

FROM THE HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF CINEMA IN UZBEKISTAN

Nigora Karimova

Institute of Fine Arts Studies, Academy of Sciences, Uzbekistan

Abstract

Cinematography in Uzbekistan has been loved since the evening when the screen first lit up and a magical vision appeared on the stretched canvas. It was in Tashkent in 1897, literally two years after the famous show of the Lumiere brothers in Paris. Uzbekistan is the birthplace of cinema in Central Asia. It was there, in the cities of Bukhara and Tashkent the first silent films were made in the mid-1920s. They laid the foundations not only for the national cinematography of Uzbekistan, but also became a kind of example that gave impetus to the formation of national cinematography in the entire region.

Keywords: cinematography, cinema, film, camera, operator, region, politics, director, actor, image

Due to its historical mission as a crossroads of cultural interaction between East and West and a region with a developed urban structure, Uzbekistan naturally became the birthplace of cinema in Central Asia. The evidence is the following historical facts, archival documents and film and photo materials reflecting the history of the formation of the cinema of Uzbekistan: On October 30, 1897, the first film show took place in Tashkent; Since 1908, the first Uzbek cameraman Khudaibergen Devanov began shooting his own independent film plots. In the same year, the first film and photo laboratory in all of Central Asia was opened in Khiva; In 1924, the first in Central Asia film partnership “Bukhkino” was organized and in 1925, the first silent fiction film in Central Asia “The Minaret of Death” was released; In 1925 in Tashkent, the first in Central Asia film factory “Sharq Yulduzi” was opened in the building of the Ishankuli madrasah. The special magnetism of cinematography is generally recognized.

According to researchers, the first film show in Turkestan took place already in 1897, as noted above, only two years have passed since the Lumière brothers demonstrated their films in Paris. In the first decade of the 20th century, the offices of the city administrations of Tashkent and Samarkand were literally overwhelmed with petitions for permission to equip cinematography by representatives of both the European and local population from ordinary townspeople to members of the upper class.

By the mid-1920s for the emergence of national film production in Uzbekistan, there was no necessary technical base and no national cinematographic personnel. The beginning was the establishment of the Bukhkino film company in 1924 in Bukhara, which provided for the production of films, film distribution and the exploitation of films in the region and the countries of the East. For a short period of time, the organization released two newsreels “Around Central Asia” and “Bukhara on the Way toward Cultural Revival” and several stories from the chronicle. In 1924, work began on the creation of the first joint Russian-Uzbek film “The Minaret of Death” shown in Bukhara in 1925. Despite the devastating critical articles, the picture had a certain box office success and was sold for a foreign release under the title “Prisoner of the Harem”. In March 1925, the Regulation on the Uzbekgoskino – Uzbek State Photo and Film Enterprise was published, which was supposed to produce feature films on national material, rent films and develop a cinema network. In March 1925 in Tashkent, the Sharq Yulduzi film factory was opened in the building of the Ishankuli madrasah. It was the first production film studio in the whole Central Asia.

It was in the 1920s that the aesthetic foundations of Uzbek silent cinema were laid: to embody a new ideology in various genres and in films of various cinematic levels. Multiplied copies of the films were widely distributed throughout the republic to the viewer. The propaganda films carried the features of “oriental exoticism” but social intonations were quite clearly visible in them: the struggle for the emancipation of women and liberation from religious prejudices. Alas, they did not have a deafening box-office success. E.g., the social order was reflected in the films “Pakhta-Aral” (1925, director A. Shcherbakov) and “Solar Happiness” (1926, director V. Krivtsov). The directors of the pictures worked mainly with non-professional

performers. For example, Kh. Shadieva and A. Khojayeve were invited to take part in the filming of the Pakhta-Aral, who later played several more roles in films of the silent period. Only one professional actress of the Tatar Theater, Malikakhanum Jafarova, took part in the Sunny Happiness. The rest of the performers turned out to be members of the film crew and direct participants in the land and water reform, to which the film was devoted. In July 1926, at the invitation of the Uzbekgoskino, director Mikhail Doronin and a film group were invited from Moscow to shoot the film "The Second Wife". For the first time, Uzbek women participated in this film as actresses. Actors and sitters were selected through advertisements and mutual friends. Many came and thought that they would have some kind of work; after many persuasions, the women removed the chachwan, revealing their faces, but upon learning that they would be filming with an open face in front of unfamiliar men, they simply fled. The film was released in 1927. In 1928, the film "The Leper" was released; it was an "oriental" story based on the novel "New Moon" by the French writer Ferdinand Duchenne. Rachel Messerer was invited to the main female roles in the films "The Second Wife" and "The Leper". The film was very popular at the box office and it was watched by millions of people across the country. One of the first Uzbek silent films that enjoyed tremendous success was the film "Jackals of Ravat" released in 1927. This was due to several reasons. Firstly, almost all the roles were played in the film by Uzbek actors – Suleiman Khojaev, Rustam Akhmedov and Rakhim Pirmukhamedov. Secondly, the composer and ethno-musicologist Viktor Uspensky wrote a special score for the film musical accompaniment. The silent cinema of Uzbekistan had its own "avant-garde people". E.g., funny sketches of ethno-Soviet reality and eccentric characters appeared in some films. Dashing avant-garde was expressed even in the titles of the films "The Well of Death", "American Woman from Baghdad" and "Cleaner, Buddy!" In total, more than twenty silent feature films and about a hundred news stories that are of great historical and cultural value were filmed within the walls of the Sharq Yulduzi film studio in 1926 – 1937. They reflect the time, people, natural landscapes, the architecture of cities and villages, details of everyday life. And in this sense, the production of silent films in Uzbekistan is the richest repository of the past. It managed to capture the panorama of national life for future generations not only in documentary chronicles but also in live-action films. In black and white shots, another facet of the true essence of cinematography comes to the fore: the ability to save time forever. Such young enthusiasts of national cinema as Nabi Ganiev, Suleiman Khojaev, Ergash Khamraev, Kamil Yarmatov, Malik Kayumov, Yuldash Agzamov, Bori Khaidarov, and Akhmadjan Saidov for the first time crossed the threshold of the former Sheikhan-taur mosque with the Sharq Yulduzi film factory and stayed there forever. There in the recent past, there was the Ishankuli madrasah, and then the Shark Yulduzi film factory was located. In small cells, hujras, there were active workshops, offices and a developing laboratory, all the poor equipment that was available at that time: Aimo cameras, tripods and hand-held lighting devices. Each of them began his career in cinema with insignificant positions: an apprentice of the lighting technician, a consultant and an assistant director. However, this gave them the opportunity to travel with the film crew to the filming locations, watch the filming themselves and act in episodes. In this way, the "universities" of the future leading figures of the Uzbek cinema and their comprehension of the most basic knowledge of the profession of a cinematographer began with a small start. Knowledge was accumulated empirically in the process of filming. But the very moment of filming was not similar to the modern filming process. Everything was organized much simpler, more modest and, importantly, more mobile. The entire film group consisted of 4 – 5 people, everyone counted, therefore interchangeability was of great importance, the ability, albeit minimal, to understand another specialty. They imperceptibly mastered the work of an assistant director, assistant operator, lighting technician, and actor, replacing the missing workers if necessary. At that time, the studio was just being formed as production and constantly experienced an acute shortage of specialists. Directors who ended up in Uzbekistan worked at the Sharq Yulduzi studio at different times for various reasons were M. Doronin, V. Shcherbakov, K. Gertel, A. Usoltsev, and A. Kordyum; such cameramen as: V. Dobrzhansky, F. Verigo-Darovsky, A. Dorn, A. Ginzburg, G. Zelmanovich, B. Francisson, and A. Bulinsky; and such actors as: B. Chelli, P. Betaki and others. Undoubtedly, many of them actively helped the formation of young Uzbek cinematography, training national creative personnel, transferring to them the experience and culture of filmmaking and contributing to the emergence of cultural dialogue. Uzbek silent cinema also had its own "stars" in the person of Rachel Messerer, Safiyat Askarova, Ergash Khamraev, Kamil Yarmatov, Rakhim Pirmukhamedov, and Khalil Abjalilov. The structural features of the new Uzbek cinema were laid down

already in the first films. The 1930s became a period of intensive formation of national film directing. During this period N. Ganiev created his first films “Rise”, “Ramazan” and “Egit”, S. Khojaev performed his epic production “Before Dawn” and Yu. Agzamov tried his hand at directing. In the credits of the films of those years, it is possible to already find the names of future famous Uzbek filmmakers: S. Mukhamedov, M. Kayumov and M. Krasnyansky. The development of cinematography in Uzbekistan in the early 1930s was very complex and contradictory. During this period, cinema developed “in line with the ideas of socialist realism, as part of multinational Soviet art”, the main postulate was the formula “art must be socialist in content and national in form.” As a result, many phenomena in the cinema of the 1920s-80s were assessed in a one-sided and highly tendentious way, when ideological criteria were dominant. It was during this period that the foundations of subsequent artistic searches and directions of national cinema were laid. In the early 1930s, elements of national identity began to appear in Uzbek cinema. These are the films “Ramadan” (1932), “Before Dawn” (1934) and “Egit” (1935). The search for national identity manifested itself in the character of an authentic hero and in the presentation of life material in Nabi Ganiev’s “Ramadan”, and then the entire author’s concept of Suleiman Khojaev’s “Before Dawn” was imbued with the idea of national identity. But the film was never released. Suleiman Khojaev, a talented film-maker, was arrested. After him, almost the entire first generation of Uzbek filmmakers was arrested and, of course, the accusation was of the most common character “bourgeois nationalism”. The same fate befell the film of N. Ganiev and Ergash Khamraev “Jigit” (1935). It should be noted that the early 1930s as in other spheres of art was marked by the most severe purges coincided with the processes of political repression. During these years, almost all the leading creative forces of Uzbek cinema: Suleiman Khojaev, Khudaibergan Devanov, Nabi Ganiev, and Ergash Khamraev were repressed. S. Khojaev and Kh. Devanov were arrested and shot on charges of anti-Soviet nationalist activity. Many of the studio’s artists have been arrested. There were massive layoffs. Released after arrest, some partly went to other spheres. After a series of arrests, leading Uzbek cinematographers N. Ganiev and E. Khamraev were suspended from work in the studio. E. Khamraev in June 1941 was mobilized to the front and died on February 15, 1942. Thus, a rapid rollback happened in the development of national cinema. The situation around the cinema of creativity was very tense. The atmosphere of mistrust in national cadres, a sharp restriction of creative freedom led to a complete denial of the author’s interpretation of reality in national cinema. The forcibly interrupted film process was actually restored and returned to its own rut only during World War II.

References

1. Adams L.L. Cinema and theatre// History of Civilizations of Central Asia. Volume VI. UNESCO. Paris, 2005. P. 280.
2. Drieu C. Interdit aux Sartes, aux chiens et aux soldats: la Russie coloniale dans le film de Sulejman Khozhaev Avant l'Aurore (Tong oldidan), 1933 // Cahiers d'Asiecentrale (En ligne), 17/18/ 2009.
3. Kenez P. Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin. London, New-York, 2001. P. 430.
4. Karimova N. Igrovoi kinematograf Uzbekistana, San"at– Ташкент: 2016. P.220.
5. Каримова Н.Г. Молодой герой узбекского игрового кино 1960-1990 гг автореферат дис. ... Кандидата искусствоведения / Ташкент, 1997.с. 11.
6. Тешабаев Д. Киноискусство советского Узбекистана. М., 1968. С. 230.