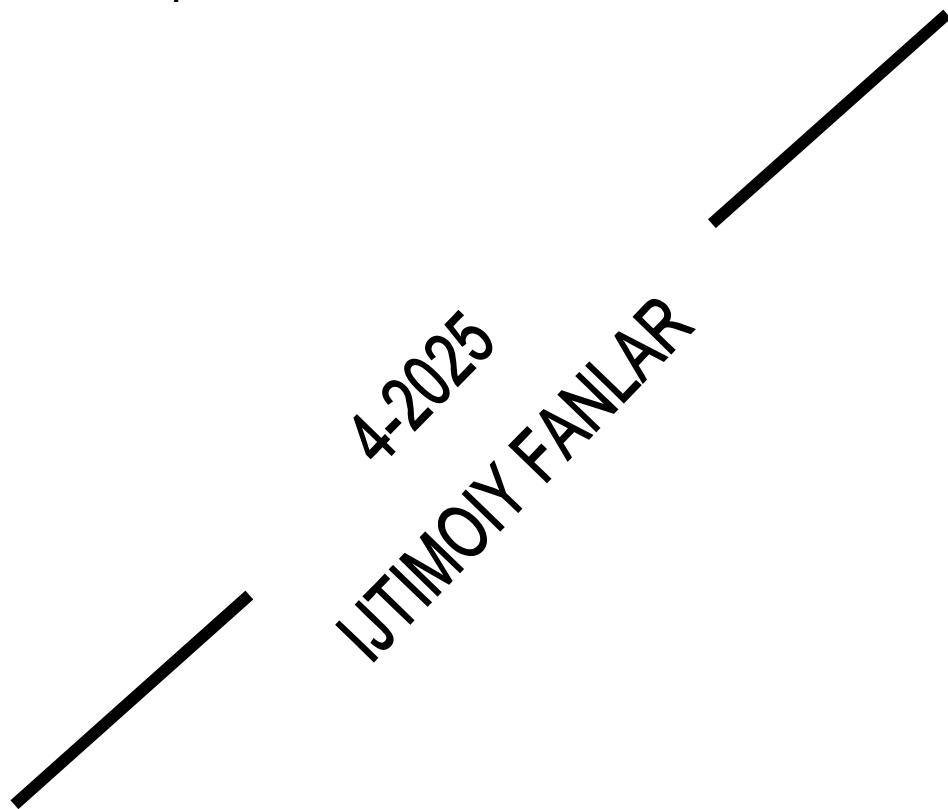


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THE PORTRAYAL OF MODERN WOMEN IN BAHMANYOR'S *SHAHANSHAH*: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF URBAN AND RURAL FEMININITY IN TAJIK LITERATURE

BAHMANIYOR SHOHANSHOHIDA ZAMONAVIY AYOLLAR TASVIRI: TOJIK ADABIYOTIDAGI SHAHAR VA QISHLOQ AYOLLARINING QIYOSIY TAHLILI

ИЗОБРАЖЕНИЕ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ЖЕНЩИНЫ В РОМАНЕ БАХМАНЁРА «ШАХАНШАХ»: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ГОРОДСКОЙ И СЕЛЬСКОЙ ЖЕНСТВЕННОСТИ В ТАДЖИКСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

Shahzoda Nazarova

Independent Researcher Alumna, Samarkand State University Honorary Member, Turan Academy of Sciences

Abstract

*Bahmanyor, a prominent Tajik male author, stands out for his nuanced exploration of women and femininity in his literary works, particularly in *Shahanshah*. This novel introduces the archetype of the modern urban Tajik woman, contrasting her with traditional rural women and historical female figures. Through the characters of Chisto and Sito, two sisters embodying contemporary freedoms, Bahmanyor examines the evolving social liberties of Tajik women. This paper analyzes the depiction of these urban women, their independence, and their juxtaposition with historical and rural female archetypes, situating *Shahanshah* within the broader context of Tajik and post-Soviet literature.*

Annotatsiya

Taniqli tojik muallifi Bahmanyor o'zining adabiy asarlarda, xususan, Shahanshohda ayollik va ayollikni nozik tadqiq etishi bilan ajralib turadi. Ushbu roman zamonaviy shaharlik tojik ayolining arxetipini tanishtiradi, uni an'anaviy qishloq ayollari va tarixiy ayol siymolariga qarama-qarshi qo'yadi. Bahmanyor zamonaviy erkinliklarni o'zida mujassam etgan ikki opa-singil Chisto va Sito obrazlari orqali tojik ayollarining rivojlanayotgan ijtimoiy erkinliklarni ko'rib chiqadi. Ushbu maqolada Shahanshohni tojik va postsovet adabiyotining keng kontekstida joylashtirgan holda, bu shahar ayollari tasviri, ularning mustaqilligi va tarixiy va qishloq ayol arxetiplari bilan yondashish tahlil qilinadi.

Аннотация

Бахманёр, известный таджикский писатель-мужчина, выделяется своим тонким исследованием женщин и женственности в своих литературных произведениях, особенно в романе «Шаханшах». Этот роман представляет архетип современной городской таджикской женщины, противопоставляя её традиционным сельским женщинам и историческим женским фигурам. Через образы Чисто и Сито, двух сестёр, олицетворяющих современные свободы, Бахманёр исследует эволюцию социальных свобод таджикских женщин. В данной статье анализируется образ этих городских женщин, их независимость и их сопоставление с историческими и сельскими женскими архетипами, помещая образ Шаханшах в более широкий контекст таджикской и постсоветской литературы.

Key words: *Bahmanyor, Chisto and Sito, Shahanshah, modern freedom, urban women, rural female archetypes, historical female figures, novel.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Bahmanyor, Chisto va Sito, Shahanshoh, zamonaviy erkinlik, shahar ayollari, qishloq ayol arxetiplari, tarixiy ayol siymolari, roman.*

Ключевые слова: Бахманёр, Чисто и Сито, Шаханшах, современная свобода, городские женщины, архетипы сельских женщин, исторические женские фигуры, роман.

INTRODUCTION

Bahmanyor is among the few male Tajik writers who have extensively explored the theme of women and femininity. His earlier work, *Sarmaddeh*, is celebrated for its vivid portrayal of rural women's lives, capturing their daily experiences with intricate detail. In contrast, *Shahanshah* shifts focus to urban women, presenting a modern, cosmopolitan femininity that challenges traditional norms. This paper examines how Bahmanyor constructs the image of the modern Tajik woman through the characters Chisto and Sito, comparing their portrayal with historical and rural female figures in his oeuvre and other Tajik literary works. It argues that *Shahanshah* serves as a critical contribution to Tajik literature by introducing the urban woman as a symbol of social progress, while also reflecting the tensions between tradition and modernity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Urban Woman in *Shahanshah*. In *Shahanshah*, Bahmanyor introduces Chisto and Sito, two sisters who epitomize the modern urban Tajik woman. Unlike the rural women of *Sarmaddeh*, who are rooted in village traditions and customs, Chisto and Sito embody a cosmopolitan lifestyle. They live independently in a city apartment, free from parental oversight, as their parents work abroad. Their social circle includes male friends, such as Chisto's dance instructor and their enigmatic neighbor Bobokalon, reflecting a break from traditional gender segregation.

The novel also features a domesticated dog, a symbol of modernity, contrasting with the traditional role of dogs as guard animals or shepherds' companions in *Sarmaddeh*. In *Shahanshah*, the dog is a pet, devoid of utilitarian function, underscoring the urban setting's detachment from rural traditions. Historically, dogs in Tajik literature, including Bahmanyor's works, often symbolized loyalty or protection, but in *Shahanshah*, the dog's role as a companion highlights the sisters' modern sensibilities.

Characterization of Chisto and Sito. Chisto, the elder sister, is portrayed as bold, assertive, and quintessentially feminine, while Sito, the younger sister, is more delicate and reserved, retaining traces of traditional Tajik femininity. Both sisters, educated in Russian, frequently use Russian phrases and exhibit behaviors influenced by Russian and Western cultural models. Their linguistic and cultural hybridity positions them as progressive figures, contributing to the refinement of the Tajik language through neologisms and intellectual discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The novel's narrator, a stand-in for the author, develops a complex relationship with the sisters. His initial curiosity about Chisto evolves into a one-sided romantic attraction, while his preference for Sito reveals a tension between his traditional inclinations and the sisters' modern outlook. This dynamic underscores the narrator's struggle to reconcile his traditional Eastern masculinity with the sisters' postmodern freedoms.

The Role of Modernity and Tradition. Bahmanyor's portrayal of Chisto and Sito reflects the slow but steady modernization of Tajik society. The sisters' independence, multilingualism, and engagement with global cultural practices—such as drinking coffee, enjoying wine, and appreciating intellectual cinema—position them as pioneers of a new Tajik femininity. However, the narrator's occasional discomfort with their postmodern choices reveals a lingering traditional mindset, highlighting the tension between modernity and cultural heritage.

The novel also explores unconventional relationships, such as Chisto's friendship with a homosexual dance instructor, which challenges the narrator's traditional worldview. Through these interactions, Bahmanyor critiques the rigidity of traditional Tajik masculinity, suggesting a need for greater openness to diverse identities.

Critical Reception and Literary Significance. While *Shahanshah* has not achieved the widespread acclaim of *Sarmaddeh*, it remains a significant contribution to Tajik literature for its portrayal of the urban woman. The novel's focus on Chisto and Sito as archetypes of modern Dushanbe women—educated, multilingual, and culturally progressive—marks a departure from traditional literary representations. However, the novel's narrative style lacks the poetic finesse and coherence of *Sarmaddeh*, possibly reflecting Bahmanyor's intent to adopt a new expressive mode suited to the urban context.

The collaborative nature of the novel's creation, involving Chisto, Sito, and Bobokalon, further underscores its innovative approach. These characters not only shape the narrative but also challenge the narrator's traditional perspectives, enriching the text's exploration of modernity.

CONCLUSION

Bahmanyor's *Shahanshah* is a pivotal work in Tajik literature, introducing the archetype of the modern urban woman through the characters of Chisto and Sito. By contrasting their independence and cultural hybridity with historical and rural female figures, Bahmanyor highlights the evolving role of women in Tajik society. While the novel may not match the literary finesse of *Sarmaddeh*, its contribution to the portrayal of urban femininity and its critique of traditional norms make it a valuable text for understanding the trajectory of Tajik and post-Soviet literature. Future studies should revisit *Shahanshah* to reassess its place in the canon and its impact on the representation of women in Tajik literary discourse.

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