

Laziza Akhmatalieva

*Editor, Editorial and Publishing Department
Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture
E-mail: lazizakhonakhmatalieva97@gmail.com
ORCID: 0009-0008-6101-5421*

NATIONAL IMAGE IN UZBEK CINEMA:

ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORICAL FILMS

Abstract. *This article analyzes the formation and development of the historical theme in Uzbek cinema, as well as the specific features of representing historical figures and national images on screen. The study examines the transformation of historical reality into cinematic language through the films *Alisher Navoi* (1947) by Komil Yormatov, *Abu Rayhan Beruni* (1974) by Shukhrat Abbasov, and *Imam Abu Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi* (2019) by Abduhalil Mignarov. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the characters of historical figures, the national environment, the spirit of the period, dramatic conflict, acting performance, and visual solutions in these screen works.*

Keywords: *uzbek cinema, historical cinema, national image, historical memory, cinematic language, directing, acting, dramaturgy, screen interpretation, national identity.*

O'ZBEK KINOSIDA MILLIY OBRAZ: TARIXIY FILMLARNING BADIY TALQINI

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqolada o'zbek kinosida tarixiy mavzuning shakllanishi va rivojlanishi, tarixiy shaxs hamda milliy obrazlarning ekran orqali ifodalanish xususiyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda Komil Yormatovning "Alisher Navoiy" (1947), Shuhrat Abbosovning "Abu Rayhon Beruniy" (1974) va Abduhalil Mignarovning "Imom Abu Iso Muhammad at-Termiziy" (2019) filmlari misolida tarixiy voqelikning kino tiliga ko'chirilishi masalasi ko'rib chiqiladi. Mazkur ekran asarlarida tarixiy shaxslarning xarakteri, milliy muhit, davr ruhi, dramaturgik konflikt, aktyorlik ijrosi va tasviriy yechimlarning o'zaro munosabati o'rganiladi.*

Kalit so'zlar: o'zbek kinosi, tarixiy kino, milliy obraz, tarixiy xotira, kino tili, rejissura, aktyorlik, dramaturgiya, ekran talqini, milliy o'zlik.

НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ОБРАЗ В УЗБЕКСКОМ КИНО: ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННАЯ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯ ИСТОРИЧЕСКИХ ФИЛЬМОВ

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируются формирование и развитие исторической тематики в узбекском кинематографе, а также особенности экранного воплощения исторических личностей и национальных образов. В исследовании на примере фильмов Комила Юсупова «Алишер Навои» (1947), Шухрата Аббасова «Абу Райхан Беруни» (1974) и Абдухалила Мигнарова «Имам Абу Иса Мухаммад ат-Термизи» (2019) рассматривается проблема перенесения исторической действительности на язык кино. Изучается взаимосвязь характера исторических личностей, национальной среды, духа эпохи, драматургического конфликта, актёрской игры и изобразительных решений в данных экранных произведениях.

Ключевые слова: узбекское кино, исторический кинематограф, национальный образ, историческая память, язык кино, режиссура, актёрское мастерство, драматургия, экранная интерпретация, национальная идентичность.

Since the emergence of cinema, it has demonstrated unique possibilities for depicting reality that distinguish it from other forms of art. While literature conveys events through words and theater through live performance, cinema makes use of image, movement, sound, editing, acting, as well as spaces and settings capable of conveying the spirit of a particular period. Therefore, interpreting a historical event or figure on the screen is a much more complex process than simply reproducing historical information.

When attempting to reconstruct the past, the creator of a historical film must simultaneously transform it into an artistically comprehensible and emotionally compelling form for the contemporary viewer. Historical themes occupy a special

place in the history of Uzbek cinema. Through screen images of such historical figures as Alisher Navoi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, and Mirzo Ulugbek, not only their lives and activities but also ideas concerning science, enlightenment, justice, governance, humanity, and national values have been expressed.

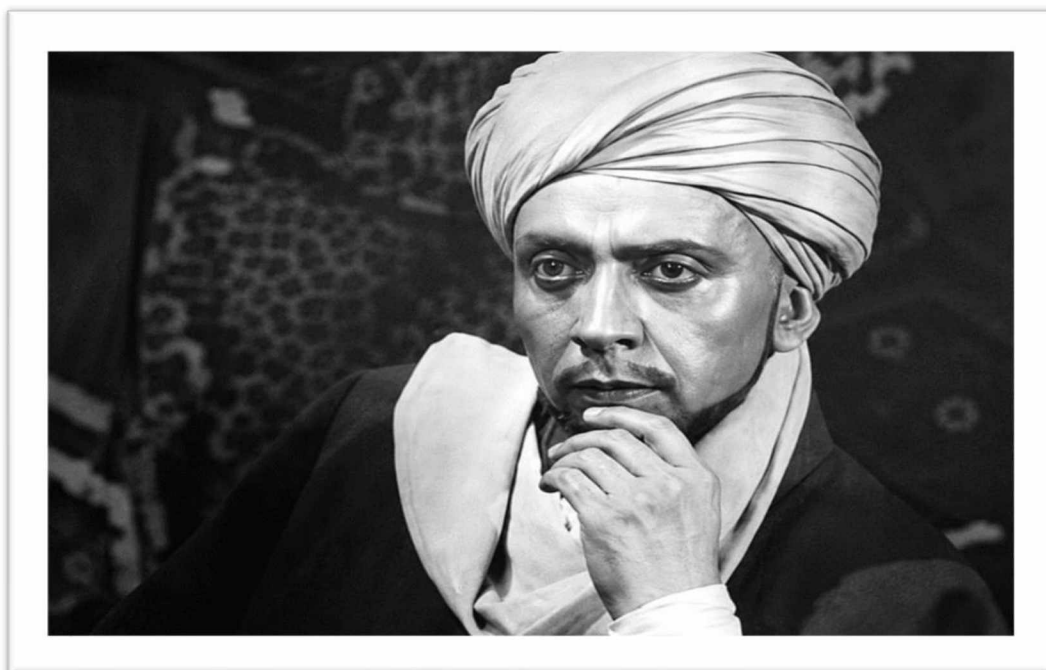
In the early films addressing historical themes, greater attention was paid to depicting the external appearance of events, creating the atmosphere of the period, and presenting the general image of a historical figure. Later, however, there was a growing effort to reveal the inner world of the historical character. In this context, the concept of the national image acquired particular significance. A national image is not limited merely to the depiction of national clothing, customs, or historical architecture. It is manifested in the character's worldview, personality, speech, attitude toward the surrounding environment, moral choices, and relationships with other characters.

Komil Yormatov's *Alisher Navoi*, filmed in 1947, is one of the significant works in Uzbek cinema to address a historical theme. The screenplay was written by Alexei Speshnev, Izzat Sultan, Uygun, and Viktor Shklovsky, while Mikhail Krasyansky served as cinematographer. The leading role was performed by Razzoq Hamroyev. The historical significance of the film lies not only in its subject matter. It also contributed to the development of the experience of creating a historical figure as a major screen character in Uzbek cinema.

An important feature of Navoi's image portrayed by Razzoq Hamroyev is the combination of the character's external dignity with his inner world. The actor interprets Navoi not merely as a poet or court adviser, but as a person who observes circumstances carefully, deeply understands human relationships, and is not indifferent to questions of justice.

This aspect is particularly noticeable in the actor's facial expressions and gaze. In certain situations, the character's silence, rather than verbal expression, conveys his attitude through his eyes and facial expressions, intensifying the inner drama of

the image. As a result, Navoi appears as a character whose development is driven more by inner experience than by external action.



Alisher Navoi (directed by Kamil Yarmatov, 1947)

The visual design of the film also pays particular attention to creating a historical environment. Palace interiors, architectural details, costumes, and decorative elements create a visual representation of the period in which the characters live. At the same time, these external signs do not serve merely as decoration. They also determine the characters' social status and their relationship with the historical environment.

However, when analyzing the film from a contemporary perspective, it is necessary to take into account the ideological circumstances of the period in which it was produced. Modern studies note that the film does not fully reveal Navoi's religious and Sufi worldview, which was influenced by the ideology of the period. Thus, Alisher Navoi can be evaluated not only as a screen work about a historical figure but also as an artistic phenomenon reflecting the attitude toward history in Uzbek cinema of the 1940s.

In Khanjara Abulqasimova's observations concerning the work of Shukhrat Abbasov, the director's approach to historical material is one of the aspects requiring

particular attention. Based on her views, it would be incorrect to explain the director's approach to creating the image of a historical figure merely as the reconstruction of historical events on screen. The artistic value of a historical film depends primarily on how vividly and psychologically convincingly the historical figure is presented to the viewer. From this perspective, Abu Rayhan Beruni can be regarded as one of the works that seeks to connect the possibilities of the historical-biographical genre with the issue of national character.

The film, produced in 1974, centers on the personality of Abu Rayhan Beruni. However, the director does not focus exclusively on the scholar's scientific legacy. Beruni's character is revealed in conjunction with the historical period in which he lived, the political environment, and the system of human relationships surrounding him. This determines the film's approach to characterization: the viewer observes Beruni not as a ready-made, idealized historical figure elevated to a monumental status, but as a human being striving to preserve his convictions and scientific views under difficult circumstances.

This approach is particularly evident in the performance of Polat Saidqosimov. The actor constructs Beruni's character not through external dramatization but through inner restraint.



Abu Rayhan Beruni (directed by Shukhrat Abbasov, 1974)

His performance is free of excessive gestures, artificial excitement, or a tendency to exaggerate heroism. Instead, silence, gaze, facial expressions, and brief reactions become important means of understanding the character's inner state. As a result, the image of Beruni combines the qualities of a scholar with his humanity. In this regard, the acting performance is directly connected with the overall artistic conception of the film. Constantly emphasizing the greatness of a historical figure may make the character one-dimensional and overly monumental. In Abu Rayhan Beruni, however, there is an effort to avoid this danger. Beruni's greatness is manifested not in the descriptions given by others, but in the choices he makes in difficult circumstances and in his attitude toward his principles.

This principle also dominates the dramatic structure of the film. For Beruni, the main issue is not achieving personal interests but preserving his scientific and moral position. Therefore, it would be too narrow to interpret the conflict of the film solely as a political struggle between historical rulers. The inner drama of the work emerges through the confrontation between human thought and external power. The conflict between reason based on knowledge and will based on political authority becomes the principal dramatic device revealing the essence of Beruni's character.

The director does not limit the portrayal of Mahmud of Ghazni to simply positioning him as Beruni's opposite. Their relationship gives rise to a clash between two different worldviews. On one side stands a person striving to understand knowledge and truth; on the other stands political power seeking to subordinate society and human destiny to its own will.

The creation of the historical environment in the film further reinforces this ideological layer. The natural landscapes of Khwarazm, palaces, scholarly settings, various everyday details, and clothing function as visual signs that help reconstruct the period. The plot of the film is also structured in accordance with the period, space, and time in such a complex manner that the film has retained its significance to this day. As Aristotle stated, "the parts of the events must be arranged in such a

way that when one part is changed or removed, the whole is altered or set in motion..." [1, 34-p].

The visual solutions created by cinematographer Hotam Fayziyev are noteworthy in this regard. The overall composition of the frame, the positioning of characters within the space, and the attention given to the human face strengthen the psychological orientation of the film. The relationship between long shots depicting the historical environment and close-ups that allow the viewer to perceive the character's inner experiences creates the visual dramaturgy of the film. Thus, the camera does not remain merely a means of recording historical reality; it also actively participates in expressing the character's inner state.

The introduction of the young Beruni character makes it possible to demonstrate the process through which the protagonist's personality was formed. Through Baxtiyor Shukurov's portrayal of the young Beruni, the viewer understands that behind the mature scholar's established character lie years of inquiry, experience, and observation of life. This method helps the viewer perceive the historical figure not as a legendary hero but as a person who has undergone a process of human development. As a result, the viewer can sense not only the outcome of Beruni's personality but also the factors that contributed to its formation.

The secondary characters in the film also perform specific functions in revealing the central figure. The participation of such characters as Abu Iraq, Qabus, Zaringiz, Rayhan, and others in the events of the film makes it possible to present different layers of the historical environment. Through them, the social and spiritual surroundings of Beruni are expanded. In particular, the character of Rayhan is one of the figures through whom the influence of personal relationships and social restrictions on human destiny can be understood.

In this respect, the system of characters in the film contributes to a deeper understanding of the protagonist. Beruni's character is revealed not only through his independent actions but also through his relationships with other characters. Every confrontation or dialogue reveals a particular aspect of his personality. Thus, the

psychological completeness of a character is not formed through a collection of individual scenes alone but through a system of relationships among the characters.

The musical and sound design of the film also functions as a component complementing its historical and psychological atmosphere. In certain episodes, music does not directly explain the events but strengthens their emotional meaning. The combined effect of image, acting, and sound creates the dramatic atmosphere of the film and brings historical reality closer to the viewer's emotional perception.

From this perspective, the national character of the film is manifested primarily in the protagonist's spiritual world. Respect for knowledge, the pursuit of truth, reverence for teacher-student relationships, moral determination, and devotion to learning define the inner essence of Beruni's character. In this sense, national character is expressed less through external features than through the protagonist's life position.

This aspect allows for a deeper understanding of Khanjara Abulqasimova's assessment of Shukhrat Abbasov's work [2]. In the scholar's views, the issue of the national image is not limited to the external appearance of a character or the national character of the subject matter. The human credibility of the character created by the director, the character's spiritual world, and life position are also important components of the concept of national character. In Abu Rayhan Beruni, this principle finds artistic expression through the portrayal of a historical figure.

Thus, the artistic significance of Abu Rayhan Beruni lies not simply in the reconstruction of the historical figure's life on screen, but in the attempt to reveal his human character within the complex circumstances of his era. Through historical material, Shukhrat Abbasov artistically explores the complex relationships between the individual and the period, science and power, faith and coercion. Beruni's character, situated at the center of these contradictions, becomes a symbol of moral stability and intellectual freedom.

This demonstrates one of the important principles of creating great historical figures in historical cinema: the necessity of revealing not only the historical figure's

activities but also his moral and spiritual world. This approach continued in historical films of later periods and contributed to the cinematic interpretation of the human character of representatives of science, religion, and enlightenment.

The main achievement of Imam Abu Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi is its attempt to portray the historical figure not merely through a veil of grandeur, but primarily as a human being and an enlightened scholar. Through the image of al-Tirmidhi, the film embodies such national values as respect for knowledge, the teacher-student tradition, modesty, patience, spiritual purity, and devotion to truth. In this respect, the national image is expressed through character and worldview rather than external appearance.

“The art of the cinema and theater actor is based on the K.S.Stanislavsky system, which is recognized throughout the world. When actors master this system thoroughly, they achieve depth, truthfulness, and expressiveness in their performances. The expressive means of actors in both directions are essentially the same. These include plasticity, facial expression, movement, expressive gaze, and intonation of speech” [3]. This theoretical perspective can serve as an important criterion for evaluating the interpretation of the protagonist in Imam Abu Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi.



Imam Abu Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi (directed by Abduhalil Mignarov, 2019)

The impact of the image of al-Tirmidhi portrayed by Doniyor Hafizov is primarily evident in the actor's ability to express the character's inner restraint without exaggerating external action. His calm gaze, manner of communication, and measured movements shape the image of a person devoted to knowledge, humble, and spiritually elevated. Thus, national character is manifested not only through ethnographic external features but also through a person's behavior and spiritual values.

However, this restraint in the acting performance also creates certain limitations regarding the dramatic development of the character. Throughout the film, al-Tirmidhi is presented primarily as a mature and internally stable personality. His spiritual searches, doubts, or new dimensions of character emerging under the influence of life's trials are not sufficiently revealed. Consequently, although the character appears spiritually coherent, he leaves a relatively static impression from the perspective of character development.

Doniyor Hafizov's portrayal of al-Tirmidhi is dominated by restraint and naturalness. The actor does not interpret the protagonist in a bombastic or excessively idealized manner. His calm manner, attentive listening, and sincerity in interacting with people help reveal the scholar's spiritual character. In particular, the respect shown by the people toward him is conveyed through the attitudes of those around him rather than through direct verbal descriptions of his status. This is one of the film's successful artistic solutions.

However, it cannot be said that the artistic possibilities of the film are fully realized. The main problem is evident in the dynamic development of al-Tirmidhi's character. From the early stages of the film, the protagonist is presented as a person devoted to knowledge, composed, and spiritually mature.

Subsequent events do not sufficiently demonstrate the consistent development of new dimensions of his personality. Therefore, the viewer understands well what kind of person the scholar was, but does not fully experience, as a process, how he attained such a level of spiritual maturity.

This aspect is directly related to the issue of the national image. National character is not merely a collection of positive qualities; it is also a dynamic character revealed through the process of overcoming life's trials. If al-Tirmidhi's choices on the path of knowledge, inner doubts, spiritual trials, and decisions had been developed step by step more fully, his national image would have become more vivid and convincing.

Nevertheless, the value of the film lies in the fact that it succeeds in portraying the historical figure's greatness not merely through his scholarly status but through his human qualities. Through al-Tirmidhi's image, values such as respect for knowledge, transmitting learning to future generations, respect for teachers, and spiritual responsibility acquire artistic coherence. In this respect, the film transcends the framework of a historical-biographical work and becomes a cinematic expression of national spirituality.

The character of Ja'far creates an opportunity to reveal the central protagonist's personality. By contrasting this character with al-Tirmidhi, the difference between knowledge and selfish motives, spiritual maturity and personal interest becomes apparent. However, if the influence of this conflict on al-Tirmidhi's character had been explored more deeply, the inner strength of the central character would also have become more evident.

In other words, the function of a secondary character should not be limited to creating a negative pole; it should also serve to reveal new dimensions of the protagonist's personality.

In this respect, both the strength and limitation of the film converge at one point: al-Tirmidhi's character is spiritually clear and coherent but less changeable from the perspective of dramatic action. Its content as a national image is strong, while its character development is comparatively weak. As a result, the film shows the viewer what kind of person the great scholar was, but does not sufficiently reveal the process through which he became such a person.

When considered on the basis of Khanjara Abulqosimova's views on national image and characterization, the film provides an interesting opportunity for analysis. National character is expressed through such values as knowledge, spirituality, modesty, and humanity. However, if the dramatic development of these qualities had been strengthened, the image of al-Tirmidhi could have achieved a fuller national character not only spiritually but also psychologically and dramatically.

A comparative analysis of the films discussed above demonstrates that in Uzbek historical cinema, the national environment is created not through decoration or costume alone, but through various elements of cinematic expression.

First, space plays an important role. A palace, madrasa, house, street, marketplace, or center of learning is not merely a location where events take place. It becomes an artistic means of expressing the character's social position and psychological experiences.

Second, costume not only establishes the historical period but also complements the character's personality. The clothing of a ruler, the attire of a scholar, or the everyday dress of an ordinary person visually expresses their position within society.

Third, music creates the emotional layer of a historical film. In particular, the use of national musical motifs in historical cinema strengthens the viewer's perception of a particular period and environment. "The relationship between image and music is an important and complex task. S.M.Eisenstein, who wrote a number of scholarly works on this subject, states that a film created without music must possess an artistic cinematic expressiveness capable of fully replacing the character, scope, and function of music" [3, 47-p].

Fourth, acting is one of the principal factors shaping a historical image. Razzoq Hamroyev's inner restraint in portraying Navoi, Shukur Burhonov's dramatic experiences in the role of Ulugbek, and the combination of intellectual thought and human emotion in the portrayal of Beruni demonstrate the possibilities of bringing historical figures to life on screen.

Such studies make it possible to understand how national cinematic thought was formed, how Uzbek directors perceived history, and how the issue of national identity was expressed on screen in different periods.

For contemporary Uzbek cinema, this experience is of particular importance. A modern filmmaker addressing historical themes faces the task not simply of reproducing history but of interpreting it through a contemporary cinematic language capable of engaging in dialogue with today's audience. In this sense, the scholarly study of previous experiences in Uzbek historical cinema has both theoretical and practical significance for the development of contemporary national cinematography.

References

1. Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Tashkent: State Scientific Publishing House "National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan", 2018. – 350 p.
2. Абул-Касимова Х. Кино и художественная культура Узбекистана. – Ташкент: Фан, 1991. – 146 с.
3. Abulqosimova Kh. *Fundamentals of Cinematic Art*. Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts. Tashkent: State Scientific Publishing House "National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan", 2009. – 100 p.
4. Базен А. Что такое кино? Сборник статей. – Москва: Искусство, 1972. – С. 84.
5. Saidboyeva, N. *Pages of History*. Madaniyat newspaper, 2021, No. 26 (161).