

AREAL FOLKLORISTICS AND THE RESEARCH OF OXUNJON SAFAROV

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Annotation: This article discusses the principles of areal folkloristics and analyzes the work of scholars who have conducted research in this field. In particular, it acknowledges the contributions of the folklorist Oxunjon Safarov, who has carried out effective work in collecting, contextually analyzing, and publishing samples of Bukhara folklore. The article also reflects on the scholar's areal research.

Keywords. Areal folkloristics, cartographic method, questionnaire, research, local, source, material.

As science continues to develop rapidly, the emergence of new scholarly directions and concepts in contemporary Uzbek folkloristics is becoming a necessity. The appearance or strengthening of certain approaches in folkloristic research is closely connected with society's attitude toward folk creativity. Today, studying folkloric materials from an areal perspective, identifying their unique local features, defining their boundaries of distribution, and examining them within the broader folklore context is of great importance.

The term *areal* comes from Latin, meaning "territory," "surface," or "space," and refers to the territorial distribution of a particular fact or set of facts. The Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language gives the following definition: "Areal (Latin *area* — territory, space): 1) the area in which a plant or animal species, group, or family is distributed; 2) the area in which linguistic phenomena—phonetic, lexical, etc.—are distributed; linguistic areal" [1, 35]. Thus, the term *areal* expresses a concept related to territory.

In modern scholarship, areal linguistics continues to develop. Today, the linguistic field dedicated to studying linguistic areals and their characteristics has developed its own methods. In recent years, areal methods have made significant contributions to the progress of linguistics, ethnography, anthropology, and archaeology. Although this term, when applied to folklore, still requires clarification—even if it represents a fundamental concept of general areal theory—its meaning in folkloristics can be formulated as follows: the *folklore areal* is the territorially defined scope of a specific folkloric fact or set of facts, determined with regard to artistic-aesthetic, historical-ethnographic, dialectal, and social parameters. Therefore, territorial limitation constitutes the main feature of the object of areal folkloristic research.

Certain ideas concerning areal research of Uzbek folklore first appeared in the 1980s [2, 44]. In her scholarly article, S. Shodiyeva proposed that applying areal research methods to folkloristics could help resolve many complex issues. She suggested using the cartographic method based on folkloric materials collected from specific regions. It may be said that the attempt to study folklore samples in spatial terms contributed to the introduction of areal methods into folkloristics. Among these methods, the cartographic method holds particular significance.

"This method is used to collect and systematize large amounts of factual material that reflects a people's traditional material culture, customs, and traditions, as well as various dialect features, and to identify the specific laws related to ethnolinguistic processes." The first to use the cartographic method to determine the distribution and degree of documentation of ethnofolkloric phenomena were Friedrich Ratzel and Wilhelm Pesser. In folkloristics, the emergence of this method is associated with the works of the prominent French folklorist Arnold van Gennep. In Uzbek folkloristics, the method first appears in the research of G'ozzi Olim Yunusov and Hodi Zarif. For example, in H. Zarif's manual "A Guide for Collecting Dictionaries and Terms," published in 1934, a section titled "Program" includes questionnaires designed for collecting

various kinds of data. These questionnaires were intended for gathering information on plants, animals, meteorology, astronomy, dwellings, household items, food and drinks, clothing, ornaments, means of transportation, agriculture, gardening, livestock breeding, beekeeping, poultry farming, hunting, floriculture, handicrafts, trade, medicine and folk healing, tribal and kinship structures, weddings, funerals, religion, holidays, games, musical instruments, melodies and dances, and oral literature [3, 98]. Thus, H. Zarifov was the first to establish the tradition of collecting materials in Uzbek folkloristics using the cartographic method.

The primary purpose of the cartographic method is to study folklore works or specific genres from an areological perspective. In our view, the cartographic method forms the foundation of areal folkloristics as well. Areal study of oral folk creativity allows for a comprehensive exploration of local features within a given region and enables comparative analysis. Although no scholarly research in Uzbek folkloristics has been created solely on the basis of the cartographic method, some aspects of this method have indeed been used in folkloristic studies. For example, from the perspective of children's folkloristics, the folklore of young children in the Namangan, Fergana, Khorezm, and Surxondaryo regions has been studied separately.

The Bukhara oasis also enriches the treasury of intangible cultural heritage with its unique and distinctive folklore samples. Analyzing and collecting them is one of the important tasks facing folklorists of Bukhara. In this regard, it is appropriate to mention the renowned scholar Oxunjon Safarov, who devoted his entire life to his homeland, his nation, and the development of science. His commitment to collecting and studying the folklore of the Bukhara oasis at the regional level reflects his love for his native land and his devotion to scholarship. As he undertook this responsibility, he thoroughly studied previous works in the field. He deeply absorbed the ideas of Narshakhi ("History of Bukhara"), Avfi Bukhari ("Javome' ul-hikoyat"), Abdulqodir Savdo ("Mujhika"), as well as the works of Abu Ali ibn Sino, Farobi, Abdurauf Fitrat, H. Zarif, G'. Yunusov, and T. Mirzayev. As a result, the scholar developed his own method and approach to collecting the folklore of the Bukhara oasis.

Regarding the diverse forms and genres of Bukhara folk creativity, O. Safarov concludes: "This clearly confirms the existence of genres ranging from incantations based on the magic of the word, to myths and legends, stories and anecdotes, the most popular small genres—proverbs and riddles, and up to epic masterpieces such as epics and fairy tales" [4, 63]. This observation confirms the antiquity and rich variety of Bukhara folklore.

By the 1970s, the study of the regional features of Bukhara folklore and its place within the broader context of Uzbek folklore was led by Professor Oxunjon Safarov of Bukhara State University. Each year, expeditions were organized with students of Uzbek Philology to various parts of the oasis. Based on available sources, O. Safarov's areal research may be divided into two categories:

1. Areal research on children's folklore
2. Areal research on adult folklore

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