

The Writer's Skill in Creating the Image of Imam Maturidi

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Abstract: This article discusses Luqmon Bo'rixon's novel "Imam Maturidi." Notably, the novel stands out as a new phenomenon in recent years of Uzbek historical fiction due to the novelty of its subject matter. At the center of the work is the figure of Imam Maturidi — a renowned scholar in the Islamic world and the Muslim East, particularly known for his contributions to the science of hadith. The article focuses on the novel's ideological and artistic features, the writer's skill in portraying the great scholar's image, as well as the originality of the style and conceptual content, and the principle of historical accuracy.

Keywords: Imam Maturidi, hadith scholar, historical novel, Islamic world, writer's skill, sheikhs and saints, issues of fiqh, philosophy and logic, soul and spirit.

Introduction: From the earliest examples of Uzbek novels, historical fiction has held an important place in modern Uzbek prose due to its thematic diversity and broad scope in both subject matter and volume. Indeed, the school of Uzbek historical novel, which began in earnest with Oybek's "Navoi", has faced the serious task of artistically reviving the images of ancestors who showed courage and fortitude during significant political transformations in the history of the Uzbek people. This task also involves restoring these figures to the treasury of national spirituality and inspiring pride and admiration for them in the minds of today's younger generation. Writing a historical novel requires from the author not only great skill, but also a thorough comparison and study of the historical context and sources of that period. It demands a commitment to justice in portraying historical figures, revealing their personal conflicts, inner emotional worlds, and human qualities in a vivid and lifelike manner.

METHODS

During the years of independence, a new national perspective has emerged in the literary treatment of the spiritual leaders, saintly scholars, and hadith experts who lived in Central Asia and contributed to Islamic thought. Thanks to independence, it has

become possible to provide an objective assessment of historical religious figures. Luqmon Bo'rixon's novel "Imam Maturidi" is dedicated to the life and scholarly work of the great thinker, founder of the Maturidiyya school, and prominent hadith scholar Imam Maturidi, who made a lasting contribution to the development of Islam. The novel's uniqueness lies in the fact that Imam Maturidi's image is presented for the first time in Uzbek historical fiction, making it a pioneering work in both theme and scope. While other writers have repeatedly turned to certain historical periods and personalities, the portrayal of this great scholar had long been overlooked in Uzbek prose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Writer Luqmon Bo'rixon, with his deep insight and broad creative imagination, has skillfully interpreted the life and scholarly activities of Imam Maturidi—who lived in 10th-century Samarkand—from both the perspective of his time and modern-day relevance. His success in presenting this narrative as a cohesive and purposeful work highlights the significance of the novel. In his review article titled "The Image of a Theologian Scholar", literary critic Ibrohim G'ofurov describes the novel's place in Uzbek prose as follows:

"Writer Luqmon Bo'rixon painstakingly gathered, studied, analyzed, and interpreted historical records to

depict the great theologian's image in a lifelike and humanized way. The protagonist of the novel emerges as a profoundly intelligent, humane, and just person. He corrects many misconceptions and incorrect ideas in the field of theology using deep reflection and by relying on the power of reason and tradition. He upholds a pure theological approach through his scholarly talent and sound logic. The novel presents the scholar's personality in full, both as a scholar and a human being, allowing the reader to fully appreciate Imam Maturidi's image."

The novel gradually illustrates key moments in the scholar's life, including his childhood memories, family life, and the distinguishing features that set him apart during his educational journey under various teachers. We see this clearly in the following depiction:

"Imam Abu Mansur always remembered with longing the early lessons he received from his father and the village teacher. At that time, young Muhammad's heart and mind thirsted for knowledge and understanding. He constantly questioned his teachers. Later, he studied at the famous Juzjaniya madrasa in Samarkand. He learned with great diligence and eagerness. Every lesson, every subject opened up new worlds in his mind, heart, and thoughts. Young Muhammad was so engrossed and passionate in his studies that he forgot his surroundings and society..." (p. 38).

Through these vivid portrayals, the author points to the spiritual and intellectual state of the young Imam Maturidi during his childhood, foreshadowing his future development into a great hadith scholar.

In the novel, the personality of Imam Maturidi is interpreted without being idealized, exaggerated, or embellished. Instead, he is portrayed through realistic examples, allowing the writer to convincingly depict the truth of life and the image of the great scholar. At the same time, the author also effectively conveys the uniqueness of Imam Maturidi's inner world, his divinely gifted spiritual talent, and profound intellectual capacity, especially through the recollections of his childhood friend and companion Vosiq ibn Qosim. The following passage from the novel clearly illustrates this:

"Indeed, there was undoubtedly a dervish-like nature in Muhammad. Sometimes he would miss classes, at times he would arrive quite late. Yet strangely, his conduct seemed to be seen as a virtue by the teachers. While others would be strictly reprimanded for being absent or late, Muhammad was received with sympathy. Especially the esteemed teacher Iyodi displayed a particularly favorable attitude toward him." (pp. 72–73)

Naturally, such distinctiveness and the recognition of his talents by his teachers led to a certain tension in his

relationships with other students. The scholar's exceptional intellect, ability to excel in assignments, swift and insightful responses in class, and depth of thought greatly impressed his teachers—especially Iyodi. Recognizing signs of spiritual elevation in him, his teacher Abu Bakr Iyodi even assigned a responsible person at the madrasa to monitor his condition. This was due to Muhammad ibn Muhammad's habit of performing late-night prayers (tahajjud) and occasionally entering a trance-like state during worship.

In depicting the image of the scholar, the writer does not limit himself to traditional narrative techniques or dry description. Instead, he uses the method of individualized speech, voicing the impressions of contemporaries, scholars, students, and relatives of the protagonist—characters who function as secondary figures in the composition of the work. This approach underscores the originality of the author's style and contributes to the complete representation of historical truth in the novel.

In many cases, historical novelists, out of admiration for their subjects, tend to over-idealize them or excessively embellish descriptions, ultimately damaging the structure of the novel. Despite Imam Maturidi's prominence and vast scholarly legacy in the Muslim East, the author refrains from overly emotional portrayals. Instead, he presents the scholar's memory, intellectual ability, and legacy through the natural flow of life, scientific debates, and actual historical and political developments. This approach provides a complete and holistic depiction of the scholar's internal and external worlds.

Regarding the educational significance of the novel and the portrayal of Imam Maturidi, Associate Professor Mas'udkhon Ismoilov of the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan notes: "What makes the novel particularly noteworthy is that, despite being about a praiseworthy and revered figure, the author avoids blind admiration or pompous praise. He portrays the dervish-like appearance and behavior of the protagonist with sincere language, showing how beneath a humble exterior lies a great heart, immense knowledge, and unwavering faith."

Indeed, Luqmon Bo'rixon's efforts, creative maturity, and stylistic originality in crafting the image of Imam Maturidi are clearly evident in the novel. While Imam Maturidi remains the central figure, the novel also provides a vivid portrayal of the era—marked by intense ideological and theological struggles within Islam. During the time of the Samanid dynasty, numerous non-Islamic movements such as the Mu'tazilites, Jabriyya, Murji'a, and Kharijites were

gaining ground, even influencing court circles and educational institutions. The novel thoroughly explores this complex and conflict-ridden historical setting.

Imam Maturidi, despite his fame throughout the Samanid state, distanced himself from royal courts and cultural centers, and refrained from participating in official gatherings. When newly appointed governor Khalid Khalaj Buronbiy sent emissaries to invite him to the court, Imam Maturidi declined and instead sent a letter through his student Javod. He lived a modest, solitary life in his village, teaching students and tending to a vineyard inherited from his father. Although well-versed in religious and secular sciences, he avoided public disputes and debates, preferring a quiet, contemplative lifestyle to avoid being targeted by disruptive groups.

This modest lifestyle did not diminish his stature; rather, it enhanced his reputation. The novel even recounts a moment when the Samanid ruler Ahmad ibn Ismail visited Imam Maturidi in secret, disguised as a dervish, to engage in personal conversation. Though Imam Maturidi is not constantly present throughout the narrative, he plays an active role in several climactic episodes—such as the royal assembly in Samarkand led by Ahmad ibn Ismail, where he engages in a theological debate with representatives of the Mu'tazila group. In this scene, Imam Maturidi refutes their philosophical and logical views with reasoned arguments based on the Qur'an and Hadith, demonstrating their contradictions with Islamic teachings. He calls for the rejection of these false beliefs and is awarded the title Imam al-Mutaqayyimin by the ruler in recognition of his deep insight and dedication to Islam.

CONCLUSION

a) Luqmon Bo'rixon's Imam Maturidi novel has been recognized as a significant literary event in recent years of Uzbek prose. It has garnered active engagement from the literary community and critics, particularly because the image of Imam Maturidi had not been artistically interpreted prior to this novel.

b) The writer, through creative maturity and meticulous study of historical and religious sources, successfully portrayed Imam Maturidi without departing from historical truth.

c) Despite the scholar's revered status and immense intellectual legacy in the Muslim East, the writer avoids excessive emotionalism, portraying his memory and legacy through the course of real-life events, scholarly debates, and actual historical and political processes—ensuring a complete depiction of both the inner and outer worlds of the scholar.

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