

**THE REFLECTION OF UZBEK ORAL FOLK TRADITION IN THE SHORT STORIES  
OF SHODMONQUL SALOM (On the Example of the Short Story “Bibi Seshanba”)**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the distinctive artistic world of Shodmonqul Salom’s literary works, with particular emphasis on the reflection of elements of Uzbek oral folk tradition in the short story “Bibi Seshanba.” Through the use of proverbs, sayings, folk expressions, and poetic imagery characteristic of legends and fairy tales, the author’s portrayal of national spirit is revealed. The worldview of the characters, the vividness of the depicted events, and the emotional expressiveness of the images are shown to be deeply rooted in folklore elements. The study examines Shodmonqul Salom’s creative mastery in utilizing folk language, national mentality, and folkloric motifs, thereby revealing the artistic and aesthetic value of the short story.

**Key words:** “Bibi Seshanba,” Afghan–Soviet War, kurta, “The Orphan Girl” parable, Shodmonqul Salom, short story, ritual.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqolada Shodmonqul Salom ijodining o‘ziga xos badiiy olami, xususan, “Bibi seshanba” hikoyasida xalq og‘zaki ijodi unsurlarining aks etishi tahlil qilinadi. Asarda qo‘llangan maqol, matal, xalqona iboralar, rivoyat va ertaklarga xos poetik tasvirlar orqali yozuvchining milliy ruhni qanday ifodalagani ochib beriladi. Hikoya qahramonlarining dunyoqarashi, tasvirlangan voqealarning badiiy bo‘yoqdorligi va obrazlar ta’sirchanligida xalq og‘zaki ijodiga mansub unsurlarning tutgan o‘rni yoritiladi. Tadqiqot davomida Shodmonqul Salomning xalqona til, milliy mentalitet va folklor motivlaridan ijodiy foydalanish mahorati o‘rganilib, hikoyaning badiiy-estetik qiymati ochib beriladi.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** “Bibi seshanba”, Afg‘on-Sovet urushi, kurta, “Yetim qiz” matali, Shodmonqul Salom, hikoya, marosim.

**Аннотация:** В данной статье анализируется своеобразный художественный мир творчества Шодмонкула Салома, в частности отражение элементов устного народного творчества в рассказе «Биби Сешанба». Через использование пословиц, поговорок, народных выражений, а также поэтических образов, характерных для легенд и сказаний, раскрывается, каким образом писатель передаёт национальный дух. Показана роль элементов устного народного творчества в формировании мировоззрения героев рассказа, художественной выразительности изображаемых событий и эмоциональной воздействующей силы образов. В ходе исследования изучается мастерство Шодмонкула Салома в творческом использовании народного языка, национального менталитета и фольклорных мотивов, а также раскрывается художественно-эстетическая ценность рассказа.

**Ключевые слова:** «Биби Сешанба», Афгано-Советская война, курта, поговорка «Сиротка», Шодмонкул Салом, рассказ, обряд.

One of Shodmonqul Salom's short stories that has firmly taken root in the hearts of readers is "The Last Day of Childhood." Initially, the author titled this work "Bibi Seshanba." Later, under the editorship of Murod Abdullayev, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper "O'zbekiston adabiyoti va san'ati," the title was changed to "The Last Day of Childhood."

"Bibi Seshanba" is a ritual performed exclusively by women and is regarded as a mushkulkushod ceremony, meaning a rite intended to resolve difficulties. According to several historical sources, the origins of "Bibi Seshanba" are connected to the image of a goddess whose roots trace back to Anahita (Nohid), a deity widely worshipped in Central Asia and the Middle East prior to the advent of Islam. Anahita was considered the goddess of agriculture, livestock, fertility, and abundance. It was believed that humans, animals, birds, and all living creatures were subject to her power. Over time, this deity transformed into the image of "Bibi Mushkul Kushod," a maternal figure believed to relieve people from hardships. Other sources indicate that the ritual was widespread among many Turkic peoples. In Turkestan it is known as Bibi Seshanba; in Turkey as Payshanba Qari (Peyshenbe-kari) or Parshamba Pari; in Iran as Bibi Hur or Bibi Nur; in Afghanistan as Bibi Risinda or Bibi Charxi; and among the Uyghurs as Seshamba Bibi<sup>1</sup>.

In the Surkhandarya region, this ritual has been particularly widespread. It is traditionally performed on Tuesdays to pray for the happiness and prosperity of male family members, for the smooth progress of their affairs, and during wartime, for the safe return of sons or husbands. As part of the ritual, seven chalpak, seven obi non, and various rice-based and dough-based dishes are prepared. Plates filled with flour are placed in the four corners of the room where the ceremony is held. Flour symbolizes sustenance, purity, and peace. Therefore, one of the main symbols of "Bibi Seshanba" is the supra (ritual cloth). Various customs related to sifting flour are performed on the supra.

The short story itself is not directly about the "Bibi Seshanba" ritual; rather, the ritual functions merely as a narrative detail. The work primarily depicts a young boy named Tursun realizing that war is not an ordinary game. In this regard, the title "The Last Day of Childhood" more accurately reflects the essence of the story.

The story has a realist character. In Uzbek literature, this tradition of realism in short stories was initiated by Cho'lpon and Abdulla Qodiriy in the early twentieth century, particularly in the stories "Doctor Muhammadiyor" and "Uloqda."

It is well known that the Afghan–Soviet War took place between 1979 and 1989, during which soldiers from Uzbekistan were mobilized. Among them, a significant number came from Termez, a city bordering Afghanistan. The events of the story are depicted through a "Bibi Seshanba" ceremony held at the home of one of the Termez soldiers.

The events occur in autumn, as indicated by the sight of migrating birds in the sky and the drooping mulberry branches. The main character is Tursun. His exact age is not specified; however, considering that he is still too small to mount a donkey on his own, can put on his boots by himself, and plays war games with a wooden gun, he can be assumed to be around seven or eight years old. The story is narrated from his perspective.

“Only women go there. What business do you have there? Get lost,” my mother shouted as she stepped onto the veranda through the low doorway. I had not yet finished putting on one of my boots, so I took it in my hand and hid behind my grandmother. Once again, my grandmother came to my rescue:

“He’s just a crumb of a child, let him be. He’ll go and come back on his own. That’s what ‘running toward the place one fears’ means.”

Muttering under her breath, my mother led the white donkey with felt in its ears to the platform near the tandoor. My grandmother mounted the donkey with ease, and my mother lifted me and seated me behind her, grumbling half-jokingly: “This beggar child doesn’t even know how to ride a donkey.”

I grinned at my mother.<sup>2</sup>

The grandmother is portrayed as a woman of great life experience and eloquence, which is evident from the proverbs and sayings she uses. The proverb “running toward the place one fears” serves as a fitting response to her irritated daughter-in-law, leaving the latter with no choice but to grumble quietly. The word *tilamish* can be interpreted in two ways:

a child obtained through prayers;

someone who is asking or begging.

“The donkey jerked suddenly, and I clutched my grandmother’s kurta tightly. We set off to Oysuluv’s house for the Bibi Seshanba ritual. Their home lies along a mulberry grove: on one side mulberries, on the other cotton fields. The gentle donkey walks steadily along the narrow footpath in between. The drooping mulberry branches hinder our way.”<sup>2</sup>

A vivid image forms before the reader’s eyes: an elderly woman riding a donkey and a child clinging to her clothing. At this point, the word *kurta* draws attention. A *kurta* is a traditional outer garment worn by women over their dresses, sewn with lining from fabrics such as atlas, adras, or bekasam. In the Surkhandarya region, it is often made from janda fabric. The sleeves are long, and the collar resembles that of a men’s *chopon*. Padding is placed along the front edges. Women wear the *kurta* over their headscarves. Middle-aged women tend to wear lighter colors, while elderly women prefer darker fabrics, allowing one to infer age from color choice.

The narrow village path accessible only to pedestrians is flanked by mulberry and cotton fields. This detail is not accidental. During the colonial period, such landscapes were common throughout Uzbekistan. Mulberry trees were planted along roads to support silkworm breeding. Although the drooping branches often obstructed travelers, no one dared to cut them.

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