

THE CREATIVE WORK OF KHUDOYBERGAN DEVONOV IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEK DOCUMENTARY CINEMA

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Abstract:“This article provides information about the early creative works of Xudoybergan Devonov, the founder of Uzbek documentary cinema. It discusses the functions and categories of early documentary films, their significance, and the unique characteristics of the development of the field.

Key words:Documentary chronicle, Feature, characteristic, or aspect (depending on the context)

Cinema has become an integral part of people's lives as a tool that shapes the worldview of individuals, nurtures high moral standards, and develops aesthetic taste. It plays a significant role in educating people, especially the younger generation, in the spirit of humanism, patriotism, purity, nobility, conscientiousness, respect for elders, love for labor, and hope and confidence for the future. The century-long development of Uzbek national cinema, which has passed through numerous stages of progress, today enjoys the attention and recognition of world filmmakers. The existence of a long-established school of mastery in the genres of feature films, popular science, documentary, and animated films is a testament to this cultural achievement.

The history of documentary films in Central Asia undoubtedly brings to mind the mysterious frames captured by the first cinematographer, Khudoybergan Devonov. The first photographic image was taken by Khudoybergan Devonov in 1908. The year 1908 marked an important period in the birth of Uzbek cinema. Khudoybergan Devonov independently filmed the arrival of Khan Asfandiyar Khan of Khiva in 1910, capturing historical monuments, minarets, mosques, and other architectural gems on film. His early works, such as “Architectural Monuments of Our Land” (1913, 114-meter film) and “Views of Turkistan” (1916, 100-meter film), are considered unique relics that reflect the spirit of that time.

In his early documentary and chronicle films, Devonov sought to reflect the life, customs, and landscapes of Khorezm. In 1929, films like “Working Women,” “Shorkol,” “Koza,” “Chigir,” “Tuzkon,” “Cotton Caravan,” “In the Fields of Khorezm,” and “The Drought Disaster” were filmed, which belong to this category.

In depicting the different professions, the photographer paid special attention to capturing them closely, showing them in their work process. The “heroes” of these photographs are often depicted as sitting somewhere (“Spinners,” “Oil Sellers,” “Desert Furnace Workers”). Even in the work “The Khan's Hunter,” the “hero” is shown sitting on horseback, holding two birds. This demonstrates Devonov's aim not just to take pictures of his contemporaries but to create an image of them as people belonging to a particular field.

A small film frame depicting boats in the Amu Darya with their sails fluttering in the wind was part of Devonov’s first experience in cinematography. These frames are very brief but display incredibly beautiful and unique moments. Devonov captured the hard work of water

extraction with a Chigir (a traditional irrigation device) in Khorezm, as well as the laborers' ability to find joy and humor even in such tough conditions.

Thanks to the work of this skilled photographer, people from other nations gained valuable insights into the historically rich land of Khorezm. Another chronicle frame filmed in 1910 shows the Khiva Khan leaving his palace. In this, the Khan is depicted on horseback, accompanied by his courtiers, leaving the palace. At first glance, these may seem like very short and simple chronicle shots, but through these lively images, we can witness the true appearance of the Khorezm kings and their soldiers, while also feeling the spirit of the time.

In every frame, Devonov's emotions and his relationship to the events are clearly visible. The frames where he mounted his large camera on a moving cart are particularly striking and leave one in awe.

After the establishment of the Khorezm People's Republic in 1920, Khudoybergan Devonov was appointed as the Minister of Finance. Due to his official duties, he frequently traveled to Moscow and brought new films. He worked as a correspondent for the "Sovkino" joint-stock company, and many of the films he shot were featured in the "Soyuzkinojournal" screenings. During this time, a number of films produced by Russian filmmakers began to enter the territory of Uzbekistan.

The first film in Uzbekistan was shown in 1897 in the "Old Jova" square. Starting from 1908, foreign films began to be screened in cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, Kokand, and others. These films were primarily brought by special emissaries from the United States, France, and Russia. It is assumed that most of these films depicted Eastern exotica.

The history of Uzbek documentary cinema requires studying each phase in terms of how it addressed and solved the tasks of realistically portraying life. By the first half of the 1920s, the main focus was on establishing industry, collectivizing agriculture, and addressing cultural construction. By this time, the aesthetic taste and education of the audience had significantly changed and improved. Therefore, the ideological and thematic content of artistic works had to become deeper and broader. Life demanded ideological and artistic excellence from these works. In the 1930s, Uzbek documentary cinema developed based on the trends of realistically portraying life. The post-war development phase of documentary cinema in the republic spanned from 1946 to 1955. During this period, the focus was on reconstructing and further elevating the republic's economy and culture based on new economic and historical conditions. Under such circumstances, documentary cinema also attempted to restructure its work and thematic content. A key internal task of cinema during this period was to train specialists in various fields of documentary filmmaking. During this time, the founders of the republic's artistic cinematography, such as N. G'aniyev and K. Yormatov, also worked in the field of documentary cinema. Later, prominent figures in Uzbek cinematography, such as Y. Azamov, L. Fayziev, and Z. Sobitov, as well as cinematographers like M. Krasnyanskiy, N. Ryadov, A. Pann, and several screenwriters and composers, also worked in documentary cinema.

Director-cinematographer M. Qayumov, directors V. Usova, N. Dolinskiy, cinematographers Sh. Zohidov, A. Saidov, O. Tursunov, A. Rahmonov, K. Muhammedov, P. Rasulev, N. Vasliyev, sound operators J. Ahmedov, G. Senchilo, A. Kudryashev, and others formed the core of the documentary filmmakers during this period. The thematic scope of documentary cinema in the republic expanded further, enriched with visual, event-driven, and cinematic essay genres. From the perspective of that time, the main goal was to create portraits of laborers, bring them to the forefront, and show the public exemplary figures to inspire them to work even harder.

M. Qayumov's films are remarkable both in terms of their themes and ideologies. His work is particularly notable for the creation of film portraits of figures such as academic S.P. Tolstoy, T. Qori-Niyoziy, Abror Hidoyatov, Tamarokhonim, Mukarrama Turg'unboyeva, Galiya Izmaylova, and others. These portraits are now considered significant historical documents.

In the documentary chronicles of this period, the portrayal of art, agriculture, science, and the figures of artistic luminaries began to acquire more impactful and refined expressions. Cinematographer P. Rasulev, in his works, focused on creating film portraits of leaders in agriculture.

A. Rahmonov, recalling this tendency observed in Uzbek documentary cinema, shares the following in his memoirs: "In Pop district, in the village of G'urumsoy, I had to film the mechanizer Melikoz Umrzoqov. As you know, Melikoz was one of the pioneers in introducing advanced agro-technology and complex mechanization in cotton growing. I was captivated by Melikoz's devotion and human qualities. When the village of G'urumsaroy was flooded, I followed Melikoz on horseback with the film camera, who displayed these qualities. Later, I handed over all the materials to the director. When I later inquired, I found that the director, in panic, had lost the materials so that no one would see them..." Thus, some of the real-life conflicts and hardships characteristic of the years of economic reconstruction were avoided. Instead of showing the struggles for the development of the society's economy and culture, there emerged a tendency to present life superficially, with embellishments.

For example, while 255 news stories were filmed for local use in 1954, 130 of them were dedicated to Tashkent city and Tashkent region. During this period, dozens of films in genres such as film portraits, life essays, event-driven, and visual reviews were created. Films like "The Cotton Farmer's Daughter" (1948), "Kanash" (1952), and other film essays were dedicated to the respected figures of labor and science. Films like "The Daughters of the People" (1951) and "Textile Workers" (1952) are considered "life essays" by genre. In the history of Uzbek documentary cinema, the visual-review genre occupies a special place during this period. This genre served to introduce viewers to the geographical features, natural resources, economic and ethnographic characteristics, and the active labor processes of the region's people. During these years, films such as "The Four-Gated City" (1946), "In the Karakalpak Region" (1949), "The Fergana Valley" (1952), "Along the Amu Darya" (1952), "Samarkand" (1953), and others were produced.

In conclusion, as discussed above, an analysis was made of European-style documentary film genres and their evolutionary development phases. Films from different genres and countries were reviewed.

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