

Robiya Tursunmetova

*Head of the International Cooperation Department,
Senior Lecturer, Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture,
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Art Sciences
(Uzbekistan)
E-mail: ismatullaevrobiya@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-6477-8570*

CONTEMPORARY UZBEK CINEMA IN THE CONTEXT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE AND PRIVATE FILM STUDIOS

Abstract. *This article analyzes films produced in collaboration between state and private film studios from an observational perspective and examines their role in the modern film process. Analytical views are presented on the significance of the selected films as an integral part of artistic culture.*

Keywords: *cinema, film, film process, film studio, artistic and aesthetic taste, artistic culture, theme, cinema, character, director, screenwriter, actor.*

ZAMONAVIY O'ZBEK KINOSI DAVLAT VA XUSUSIY KINOSTUDIYALAR HAMKORLIGI KONTEKSTIDA

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqolada davlat hamda xususiy kinostudiyalar hamkorligida tasvirga olingan filmlar kuzatuv nuqtayi nazaridan tahlil qilingan bo'lib, kino jarayonda tutgan o'rni xususida fikr yuritilgan. Saralab olingan filmlar badiiy madaniyatning ajralmas qismi sifatida, ahamiyati haqida tahliliy qarashlar bayon qilingan.*

Kalit so'zlar: *kino san'ati, film, kino jarayon, kinostudiya, badiiy-estetik did, badiiy madaniyat, mavzu, kinoteatr, xarakter, rejissyor, ssenarist, aktyor.*

СОВРЕМЕННОЕ УЗБЕКСКОЕ КИНО В КОНТЕКСТЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ И ЧАСТНЫХ КИНОСТУДИЙ

Аннотация. *В данной статье с точки зрения наблюдения анализируются фильмы, снятые в сотрудничестве государственных и частных киностудий, и рассматривается их роль в современном*

кинопроцессе. Представлены аналитические взгляды на значение отобранных фильмов как неотъемлемой части художественной культуры.

Ключевые слова: киноискусство, фильм, кинопроцесс, киностудия, художественно-эстетический вкус, художественная культура, тема, кинотеатр, характер, режиссёр, сценарист, актёр.

Although cinema is a relatively young art form compared with other forms of artistic expression, it has demonstrated a particularly strong perceptual impact since its emergence, owing to its ability to synthesize elements of different artistic and cultural disciplines. Today, cinema has become an integral part of everyday life. As a product of cinematographic culture, film not only reflects the culture of a nation and the spirit of an era, as well as prevailing trends, social interests and needs, and the intellectual and cultural level of society, but also brings its pressing problems to public attention. This raises an important question concerning the preservation of cinema as an art form and the prevention of its transformation into an industry driven exclusively by commercial interests. In recent years, with the growth of entrepreneurial activity, cinema has increasingly become an attractive sphere of commercial investment. This development has contributed to the emergence of state-commissioned and privately produced films as distinct categories within the contemporary film process.

Films produced under state commissions have generally been perceived as more substantial in terms of artistic integrity, cultural significance, and overall aesthetic and professional quality. By contrast, privately produced films have frequently been associated with lightweight comedy and works lacking substantial thematic or ideological content. Such tendencies have inevitably influenced the artistic and aesthetic tastes of audiences. Increasingly, cinemas have screened films designed primarily to generate uncomplicated laughter rather than address relevant and socially significant issues, with plots often confined to everyday situations or conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The growing number of similar productions has included such films as “Super Kelinchak” (“Super Daughter-

in-Law”), “Zamonaviy Sovchilar” (“Modern Matchmakers”), “Super Qaynona” (“Super Mother-in-Law”), “Qaysarginam” (“My Stubborn Girl”), “Tilim Qursin” (“May My Tongue Perish”), “Aldagani Quda Yaxshi” (“Better to Be Deceived by Matchmakers”), and others.

As a result, a perception has gradually developed that this is what popular cinema should be. Yet the fundamental purpose of art is not simply to reproduce what already exists, but to create and communicate something of greater artistic and intellectual value. In this respect, cinematographic works should, through their aesthetic and artistic content, visual language, thematic structures, and characterization, contribute to the development of audiences’ understanding of spiritual values, universal human principles, cultural identity, national self-awareness, and ethical consciousness.

This issue was addressed by the People's Writer of Uzbekistan Erkin A'zam in an interview: “The true basis of shortcomings lies in the poverty of thought. There was a period when anyone would begin writing a book simply because they wanted to. No one objected: “There is no pain in your heart, you have no purpose!” – and this phenomenon also spread to cinema. A book is nevertheless written by a specific person, whereas the deplorable situation in cinema is that films are made from films! Three or four people who have learned to hold a camera get together and, based on five or ten foreign films they have seen, create something and declare: “I have made something new!” This is shameful! An attentive viewer who watches such a “film” immediately understands where its original source came from... Meanwhile, the creative possibilities of a private film studio are broader than those of a state studio: it is freer. It can openly address a problem or phenomenon that is acutely felt in society; if it is presented skillfully, no one can reproach it. Unfortunately, our directors have found themselves confined within a single template. Especially directors working in the private sector have long needed to ask themselves: “How long are we going to make such light films solely for the sake of earning money?”

Recently, even admirers of 'home-style' films have begun demanding greater substance and seriousness" [1].

A similar concern is expressed in the following statement: "In fact, a dramatist, even when creating the 'exposition' of a film, should begin with a specific objective: "I want to express a certain pain, an idea, or offer something new". But today everything happens the other way around. It is impossible to restrain such 'born talents.' They always have a ready answer: "If you do not like it, someone else will!"

Another important principle of cinematographic expression is formulated as follows: "A film should contain a new spirit, a new hero, and new ideas. It should be especially emphasized: cinema is for the eyes, while theatre is for the ears! Empty talk is alien to cinematographic art; only a poor film consists entirely of conversations. In cinema, the eyes and actions should "speak"; it is necessary to show the "landscape" of the characters' souls. For example, could I not have found words for the girl from the film "Parizod?" [5].

The problem is particularly evident in contemporary practices in which a single individual writes the screenplay, directs the film, and performs the leading role. One might even extend this observation by suggesting that the resulting film ultimately finds an audience of only one – its creator.

Another issue of concern is the insufficient engagement of some directors with literature. Some know little beyond the technical possibilities of cinematography, have watched only five or six foreign films, yet lack a substantial intellectual and emotional foundation. It is important to remember that one of the fundamental sources of cinema is literature, particularly fiction [2].

Much therefore depends on the screenplay, which constitutes the structural foundation of a film, as well as on the characters developed within it. Reflecting on the creation of a stage character, the Norwegian writer D.Sulstad emphasizes: "The essence of performing art consists of three closely interconnected elements. These are the environment of events, characters, and their actions... If any one element is

neglected, artistic integrity does not emerge. If the environment of events is not created, the characters lose their spiritual essence; as a result, the actors' actions begin to appear illogical, and the power of the artistic impact is weakened. Therefore, those engaged in performing arts must know the laws and possibilities of the stage more and better than others. The intellect and educational level of stage masters must be high. After all, character is always connected with the fate of the characters. The actor's intellect manifests itself as a factor that clarifies what is happening on stage and reveals characters through their actions; the harmony of these three elements in performance allows the viewer to become a participant in what is happening" [3].

These observations indicate that the creation of a mature artistic work depends upon the intellectual and professional interaction of the dramatist or screenwriter, director, and actor. Characters become convincing and artistically complete when the relationship between the individual and the surrounding reality is revealed consistently and expressively. At the same time, one of the principal means of constructing character is its comprehensive and multidimensional development, including a broad representation of transformations within the character's spiritual and psychological life.

In cinema, a character does not necessarily need to remain present throughout the entire film in order to constitute a complete artistic image. What is essential is the strength and expressiveness of the characterization, together with its artistic and semantic significance. The unity of emotion and thought constitutes one of the foundations through which the essential nature of art is revealed and its internal organic coherence is achieved. Such unity enables the work to disclose the richness of its content and the psychological depth of its characters.

It is also important to note that the dramatist or screenwriter does not limit characterization to the actions and deeds that the protagonists actually perform. Attention may also be given to what they failed to do, what they might have done, or what they did not have time to accomplish. Such an approach contributes to a richer and more nuanced construction of character.

As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M.Mirziyoyev noted: "If we want to glorify the name of Uzbekistan throughout the world, we must first do so through cinematographic art. It is precisely through cinematographic art that we can conquer the screens of the world and thereby attract the attention and interest of people throughout the world" [4].

A number of films produced under state commissions have attained a level associated with auteur-oriented and elite cinema, developed their own audiences, participated in prestigious international film festivals, and received significant awards. Examples include "Yo'l bo'lsin" ("Safe journey"), "Erkak" ("Man"), "Parizod" ("Parizod"), "Issiq non" ("Hot bread"), "Faridaning ikki ming qo'shig'i" ("Two thousand songs of Farida"), and others. These films are characterized by a high degree of artistic expressiveness, dramaturgical originality, diverse and multidimensional characterization, and the incorporation of elements of national cultural identity.

In this context, the director and screenwriter A.Tarkovsky emphasizes the fundamental difference between cinematic characterization and character construction in literature, theatre, and other art forms: "If, in cinematographic art, a person's character begins to be developed through literary means, usually nothing comes of it... It turns into literature captured on film. If one attempts to create characters through traditional theatrical methods, the result will also be negative. Everything becomes highly artificial and schematic. Therefore, cinema must have its own means of expressing thought" [6].

The vitality and expressive potential of character therefore acquire particular importance. It is sometimes argued that certain films or works of other art forms are detached from reality. Yet, in essence, every art form is concerned with the human being and his or her inner world.

The contemporary film process also demonstrates the emergence of works created through productive cooperation without a rigid division between state and private cinema. Among films presented to audiences in recent years, examples

include “Dada degin” (“Call me dad”), “Kasallik tarixi” (“Medical history”), “Dorboz. Ortga yo‘l yo‘q” (“Tightrope walker. No way back”), “Yasha, xotin” (“Live, woman”), and others.

A representative example is the 2022 film “Kasallik tarixi” (“Medical history”), directed by Z.Musakov and devoted to the professional and human experiences of physicians. The film was produced in cooperation with the Cinematography Agency of Uzbekistan and the Center for the Development of National Cinematography of Uzbekistan. The screenplay and direction were by Z.Musakov (2022). Through the figure of a surgeon, the film explores the experiences of members of a demanding profession, their inner emotional states, life trajectories, and a professional mistake whose consequences are measured in human life.

The film suggests that the director sought above all to communicate to the audience a personal sense of pain, inner experience, and an event that had deeply affected him. Indeed, only someone who has personally experienced a comparable situation and become directly involved in it can present such a sphere of life from multiple perspectives and reveal its smallest details. Although the entire action takes place within a single two-room apartment, the actors’ performances and the director’s approach convey what is happening, what has happened, and what may yet happen.

The protagonist, Nurov (S.Maldokhonov), is an experienced and well-known surgeon. The film demonstrates with considerable dramatic force the consequences of a professional mistake, an attempt to evade responsibility, cowardice, and the transfer of blame for one’s own error onto another person – consequences whose ultimate cost may be measured in human life. His decision is primarily associated with a sense of responsibility before his own conscience and faith, as well as with professional integrity. The use of his name becomes the reason for his removal from the profession. Through S. Maldokhonov’s performance, the character is defined by restraint, concentration, fidelity to the Hippocratic Oath, resilience, and conviction.

The narrative unfolds among former classmates and long-time friends, while their personalities are gradually revealed through unexpected encounters and through people who enter the protagonists' lives only briefly.

N.Karimbayeva, who portrays the future minister, was invited from abroad. Her character embodies prudence, emotional restraint, and the ability to assess circumstances rationally. Her approach to the role can be understood through one of her statements: "While working on the role of the minister, I asked myself: "What would happen if I were the leader myself?" – and I showed the answer on screen. It was the first time I had worked on a film shot in a single location. I really liked it. It turns out that this requires more intense work from an actor. Constant changes of location can also distract the viewer. In the film, our faces are shown in close-ups. Even during editing, our appearance was practically not processed. Our wrinkles, tears, eyebrow and eye movements are shown openly and clearly. I repeatedly checked every term that was used. I said: "Let us not pronounce it incorrectly. There will be doctors among the audience. If we say something incorrectly, they will notice it" [7].

A comparable approach can be observed in O.Musayev's portrayal of Sharipov, a senior administrator. His characterization of a person for whom career advancement and personal gain take precedence over professional ethics, and who prefers to overlook both his position and his mistakes, is conveyed through behavior, facial expressions, gestures, and speech.

The unity of time and space enables the actor to demonstrate his professional skills with particular intensity. The absence of unnecessary visual distractions, combined with the concentration on a single location and the extensive use of close-ups, allows the audience not only to observe the character's inner experiences and imagination but also to perceive them emotionally. This places particularly demanding requirements on the actor's performance.

Another film produced through institutional cooperation and addressing contemporary social realities is "Dada degin" ("Call me dad") (screenwriter and

director M.Abdulkhairov, 2022). The film addresses a contemporary social issue. Its narrative is constructed around a paradoxical situation. The protagonist, Botir (M.Abdulkhairov), is a craftsman who makes traditional cradles, while his wife Gavhar (M.Ortikova) works as a caregiver in an orphanage. Despite their occupations, they themselves belong to a group of families who desperately wish to have a child, thereby reinforcing the paradox at the center of the narrative.

The conflict begins when Botir, who dreams of one day hearing a child call him “dad,” expresses a desire to adopt a boy named Sardor. Within the cultural context represented in the film, the presence and number of children in a family are among the factors that may determine the family’s social status and authority. At the same time, childless families and the issue of adoption may be approached with social prejudice.

Botir and Gavhar encounter precisely such circumstances: opposition from family members, distrust, rejection of their decision, lack of support, and even suggestions that they abandon their existing family and establish another one. Nevertheless, these pressures do not persuade them to abandon their aspirations. The situation changes when Sardor’s biological mother (N.Karimbayeva), who has been absent for many years, returns and announces her intention to take her son back. This profoundly affects Botir, particularly because a relationship of mutual affection and trust has already developed between him and Sardor.

In a certain sense, the viewer becomes a witness to a situation reminiscent of the proverb “Neither does the dog eat the hay, nor does it let the horse have it”. Botir’s growing paternal attachment and determination to realize his dream gradually reach an extreme point: he kidnaps the child and ultimately pays for his actions with his life. Through this narrative, the film explores a range of human qualities and moral states, including parental attachment, which is not equally experienced by everyone, infidelity, loyalty, love, trust, responsibility, a sense of duty, and the desire to evade responsibility. The ending of the film may appear somewhat artificial, and its resemblance to narrative solutions characteristic of

foreign blockbusters is noticeable. At the same time, even if Botir had survived physically, the events depicted suggest that he would already have experienced profound spiritual and emotional loss. From this perspective, the narrative resolution proposed by screenwriter, director, and lead actor M.Abdulkhairrov can be interpreted as consistent with the film's dramatic logic.

It should be noted that audiences primarily know M.Abdulkhairrov as a comedy actor. In this film, however, he demonstrates his capacity as a dramatic performer and, as in his roles in "Quduq" ("The Well"), "Arosat" ("At the Crossroads"), and "Yo'l Bo'lsin" ("Safe Journey"), creates a serious, introspective, psychologically complex character with a rich inner world and profound emotional experiences.

The film "Dorboz. Ortg'a Yo'l Yo'q" ("Tightrope Walker. No Way Back") (screenwriter N.Narzullayev, director A.Isakov, 2023), devoted to the art of "dorboz" – a traditional Uzbek form of performance associated with tightrope walking and public spectacle – foregrounds such values as national culture and cultural identity. Through the art of "dorboz", the film explores relationships and conflicts between generations, fathers and children, as well as tensions between tradition and innovation, conservatism and modernity.

The protagonist, Ota (U.Omon), seeks to preserve the art of "dorboz", which has been transmitted from generation to generation, and to ensure that it has a successor. His characterization is primarily defined by pride in his origins, confidence in his identity, and devotion to his profession.

His son, by contrast, represents an opposing value system. He is ashamed of his father's profession, regards honest labor as something degrading, is easily influenced when confronted with difficulties, and has not yet developed a stable set of values. The art of "dorboz" itself functions as a metaphor for the path of life. A person who remains faithful to his or her life path and convictions has the opportunity to live with dignity, develop as a mature individual, and attain mastery in his or her chosen field.

The events involving the dorboz performer's daughter further demonstrate that every individual, regardless of social origin, social status, position, or occupation, is equal in relation to fundamental human values and spiritual experiences.

The father-dorboz may be interpreted as a symbol of a value system at risk of disappearing. Modernity, however, does not necessarily require the abandonment of cultural identity; rather, it may imply the continued development and refinement of national values and their harmonious interaction with new social and cultural trends. Nevertheless, the concept of "modernity" is frequently interpreted in the opposite way. Until individuals understand and acknowledge their cultural roots and become conscious of their identity, the process of personal development remains difficult. A person without stable values and convictions is more susceptible to external influences and may experience a loss of social and personal orientation.

This tendency is also evident in the characterization of the dorboz performer's son. His preoccupation with entertainment and his inability to accept his own identity ultimately lead to his return from abroad, where he has experienced a humiliating situation.

However, this aspect of the narrative is presented rather superficially and schematically. The viewer may find it difficult to grasp the full depth of the character's difficulties, emotional experiences, and process of self-realization. Throughout the film, events are largely narrated by the son, and the storytelling relies less on cinematic action than on exposition and verbal narration. This may indicate limitations in the screenwriting and directorial approach or an insufficient level of professional experience. The principal strength of the film lies in its thematic focus and the performance of the lead actor, U.Omon. These elements provide the primary motivation for the viewer to remain engaged with the film through to its conclusion. Cinematographic art is not only a highly influential component of mass culture but also a medium through which artistic and aesthetic taste, artistic culture, and, in certain cases, cultural memory are articulated. It can also embody the image of the

contemporary individual and the figure of a protagonist capable of influencing and inspiring younger generations.

In this context, it may be insufficient to categorize films exclusively according to whether they were produced under state commission or by private film studios. If the fundamental objective of creative practitioners is the creation of genuine works of art, opportunities emerge for cinema to contribute to the formation of a civil society that remains connected to national and spiritual values. As the renowned director Ali Khamroyev stated: "We created films, and one day the films created us. The formation of identity is connected with the time and effort invested in each film" [8]. Of particular importance in this process are the contribution of the individual creative practitioner and specialist, as well as the collaborative work of a cohesive group united by common artistic objectives.

As Ali Khamroyev further noted: "I worked on my films together with wonderful cinematographers, screenwriters, and film artists. They are masters of their craft, professionals, and I believe that the success of my films lies in the fact that the art of each of them became integrated with my own art. After all, the ideas were born together; we understood one another" [9].

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