



MUHAMMADIEV, FAZLIDDIN

MUHAMMADIEV, Fazliddin, Tajik writer (b. Samarkand, 15 June 1928, d. Dushanbe, 6 October 1986). Born into a family of modest circumstances, he was drawn to journalism and began his career as a correspondent for the official daily, *Tojikistoni Surkh* (1947-49). On completing studies at the Central Komsomol School in Moscow in 1951, he became deputy editor of *Komsomoli Tojikiston* (1951-54) and then editor of *Sharqi Surkh* (later, *Sadoi Sharq* (1957-60) and the national satirical weekly, *Khorpushtak* (1962-64). He also wrote scripts for the fledgling Tajik film industry (1965-66) and became chief editor for the Tajik State Committee for Cinematography (1973-76). In 1986, he was awarded the title of “Writer of the People of the Tajik SSR.”

Numerous works of his were translated into Russian and other languages of the Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe, but only a few stories are available in English, French, and German. He himself read widely and translated works from Russian, French, and American literature. Russian and Soviet writers exercised certainly significant influences on his work, but he paid homage particularly to his older Tajik colleagues, Sadriddin Aini (Şadr-al-Din ‘Ayni, q.v.), Jalol Ikromi, and Rahim Jalil, for their contributions to the creation of a modern Tajik literature.

As a writer of fiction, Muhammadiev followed a career path similar to that of other Tajik writers of his generation; he began by writing sketches and short stories before moving on to longer fiction. His work as a journalist proved invaluable, for it acquainted him with an immense variety of human types and social issues. His aesthetic allegiance was to realism, in keeping with the



official view of literature as primarily an instrument to further the creation of a new society, but his elaboration of themes and depiction of character were by no means narrowly constrained by ideology. He thus belonged to that cohort of Tajik writers who remained within the general bounds of socialist realism, but whose art between the 1960s and 1980s was continuously evolving.

The short story (*hikoi*) occupies a special place in Muhammadiev's art. From the beginning he focused on the changing faces of a society in process of formation and displayed his sympathy for the individual as he coped with the new order of things. He centered his attention on the inner worlds of his characters, as he sought to define them as human beings and establish their place in the general scheme of things, as in "Maktubi dūst" (1958) and "Roh" (1962). His narratives are leavened by delicate humor, and he delights in investigating the mores of contemporary Tajik society and in revealing the national characteristics of the Tajiks, as in "Hiyoboni nodir" (1973) and "Tamosho" (1978). His best stories are written in a lean, fresh prose, and all together they helped to raise Tajik realism to a new level and give the Tajik story new directions.

Muhammadiev's later fiction was, in a sense, an elaboration of themes and techniques he had honed in sketches and short stories. His first short novel (*povest*), *Odamoni kūhna* (1962), examines the way of life and the psychology of ordinary, elderly people living on the outskirts of a city. Through the observations of a young journalist who resides among them temporarily he reveals the injustice and abuse they suffer from a negligent bureaucracy. Muhammadiev's light touch, as he probes the inner lives of his characters, infused Tajik prose with new aesthetic values. The publication of the novel in Russian translation brought him recognition beyond Tajikistan as an important Soviet writer.

The short novel, *Dar on dun'yo* (1965), is perhaps Muhammadiev's best known work. It is the story of a pilgrimage of elderly Muslims to Mecca and Medina (a journey he himself took) as told by a young doctor, an atheist, who accompanies them. Although he is alert to what he believes are the irrationality and even absurdity of religious beliefs, he refrains from caricature and satire. Rather, he shows a genuine human interest in the pilgrims and uses the occasion to express his own faith in the ultimate reasonableness of the world. Muhammadiev had treated of religion, a recurring theme, earlier in his long story, *Zainabibī* (1964). Adhering to official



literary formulas, he describes how a woman of humble origins had suffered discrimination at the hand of conservative Muslim clergy before 1917 and how she is liberated by the October Revolution and finds fulfillment in social activism.

Muhammadiev published his only novel (*roman*), *Palatai kunjaki*, in 1974, a penetrating examination of contemporary Soviet society. Sensing that an illness has overtaken that society, he searches for a link between morality and ideology as a means of combating it. His final short novels, *Shohin iapon* (1981) and *Varta* (1983), expand upon earlier themes. They are essentially optimistic as they portray the honest labor of ordinary people determined to overcome life's difficulties and create a better future. Such themes catch the essence of Muhammadiev's own quest as an artist.

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