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SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE POET

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Abstract. The literature of nineteenth-century Uzbekistan — and especially the Fergana literary milieu that took shape within the Kokand Khanate — left a distinctive mark on the history of Uzbek letters through the flourishing of women's poetic talent. Alongside such accomplished poetesses as Nodira, Uvaysiy, Mahzuna, Dilshod (Barno) and Anbar Otin stands Samar Bonu (pen name Bonu, 1837–1891), notable for her life, her courage and her lyric legacy. Yet for a long time her creative heritage remained almost unknown to scholarship: her name received little attention in the tazkiras (biographical anthologies) of her age, and her divan was never published in full. The present article identifies, classifies and comparatively examines the surviving sources for the study of Samar Bonu, grouping them into scholarly studies, encyclopedic and educational literature, literary anthologies, periodical journalism, electronic resources, and oral memoirs. Particular attention is given to the foundational research of the scholar To'xtasin Jalolov, whose devotion rescued the poet's name from oblivion.

Keywords: Samar Bonu, Bonu, nineteenth-century Uzbek literature, Fergana literary milieu, women poets, source studies, To'xtasin Jalolov, divan, otin schools, Huvaydo literary tradition.

1. Introduction

The study of any author's life and work begins, above all, with identifying the relevant sources, classifying them and subjecting them to comparative analysis. In the case of Samar Bonu this task is especially complex, because the information concerning her is not gathered in a single place but is scattered across sources belonging to different periods and different genres. Her name was not widely treated in the tazkiras of her time, and her divan has never been published in its entirety. For this reason, the study of the poet today must rely on a variety of materials — scholarly research, encyclopedias, anthologies, press publications, electronic resources and oral recollections — and a source-study (manbashunoslik) approach therefore acquires particular importance.

According to their content and provenance, the available sources may be divided into the following groups: scholarly and research works; encyclopedic and educational literature; literary anthologies; articles in the periodical press; electronic information resources; and oral memoirs together with cultural and creative interpretations. Each of these groups is considered separately below.

2. Scholarly research: the contribution of To'xtasin Jalolov

The principal source — the one that has laid the very foundation for studying the life and work of Samar Bonu — is the research of the literary scholar, writer and translator To'xtasin Jalolov. Born on 21 July 1909 in the Shahrixon district of the Andijan region and deceased on 13 April 1984

in Tashkent, Jalolov devoted his life to collecting and studying the heritage of Uzbek women poets. His O‘zbek shoiralari (Uzbek Poetesses, repeatedly reprinted in 1959, 1970 and the 1980s), Bonu (1963) and Qizlar qasidasi (Ode to Maidens, 1976) were all created in this field. He was, in addition, the author of scholarly and journalistic works on Alisher Navoiy (Hamsa talqinlari, 1960, 1968), of Yashasin tabassum (1965) and Nafosat olamida (1974), and a translator of works by R. Tagore, S. Ayniy, Pahlavon Mahmud and Lohutiy.

Jalolov’s book O‘zbek shoiralari occupies a central place in the study of Samar Bonu. Nearly eighty pages of this fundamental work are devoted specifically to the poet’s personality, life and poetry. In order to gather material about her, the scholar travelled through the Osh, Fergana and Andijan regions, conversed with many people, and sought to reconstruct her life on the basis of her relatives’ recollections and of written sources preserved in private hands. Through this book the principal facts concerning Samar Bonu’s origin, family environment, upbringing, tragic fate and creative activity were introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time. For precisely this reason O‘zbek shoiralari is regarded as the primary source for all subsequent research on the poet.

The essay “Samar Bonu,” included in the scholar’s book Go‘zallik olamida (In the World of Beauty; Tashkent, 1979), contains the absorbing account of how the poet’s heritage was found and reconstructed. While writing O‘zbek shoiralari, Jalolov learned from his friend, the poet Abdulahad Azizov (Anisiy), of a poetess named Sarvar Bonu; it later emerged that her true name was Samar Bonu. Following her trail, the scholar corresponded with Abdulhamid Abdurazzoqov — a gardener in the Uchqo‘rg‘on district of the Andijan region who wrote verse under the pen name “Xurram” — and with Amonullo Valixonov, a mathematics teacher and lover of literature. In 1959 Valixonov sent the scholar a ten-page, typewritten essay-material entitled “The Poet’s Fate.”

In May 1959 Jalolov personally undertook a research expedition to Qo‘qon, Andijan and Osh. There he met the poet’s younger brother, the gifted physician Amonxon Maxsum (by then an old man approaching ninety), Raziddin Maxsum (son of the poet Soqib), and other relatives, from whom he obtained valuable information about her life. The researcher’s chief aim was to find the divan that Samar Bonu had copied out in fair hand in two manuscript copies. According to various reports, this divan was kept at different times by a certain Ibrohimjon living in Dushanbe, by relatives in Chimyon, and by Mullo Botur, a resident of the village of Qorasuv in the Andijan region. Although the search proved arduous, it was precisely Jalolov’s self-sacrifice and perseverance that saved Samar Bonu’s name from complete oblivion and returned it to the history of Uzbek literature.

In the course of his investigations Jalolov also brought to light Qambarniso, a poetess who lived in the same period, and her celebrated mushoira (poetic contest) with the poet Oshiq. In the “Samar Bonu” essay he compares several versions of this contest and analyses the variants of the text. Although the question of whether Qambarniso and Samar Bonu were one and the same person or two distinct authors was not conclusively resolved by the scholar, these inquiries are important for illuminating the world of women writers in the nineteenth-century Fergana literary milieu and their mutual poetic exchanges. The book Go‘zallik olamida is therefore valuable not merely as a collection of ready facts but also, in methodological terms, as a demonstration of how a poet’s heritage may be sought out and reconstructed.

One of the most affecting episodes in Jalolov’s essay concerns the poet Sulaymon Oshiq (1860–1944). A quick-witted man who lived in Osh and worked for many years as a “vakil” — a legal counsel — at the qazi court, Oshiq once recounted to a friend an event that had taken place near Suzoq on the eve of the revolution. When a married couple came to the court to sign a divorce document, the woman asked for a pen and, in the margin of the document, signed in beautiful

calligraphy: “The mark of fate’s arrow, the long-suffering Qambarniso.” Those present at the court were astonished by her handwriting and the power of her words. It is through this very incident that the gifted poetess Qambarniso and her contest with Oshiq come to be discussed. The episode testifies that many highly talented women writers — whose names did not become widely known — lived in the Fergana Valley at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, and it heightens still further the interest in studying poets such as Samar Bonu.

The fate of Samar Bonu’s divan is itself worthy of attention. As the sources note, the poet copied out her verses in two manuscript copies, and these notebooks remained in her relatives’ keeping for many years. In his search for the divan Jalolov travelled as far as Chimyon, Andijan and the Surxondaryo region; according to different reports it was held at various times by Ibrohimjon in Dushanbe, by the poet’s kinswoman Munisxon (who wrote under the pen name “Munis”), and by Mullo Botur in the village of Qorasuv. These inquiries show how great is the danger that manuscript sources, passing over time into different hands, may be dispersed and lost, and how laborious a task the preservation of a poet’s heritage can be. The materials gathered by Jalolov today serve as the most reliable and complete source concerning Samar Bonu.

3. Encyclopedic and educational literature

The most reliable and concise information about Samar Bonu has also found a place in the National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan. The encyclopedia’s “Bonu” entry briefly sets out the poet’s pen name (Bonu), her real name (Samar Bonu Sirojiddin qizi), the dates of her birth (1837, Osh) and death (1891, in the village of Mingtepa in the Andijan region), and her activity as an Uzbek poetess and enlightener. It is noted here that she was the great-granddaughter of the great Sufi poet Xo‘janazar Huvaydo, that her poem “Bonu g‘arib” (Bonu the Forlorn) was written when, widowed at nineteen, she suffered a grievous bereavement, and that her lyrics combine amorous experience with a broad social content. Although small in scale, the encyclopedic entry is valuable for assembling the most essential and verified facts about the poet.

Samar Bonu is remembered not only as a poet but also as a schoolmistress — an otin who taught girls. In this respect her name also appears in sources concerned with pedagogy. The textbook Umumiy pedagogika nazariyasi va amaliyoti (Theory and Practice of General Pedagogy; Tashkent, 2012) by E. R. Yuzlikaeva, S. A. Madyarova and others gives special attention to the otin-bibi schools of the nineteenth-century Fergana Valley and to the poet-teachers who taught there — Uvaysiy, Dilshod and Samar Bonu. The source records that these schools chiefly taught the works of poets such as Hofiz, Navoiy, Fuzuliy and Bedil, and that the teaching poetesses communicated with the children in their native tongue and awakened in them a love of poetry. This source occupies an important place in illuminating Samar Bonu’s work as an enlightener.

Likewise, G. D. Baubekova’s doctoral dissertation in pedagogical sciences, “The Psychological and Pedagogical Views of the Central Asian Enlighteners of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” (defended in 2010), mentions Samar Bonu — among such women educators as Nodira, Anbar Otin and Dilshod Barno — and analyses her pedagogical ideas. This source is of particular importance for studying the poet not only as an artist but also as an enlightened woman of her time who contributed to the education of girls.

4. Literary anthologies

Selections from Samar Bonu’s ghazals have also been published in a number of literary anthologies. The collection Sharqning yetti yog‘dusi (The Seven Radiances of the East; Tashkent: Abdulla Qodiriy People’s Heritage Publishing House, 1999), prepared for publication by Turob Akbarxo‘jaev, is noteworthy in this regard. Alongside such classical poetesses as Zebunniso, Uvaysiy, Nodira, Mahzuna, Muazzamxon and Nozimaxonim, the book includes examples of Samar

Bonu's ghazals. This testifies to her recognition as one of the prominent representatives of classical Uzbek women's poetry.

5. Periodical press and journalism

In recent years, journalistic articles devoted to the life and work of Samar Bonu have appeared in the periodical press. The article "Ishqsizlardan shikoyat" (A Complaint against the Loveless), or "Bonu's Lament," published in the newspaper Iqbol on 28 March 2013, is devoted to the poet's tragic fate and rebellious spirit. The article "Bonu bulog'idan" (From Bonu's Spring), published in the journal Sharq yulduzi (2014, no. 2), serves to introduce her biography and poetic legacy to a wide readership. In addition, Sohibahon Hoshimova's article "Qalamdek g'amguzorim bor" (I Have a Sorrow-Sharer Like My Pen) extensively treats the artistic facets of the poet's work and her affiliation with the Huvaydo literary school.

Furthermore, in the article "E'zoz" by Eshmuhammad Qodirov, an associate professor at the Tashkent State Institute of Law, Samar Bonu is honoured among the great women who have left their mark on our people's history — alongside To'maris, Saroy Mulkxonim, Nodirabegim, Uvaysiy and Anbar Otin. Begali Qosimov's studies devoted to the work of Xo'janazar Huvaydo likewise record the poet's descent from the Huvaydo line and her continuation of its literary traditions.

6. Electronic resources

Information about Samar Bonu can today also be found in such internet resources as the electronic version of the National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan, the websites e-adabiyot.uz and ijod.uz, and Wikipedia. This shows the growing role of modern information media in conveying the poet's heritage to a broad audience, and especially to the younger generation.

7. Conclusion

The sources for the study of Samar Bonu's life and work are diverse in both origin and genre, yet they are uneven in volume and degree of reliability. The decisive role belongs to the research of To'xtasin Jalolov, which not only saved the poet's name from oblivion but also established the factual foundation on which all later treatments rest. Encyclopedic and pedagogical literature supplies verified, concise data and reveals her significance as an enlightener and teacher; anthologies confirm her place within the classical canon of Uzbek women's poetry; and the periodical press and electronic resources extend her renown to a wider, contemporary readership. At the same time, the fate of her divan demonstrates how readily manuscript heritage may be dispersed and lost, and underscores the continuing need for source-study work — the locating, collecting and critical comparison of materials — if the legacy of Samar Bonu and of the other women poets of the Fergana literary milieu is to be fully restored.

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