

**THE ROLE OF FOLKLORE TRADITIONS IN MODERN UZBEK PROSE
(THROUGH THE WORKS OF OMON MUXTOR)***Erkabayeva Shahnoza**Student of the Faculty of Philology and Arts,**Urgench State University named after Abu Rayhon Beruni*

Abstract. This article explores the artistic integration of folklore traditions in modern Uzbek prose, focusing on mythopoetic motifs in Omon Muxtor's novel *Aflotun*. Drawing from Uzbek oral literature—such as fairy tales, legends, and myths—the novel constructs a symbolic narrative grounded in national spirituality. The motif of descending into a well, commonly found in both local folklore and Islamic legends, is analyzed as a metaphoric passage between the material and spiritual worlds. The study examines how folkloric images, linguistic expressions, and epic exaggerations serve both poetic and philosophical functions in the novel. Ultimately, the article argues that *Aflotun* represents a unique synthesis of ancient tradition and contemporary literary expression, reaffirming the continuing relevance of myth in shaping national identity and artistic thought.

Keywords: Uzbek prose, folklore traditions, mythopoetic motif, symbolic narrative, Omon Muxtor, *Aflotun*, epic structure, well motif, oral literature, spiritual symbolism.

In world literature, the influence of folklore traditions—particularly myths and legends—has long been a source of artistic inspiration. For instance, Homer's *Odyssey* is widely recognized as a masterpiece constructed on the foundation of Greek mythological and epic heritage. Similarly, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* in Russian literature is deeply embedded in folkloric and mystical traditions. This phenomenon is especially evident in Uzbek children's literature, as seen in the works of H. Tuxtaboyev such as *Riding the Yellow Giant* and *In the Land of Sweet Melons*, which are saturated with fantastical elements and oral narrative patterns.

Although the tradition of grounding novelistic plots directly in folklore has not been a prevailing feature of Uzbek adult fiction, several modern works nonetheless demonstrate an artistic integration of folkloric elements. Asqad Muxtor's *Chinor* and Odil Yoqubov's *Ancient World*, for instance, showcase extensive use of folklorisms in their narrative constructions. Contemporary authors such as Omon Muxtor, Khurshid Dostmuhammad, Togay Murod, Asad Dilmurod, and Ulugbek Hamdam continue this trajectory, integrating mythopoetic symbols into the texture of their prose.

In the novels of Omon Muxtor, one finds a vibrant spectrum of folkloric motifs. His philosophical novel *Aflotun* presents events that provoke deep contemplation about the essence of human existence, which emerge not as abstract philosophical treatises but as vivid products of artistic reflection. The narrative builds on metaphysical musings shaped by the author's philosophical insight and aesthetic worldview. One of the most striking folkloric elements used in the novel is the motif of the **well** ("quduq"), which plays a central role in rendering the symbolic journey of the protagonist.

The motif of descending into a well is rooted in multiple folklore traditions, including Uzbek fairy tales and the widely-known Islamic legend of Joseph, which features a similar episode. In *Aflotun*, the descent serves not only as a narrative device but as a symbolic gateway between the worlds of the living and the spiritual. The author effectively employs this folkloric symbol to guide both protagonist and reader toward deeper existential revelations. According to scholar M. Jo'raev¹, the belief that the underworld is accessible through natural openings such as wells, caves, or cracks in the earth is a recurring motif in Central Asian oral tradition. Folklorist U. Sattorov² notes that in mythology, the well symbolizes a passage to the underworld and serves as a bridge between earthly and spiritual waters—representing a connection to the mythological “water of life.”

The interaction between the protagonist and the mystical characters within the well draws from the narrative structures of Uzbek epics, fairy tales, and legends, where contact with supernatural beings is often a metaphor for the soul's journey beyond physical death. In these stories, the physical body may remain underground, yet the spirit continues to transcend time and space. Thus, the characters residing at the bottom of the well in *Aflotun* are aware of the surface world's affairs and use Usmon, the protagonist, as a conduit to communicate their concerns, highlighting the well as a spiritual medium between realms.

Since the author himself takes on the role of the narrator-protagonist, the novel's fantastical episodes unfold within the realm of his imagination. As a literary device, the imagination is boundless in both space and time, allowing for fluid transitions between reality and myth. The utterance “Assalomu alaykum” (“Peace be upon you”) found in the text also functions poetically, drawing from folk superstitions—such as greeting a tree, an animal, or an outhouse to dispel negative omens like “govmijja” (a stye)—that are believed to invoke magical healing. This motif of verbal magic links directly to similar phenomena in folktales where characters confront dragons or witches who respond to ritualistic language³.

In one compelling scene, villagers peer into a well in the hope of finding water during a drought. Upon seeing a mysterious glint at the bottom, they lower a bucket, which repeatedly returns empty. They then decide to lower a man to investigate. What follows is a sequence steeped in mythical resonance: the first three men sent into the well return as mutilated corpses—beheaded, disemboweled, or shot. These horrific discoveries mirror the trials in traditional epic narratives, where protagonists face death, sacrifice, and transformation before entering sacred knowledge.

Usmon, unlike others, descends headfirst into the well—a significant narrative detail that underscores his transformation into a selfless folkloric hero. This inversion echoes epic exaggeration: the rope meant to measure seven fathoms stretches to seventy. As he descends, voices and sounds of recitation echo from the walls—further affirming the mystical and liminal quality of the setting. Yet, because he enters with humility, the mysterious figures at the well's bottom offer him not death but a bowl of liquid—possibly wine or water—as a sign of acceptance.

¹ Jo'raev M. *O'zbek xalq samoviy afsonalari*. – Toshkent: Fan, 1995. – B.23.

² Sattorov U. *O'zbek xalq toponimik rivoyatlari: Filol. fanlari nomzodi ... dis*. – Toshkent, 1999. – B.82.

³ Omon Muxtor. *Aflotun. Roman*. – Toshkent: Ma'naviyat, 1998.

Remarkably, while granted life, Usmon remains deeply concerned with the fate of those on the surface. The underground beings accuse humankind of desecrating the earth, polluting nature, and corrupting the surface world—a scene imbued with profound ecological and moral significance. It evokes traditional motifs where the natural order is disrupted by human greed, and only through spiritual awakening can restoration occur.

This moment encapsulates the essence of folkloric survivals in modern literature: while the narrative retains symbolic and mythological undercurrents, it functions within a modern artistic framework. As scholars argue, these mythic forms, while stripped of their original ritualistic functions, persist as fragments of artistic thinking that become integral to the novelistic genre.

In sum, Omon Muxtor's Aflotun illustrates how contemporary Uzbek prose can harness ancient folkloric traditions to produce a narrative that is both symbolically rich and philosophically profound. Through mythopoetic devices such as the well, underground journeys, magical speech, and supernatural judgment, the novel interweaves tradition with innovation, grounding spiritual exploration within the framework of national literary consciousness.

References:

1. Jo'raev M. O'zbek xalq samoviy afsonalari. – Toshkent: Fan, 1995. – B.23.
2. Sattorov U. O'zbek xalq toponimik rivoyatlari: Filol. fanlari nomzodi ... dis. – Toshkent, 1999. – B.82.
3. Omon Muxtor. Aflotun. Roman. – Toshkent: Ma'naviyat, 1998. – B.12.