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THE ROLE AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES OF THE "KARAKALPAKFILM" STUDIO IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEKISTAN'S NATIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY

Khujaniyazov Uktam Yeshbayevich
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Historical Sciences Head of the Department of Law and Social Sciences and Humanities Karakalpakstan Academic Lyceum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the development of cinema art in Karakalpakstan during the years of independence and the achievements of the "Karakalpakfilm" studio. It examines the establishment of the "Karakalpakfilm" film studio, its activities, and its achievements from a historical and analytical perspective. Particular attention is paid to the impact of state programs and reforms aimed at supporting national cinema during the years of independence on the studio's activities. The article highlights the practical contribution of the "Karakalpakfilm" studio not only to the development of cinema in the region but also to the advancement of film culture throughout the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Karakalpakfilm, culture, documentary film, art, feature film, full-length film, dubbing, newsreel, screen, film festival, victims of repression.

INTRODUCTION

It should be noted that in recent years, extensive renewal and modernization processes have been actively implemented in the fields of culture and art, alongside other sectors of our country. Particular attention is being paid to addressing shortcomings and challenges in the fields of cinema and theatre. This can also be observed in the speech delivered by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at a meeting with representatives of the country's creative intellectual community in August 2017. As he stated, "At present, we allocate billions of soums from the state budget to the film industry every year" \[1, p. 197\], demonstrating the considerable attention and support provided by the state to this sector. He also emphasized that "If we intend to make the name of Uzbekistan known throughout the world, we must achieve this primarily through the art of cinema" [1, p. 193].

The creative team of "Karakalpakfilm," which has always recognized the importance of these ideas in its artistic activities, has been working together with dedication to fulfil its sacred duty to the Motherland. Through their creative work, they have contributed to educating the people and younger generations in the spirit of patriotism, loyalty to their nation, and respect for national values. They have also sought to promote the development of well-rounded individuals capable of contributing to the establishment of a democratic state and a just society, in accordance with the reforms pursued by the state and the President.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

During the years of independence, the creative team of "Karakalpakfilm" has sought to explore various aspects of regional life and reflect the diverse cultural, historical, and social characteristics of Karakalpakstan on the screen. In this regard, the studio has achieved significant accomplishments.

The development of the "Karakalpakfilm" studio during the years of independence was examined through the study and analysis of archival materials, information published in the press, and statistical indicators. In addition, scientific articles published in academic journals by authors such as M. Abdreymov, A. Askarov, G. Tajadinova, and B. Madiyarov were reviewed and analyzed [2].

DISCUSSION

It is important to emphasize that during the 1990s, when "Karakalpakfilm" was initially established as an independent film studio, it retained the capacity to produce four newsreels and four documentary films, as had been the case in the previous period.

RESULTS

After Uzbekistan gained independence, the creative team of the "Karakalpakfilm" studio experienced a significant increase in enthusiasm and professional activity. Interest in national values and a strong sense of responsibility for promoting them among the public became an important duty of every member of the team towards their nation. As a result, during the subsequent years of 1991–1993, the studio managed to produce between 10 and 15 films, while from 2004 onwards, it gained the opportunity to produce 15–20 documentary films annually and release 4–6 issues of the "Karakalpakstan" newsreel magazine.

Furthermore, encouraged by the attention, care, and support provided by the President and the state, the "Karakalpakfilm" team gradually began producing full-length feature films independently, with technical assistance from the "Uzbekkino" studio.

The production of full-length feature films became possible in the history of "Karakalpakfilm" only during the years of independence. Previously, the studio had mainly produced short feature films and gained some experience in this field. In 1990, the films "Gum-gum" (screenplay by O. Abdirahmanov and M. Tuychiev), "Tiqin" (screenplay by O. Abdurahmanov), and "Qaytish" (by T. Kalimbetov) were released [3, p. 8].

In addition, studio employees were previously involved in dubbing certain foreign and films produced by fraternal nations into the Karakalpak language. They translated Indian films such as "Mother's Love," "Let Him Not Be Convicted," "The Honour of My Wife," and "Struggle for Love," as well as the Kyrgyzfilm production "The Stormy Station," into Karakalpak [3, p. 8].

Another noteworthy achievement is that documentary films and issues of the "Karakalpakstan" newsreel produced before independence were predominantly created in Russian. Following the granting of official state language status to the Karakalpak language on December 1, 1989, and as a result of the opportunities created by independence, films produced from 1990 onwards increasingly began to be created directly in the Karakalpak language.

Previously, it had become common practice to produce most films either in Russian or in both Russian and Karakalpak. Approximately 60–70% of documentary films were released in Russian. However, the period of independence created new opportunities for the development of national cinema and the wider use of the Karakalpak language in filmmaking.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of “Karakalpakfilm” during the years of independence is that the studio addressed topics in its works that had been impossible to explore during the former Soviet period and were considered forbidden under the totalitarian regime. It produced a number of films devoted to these previously restricted subjects.

An analysis of the film productions created by the studio demonstrates that, during the years of independence, “Karakalpakfilm” paid particular attention to the following themes:

1. Promoting independence and the socio-political policies pursued by the independent Republic of Uzbekistan;
2. Addressing global issues of national and international significance;
3. Promoting customs, traditions, and cultural practices that reflect the national identity and uniqueness of the Karakalpak people;
4. Highlighting individuals who were subjected to political repression throughout the nation's history or whose activities had previously been unfairly evaluated;
5. Devoting films to prominent figures of the region, institutions, enterprises, the lifestyle of the local population, and various professions;
6. Commemorating significant historical dates, anniversaries, and important historical events;
7. Promoting achievements in literature and art, as well as exploring human psychology, moral values, and positive personal qualities.

Through these thematic directions, the studio produced a number of engaging, educational, and exemplary films that contributed to preserving historical memory, promoting national cultural values, and enriching the spiritual and artistic life of society. The greatest achievement of “Karakalpakfilm” was the production of the full-length feature film “Tanka” in 2002, independently by the studio, with the participation of Karakalpak actors and based on a screenplay written by a local screenwriter. The screenplay was written by M. Nizanov, directed by T. Kalimbetov, and cinematography was carried out by D. Abdullaev \[4, p. 147\]. The film gained widespread recognition for its humorous portrayal of Karakalpak national identity, customs and traditions, the simplicity and generosity of the people, humorous scenes from everyday life, and the trusting and sincere nature of local people. It was also intended to instil feelings of kindness, compassion, and mutual respect among young people.

The film quickly won the affection of cinema audiences and became a popular production regularly broadcast on the central television channels of Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan. It also secured a worthy place in the film collection of the independent Republic of Uzbekistan. Its authors received the second prize in the competition organized by the State Joint-Stock Company “Uzbekkino” for the best film screenplays, as well as the Berdaq State Prize.

Inspired by this success, the film studio's creative team went on to produce the films “O‘g‘ri” (“The Thief”) and “Kurort” (“The Resort”), which also made a strong impression on cinema audiences [5]. A significant part of “Karakalpakfilm's” productions consists of the “Karakalpakstan” newsreel. This newsreel is released at least four or five times a year. Its distinctive feature is the diversity of its subject matter, covering events and developments in various spheres of life. These include reports about particular places and individuals, historical dates, anniversaries, the animal and plant worlds, achievements in different fields, organized social events, and many other topics.

For example, the first issue of 1993 was devoted to the establishment of the "Ecosan" Foundation, while the second issue of the same year covered a theatrical performance based on the epic "Sharyar". The second issue of 1995 focused on the activities of the "Boday To'qay" National Nature Reserve, and the first issue of 2004 presented the landscapes of "Aqcha Ko'l". Special issues No. 3-1 from 1993 and 1994 covered the events "Khirmon–93" and "Khirmon–94" \[6\]. One of the 1998 issues was devoted to saigas, the second issue of 2001 focused on the "Progress" educational centre, and the second issue of 1994 covered the meetings of the presidents of Central Asian republics in Nukus. As a chronicle-based audiovisual production, the newsreel seeks to cover all aspects of regional life, and it has largely succeeded in fulfilling this objective. Another noteworthy feature of "Karakalpakfilm" is its distinctive approach to documentary filmmaking. Initially, a particular event or development is presented in a newsreel format in the "Karakalpakstan" newsreel. Subsequently, the same subject is studied in greater detail, scientifically substantiated, and transformed into a documentary film.

Thus, the newsreel serves as an initial stage in the production of documentary films. In this way, the 1993 newsreel covering the theatrical performance "Sharyar" became the basis for the documentary film "Our Epic Is Our History". Similarly, the 1995 second issue of the "Boday To'qay" newsreel provided the foundation for the documentary film "Ikkovi". The chronicle footage of Karakalpakstan's artists presented in the 1994 newsreel also served as a basis for the 1995 documentary film "Artists of Karakalpakstan". Undoubtedly, the reputation and prestige achieved by "Karakalpakfilm" during the years of independence were largely ensured by the full-length feature films independently produced by the studio, including "Tanka", "O'g'ri", "Kurort", and "Qo'shnilar" ("Neighbours"). These films received favourable reviews in the press for their artistic value, skillful portrayal of characters, and ability to reflect through artistic details the characteristic qualities of the Karakalpak people, including their simplicity, generosity, nobility, trustfulness, honesty, and sincerity. Their distinctive artistic style, ingenuity, and inclination towards humour were also highly appreciated.

Since our approach to this subject is primarily historical, we have not examined these artistic aspects of the films in greater detail.

CONCLUSION

The achievements attained by the creative team of "Karakalpakfilm" during the years of independence have received high recognition both within Uzbekistan and abroad. The films produced by the studio have earned considerable acclaim at numerous international film forums and festivals.

In particular, the film "Gum-gum" participated in an international film festival held in San Francisco, the United States, in 1992, where it received the Grand Prix award [7]. The film "Qiz Voyaga Yetsa..." ("When a Girl Comes of Age..."), which skillfully portrays the customs and traditions of the Karakalpak people, was warmly received at the "Spring of Feruza–94" film forum held in Ashgabat in 1994 and received an international award.

The films "Jirov" and "Otseyis" participated in an international film festival held in Germany in 1998. In the same year, the film "What the Aral Sea Used to Be Like" received an award from the Soros Foundation. The film "Otbegi" became a prize-winner at the international film festival in Innsbruck, Austria, in 2005. The film "Quduq" ("The Well") received the "Silver

Crescent" award at the Bilbao Film Festival in Spain in 2005 [8], as well as a silver medal at the Netherlands Film Festival. The film "Fidoyilar" received the Grand Prix award entitled "Silver Bear" at a film festival held in Spain. Furthermore, at the Uzbek National Cinema Festival held in Bukhara in 2001, the film "Ko'kpar" received the "Winged Camel" award. In 2002, the film "Ona" ("Mother") was honoured with a special award at the Bukhara Film Festival.

These achievements represent the significant accomplishments of the "Karakalpakfilm" studio during the years of independence. Undoubtedly, its creative productions will remain an important part of the country's cultural and spiritual development, preserving vivid cinematic representations of people's lives and presenting the historical, cultural, and social heritage of Karakalpakstan to the international community. Through its artistic contributions, the studio has secured a lasting place in the history of Uzbekistan's national cinematography.

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