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THE NOVEL "YALDO KECHASI" ("THE NIGHT OF YALDA") AS AN EXAMPLE OF INTERTEXT

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Abstract: The article analyses the novel "Yaldo kechasi" (2025) by Xayriddin Sulton from the standpoint of the theory of intertextuality. The work is examined as an example of intertext through its hypertextual link with Abdulla Qodiriy's novel "O'tkan kunlar" ("Bygone Days"), the strategy of literary mystification (the found manuscript and false authorship), stylistic imitation, the incorporation of historical documents, letters and poetic texts into the fabric of the novel, and allusions and reminiscences. The study also elucidates the novel's character system and its interpretation of historical events on the basis of the principle of intertextuality, and substantiates that intertextuality is the leading means in the transformation of historical truth into artistic reality.

Keywords: intertextuality, "Yaldo kechasi", Xayriddin Sulton, "O'tkan kunlar" (Bygone Days), literary mystification, hypertextuality, paratextuality, allusion, reminiscence, historical novel.

The novel "Yaldo kechasi" ("The Night of Yalda") by Xayriddin Sulton, published in 2025, is being recognised as one of the brightest and most integral examples of the phenomenon of intertextuality in modern Uzbek prose. The distinctive feature of the work is that not only its separate elements, but its whole existence, its creative conception and its artistic structure rest upon intertextual relations. The novel enters into a continuous and multi-layered dialogue with "O'tkan kunlar" ("Bygone Days"), the first novel in Uzbek literature, written by Abdulla Qodiriy. It is precisely this feature that allows "Yaldo kechasi" to be analysed as a typical intertext that came into being – in Julia Kristeva's words – as "a mosaic of quotations" and through the "absorption and transformation" of another text. For this reason, studying the work from the standpoint of intertextuality becomes a necessary condition for a deep understanding of its artistic essence. The emergence of "Yaldo kechasi" was not accidental: it appeared at the very time when a hundred years had passed since the creation of Qodiriy's "O'tkan kunlar", as the fruit of nearly six years of the author's continuous creative labour. The presentation of the work, too, was symbolically held on 21 December – the date corresponding to yaldo kechasi, the longest night of the year – at a site dedicated to the memory of the victims of repression. These circumstances themselves directly connect the text of the novel with a particular historical, cultural and memorial context.

The intertextual nature of the novel is manifested, first of all, in its direct connection with "O'tkan kunlar". On the final pages of Qodiriy's work there is a brief note entitled "From the Writer" ("Yozg'uvchidan"), which concisely records that Yodgorbek, the son of the protagonist Otabek, died during the years of famine, leaving two grandsons – one a responsible official of the Soviet government, the other in the ranks of the Basmachi. It is precisely this note, consisting of only four sentences, that forms the plot foundation and the artistic "leaven" of "Yaldo kechasi". Such a relationship can be classed under the category of hypertextuality within Gérard Genette's theory of transtextuality: "O'tkan kunlar" is the hypotext (the base text), while "Yaldo kechasi" is the hypertext that grows out of it, reworks it and continues it. It is no coincidence that the author

himself initially described the work as the second book of "O‘tkan kunlar", then as an "appendix" to it, and even as a nazira (a poetic "response"). This also links the novel with the javobiya and nazira tradition of Eastern literature, for the nazira is, in essence, one text's creative response to another – a classical form of intertextual dialogue.

The most remarkable intertextual strategy of "Yaldo kechasi" is literary mystification. Concealing his own name, the author presents the work as if it were a discovered manuscript of Abdulla Qodiriy, an "artistic fiction based on historical documents". On the cover of the work only a modest note, "the author of the artistic fiction based on historical documents", is given, and the identity of the true creator is kept secret until the end of the presentation ceremony. According to the available information, the author wrote the preface in three different variants; in one of them the work is interpreted as an unknown manuscript found in a German archive by Ilyos Sobirov, an Uzbek émigré living in Berlin, which had reached that land in connection with the Turkestan Legion. Such a device of the "found manuscript" and false authorship builds a complex artistic game with the reader: it deliberately blurs the boundary between historical truth and artistic fiction, heightens the documentary credibility of the work, and at the same time binds it inseparably to Qodiriy's legacy. In essence, the mystification becomes a large paratextual and intertextual mechanism that "refers" the whole novel to Qodiriy's text. The consistency of this strategy was so strong that the name of the work's true author was revealed only at the close of the presentation – when the narrator (roviy) gave the final word to the writer. The author, meanwhile, held himself in the position of a translator or a copyist transcribing the manuscript, and symbolically attributed the authorship of the work to hundreds of his compatriots, both known and unknown, and to the entire Uzbek people. Such an approach revives Roland Barthes's idea of "the death of the author" in a distinctive way: the author as the single, sovereign source of the text is deliberately pushed into the background, and the work appears as a field where many voices, documents and memories intersect. In this way, literary mystification becomes not merely a technical device but a profound artistic means expressing the ideological conception of the work.

It should be noted that the device of the "found manuscript" and false authorship has a long history in world literature and is itself a distinctive form of intertextuality. Many works of world literature have made use of this technique – from the figure of the false author Cide Hamete Benengeli in Cervantes's "Don Quixote" to the interpretation of the found manuscript in Umberto Eco's novel "The Name of the Rose". The motifs of pseudo-translation, false authorship and the found manuscript are a tested means in literature of anchoring a text to another, supposedly "reliable" source and endowing it with historical and documentary weight. "Yaldo kechasi" joins this universal literary tradition and applies it on national soil – enriched with the figure of Qodiriy and the spirit of "O‘tkan kunlar". Thus the work stands simultaneously in dialogue with both national classical literature and world literary experience. This clearly demonstrates the nature of intertextuality as a means of linking a text to a broad cultural and literary context.

Another important layer of intertextuality in the novel is stylistic intertextuality. While preserving the spirit and style of "O‘tkan kunlar", Xayriddin Sulton creatively reconstructs the artistic devices characteristic of Qodiriy – wit, symbolism, historicity, imagery, folk expressions, the use of proverbs and sayings and playful words, and the depiction of customs and traditions. Even the narrative manner peculiar to Qodiriy, such as the author's intermittent intrusion into the account of events, is revived: just as in "O‘tkan kunlar" Qodiriy intervenes in the events with the phrase "Our Otabek", in "Yaldo kechasi" the author addresses the reader in exactly the same manner. Such stylistic reminiscences bind the work to the hypotext at the level of voice, intonation and artistic thought. This is a practical embodiment of the phenomenon of the "alien word" and of dialogism emphasised by Mikhail Bakhtin, in which the new text absorbs another's voice,

continues it and enriches it with new content. Such stylistic imitation is not simple copying but a creative process demanding great skill: having deeply mastered the linguistic units, tone and artistic thought of the hypotext, the author successfully applies that style to the narration of new events and characters. It is precisely for this reason that critics have highly appraised the work as a model of a creative approach to Qodiriy's style.

The character system of the work is also intertextual in essence and consists of a fusion of historical, prototypical and fictional characters. At the centre stands a character borrowed from "O‘tkan kunlar" – Yodgorbek, the spiritual heir of Otabek; in "Yaldo kechasi", even Otabek himself is reinterpreted in a new way as an unofficial adviser at the court of the Kokand khan and as a political figure striving to unite the khanates and bring them to reconciliation. Yodgorbek's sons – Ozodbek, who joined the liberation movement, and Odilbek, who moved among the invaders – symbolise the tragedy of the splitting in two of one family and, more broadly, of the whole nation. These characters grow out of the artistic world created by Qodiriy and live alongside historical figures and prototypes of the era, such as the Jadid enlighteners and the representatives of the national liberation movement. In this way the novel becomes an intersection, at the level of characters, of several literary and historical texts. Here the new interpretation of historical events is also noteworthy: whereas Qodiriy in "O‘tkan kunlar" showed the beginning of the national tragedy – the discord among the khanates and the political disintegration – "Yaldo kechasi" reveals the subsequent stages of this process: colonisation, Jadidism, the struggle for enlightenment, Soviet oppression and the trials of national memory. The reinterpretation of the figure of Otabek as a statesman striving to unite the khanates enriches the artistic world created by Qodiriy with new historical and philosophical meaning. Thus, in the work both characters and events are creatively transformed and continued in relation to the hypotext – which fully corresponds to intertextuality's principle of "absorption and transformation".

The documentary form of intertextuality is of particular importance in "Yaldo kechasi". The work was created on the basis of studying and selecting thousands of documents found in archives and collections, information from old newspapers and journals, letters and investigation files ("delo"s). The incorporation of non-fictional texts such as historical documents, press materials and personal letters into the fabric of the novel is one of the clearest and most observable forms of intertextuality. It is precisely through these means that historical truth is transformed into artistic truth: the author subordinates scattered and diverse sources to an integral artistic conception, reinterprets them and enriches them with new aesthetic meaning. Here the document is not merely evidence but an artistic element that brings the spirit of the age to life, ensures the credibility of the work and reinforces the author's idea. According to the available information, in the course of creating the work the scholar Bahodir Karim brought a rare, relevant material from Germany, and the manuscript was connected with one of the investigation files – the "delo" of Qurbon Beregin – which shows how thorough the documentary foundation underlying the novel is. The process of a historical document turning into an artistic text emerges as one of the most effective forms of intertextuality in "Yaldo kechasi", for it is precisely in this process that objective history merges with subjective-artistic interpretation and a new aesthetic wholeness comes into being. This phenomenon vividly manifests the central problem of the dissertation research – the dialectic of the transformation of historical truth into artistic reality.

The paratextual layer of the novel likewise carries rich intertextual meaning. First of all, the title itself – "Yaldo kechasi" – signifies the longest and darkest night of the year and becomes a symbolic emblem of the era in which a despotic regime held sway and the enlightened figures of the nation were subjected to repression. This symbol is further strengthened by the choice, as an epigraph, of a couplet by Muhammad Sharif Gulxaniy – a depiction of a dark night with no visible

dawn and no audible call of the muezzin. The epigraph, the title, the several variants of the preface, and the note "artistic fiction based on historical documents" – all of these are vivid manifestations of the phenomenon of paratextuality described by Genette; they specially orient the reader towards the reception of the text and link the work with other texts. The inclusion of a classical poetic couplet as an epigraph is yet another intertextual thread connecting the novel to the tradition of classical literature. The image of "the night of Yalda" in the title is also meaningfully linked with the site where the presentation of the work was held – a locality where, in the 1930s, the enlightened figures of the nation were executed, formerly called Alvastiko‘prik and now dedicated to the memory of the victims of repression. In this way the paratextual elements deepen the symbolic layer of the text and connect it with a real historical place and the memory of the national tragedy.

Allusion and reminiscence occupy a broad place in the work. The novel directly alludes to the life and work of Abdulla Qodiriy and to his literary legacy: Qodiriy's novel "Amir Umarxonning kanizi" ("The Concubine of Amir Umarkhan"), which he planned but never wrote, Habibulla Qodiriy's memoir "Otam haqida" ("About My Father"), and historical facts connected with the writer are reflected to various degrees in the text of the work. In addition, the novel broadly alludes to the history of Turkestan in the second half of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century – to the Tsarist and then the Soviet colonial periods, the Jadid movement, the national liberation struggle and the era of repression. These allusions link the novel not only with literary but also with historical and cultural texts, expanding the scope of its meaning. In this sense "Yaldo kechasi" is a complex field where literary, historical and documentary texts intersect.

The intertextual essence of "Yaldo kechasi" is also manifested in its ideological-thematic layer. Through the fate of three generations, the novel raises the tragic history of the nation, the struggle for freedom and enlightenment, and the problem of national memory, and thereby enters into dialogue with a whole historical epoch – the national "night of Yalda". The novel's logical continuation of the path of historical-national thought begun by Qodiriy, and its building of a bridge between past and present, present it not as merely a single work but as a text standing in dialogue with the entire national literary-historical memory. This once again confirms intertextuality's capacity for linking a text with a broad cultural context. The sorrowful yet hopeful spirit of the work is also born of this intertextual dialogue: while depicting the gravest trials that befell the nation, the novel at the same time affirms that the ideas of freedom, enlightenment and justice do not die out, and that the spirit and thought of the executed ancestors cannot be extinguished. This idea, too, is perceived as a continuation of the motifs of national identity and enlightenment in "O‘tkan kunlar" – that is, ideologically as well, the work continues the dialogue with the hypotext and enriches it on the ground of new historical experience.

At the presentation of the novel and in the first scholarly-critical discussions, it was precisely its intertextual nature that was acknowledged. Literary scholars – N. Jabborov, I. G‘afurov, X. Qodiriy and others – appraised the work as a wholly new artistic phenomenon created through literary mystification and based on a creative approach to Qodiriy's style. These assessments confirm the singular place of "Yaldo kechasi" in Uzbek prose and the fact that it is built upon the principle of intertextuality. The first scholarly-publicistic articles about the work have also begun to appear; in particular, Ikrom Iskandar's article "Yaldo kechasi: Conclusions and Lessons" elaborated in detail on the history of the work's creation, the three variants of the preface, and the method of literary mystification. In the speeches of scholars and writers such as Sh. Rizayev, B. Karim and S. Sayyid, the work's creative attitude towards Qodiriy's style, its historical foundations and the richness of its symbolic layer were also specially emphasised. This shows that the scholarly discourse only now taking shape around "Yaldo kechasi" is itself directed at the

intertextual nature of the work. Thus the work has been received as an example of intertext not only in the view of writers but also in that of researchers.

In conclusion, the novel "Yaldo kechasi" is a rare work that embodies almost all the principal concepts of the theory of intertextuality – hypertextuality, paratextuality, allusion, reminiscence, stylistic imitation, the incorporation of documentary and poetic texts, and literary mystification – within a single integral artistic system. Its artistic value is inseparable from intertextual relations: the work enters into dialogue with "O‘tkan kunlar" at the level of plot, character, style and idea, harmonises within itself national classical tradition and world literary experience, and transforms historical documents into artistic truth. For this reason "Yaldo kechasi" is an extremely convenient and rich object for study from the standpoint of intertextuality, and its analysis offers wide scope for a new understanding of the poetics of the modern Uzbek historical novel. Moreover, the example of this work allows one to observe the process of intertextuality's transformation from a purely theoretical concept into a practical method for analysing a concrete artistic text. The study of "Yaldo kechasi" as an example of intertext in Uzbek literary scholarship serves to shed new light on the formation, upon the ground of intertextual relations, not only of this work but of the entire national tradition of historical-novel writing.

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