THE HISTORICAL NOVEL GENRE AND THE INTERPRETATION OF HISTORICAL CHARACTERS IN UZBEK LITERATURE

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The historical novel is regarded as one of the most complex and multifaceted genres in both world and Uzbek literature. Its distinctive feature lies in the harmonious integration of historical truth and artistic imagination: on the one hand, the writer is expected to remain faithful to historical sources, while on the other hand, creative freedom enables the artistic reconstruction of historical periods and personalities. In literary studies, these two principles—historical authenticity and artistic fiction—are considered the fundamental criteria defining the genesis of the historical novel.

Scholars such as S. Petrov, A. Kattabekov, L. Prashkovich, O. Leontovich, M. Sattorov, G‘ulom Karimov, and G‘ayrat Murodov classify historical novels according to various criteria, including subject matter, the author's approach to the past, and the genre’s historical development. According to the most widely accepted classification, the historical novel exists in two principal forms: the traditional historical novel and the historical-biographical novel. Both forms occupy a prominent place in Uzbek literature. However, works devoted to the image of Jaloliddin Manguberdi demonstrate the emergence of a hybrid form that combines traditional historical narration with contemporary artistic interpretation. Erkin Samandar’s novel *Sultan Jaloliddin*, for example, illustrates this tendency through its synthesis of historical realism and legendary episodes.

One of the defining characteristics of the historical novel is **historical distance** (creative distance). The period depicted should be separated from the author's own era by at least one generation—approximately sixty to seventy years. This principle is evident both in Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (depicting the events of 1745 and published in 1814) and in Abdulla Qodiriy’s *O‘tkan kunlar* (*Bygone Days*). Such temporal distance enables the author to analyze the past from a relatively objective and impartial perspective.

The formation of the historical novel as a literary genre requires several essential features: a plot based on authentic historical events, reliance on historical sources, a balanced integration of historical fact and artistic invention, the coexistence of real

and fictional characters, a broad compositional structure encompassing a particular historical period or personality, the writer's individual artistic approach, language and style appropriate to the represented era, and an ideological orientation emphasizing such values as humanism, patriotism, and justice. Although these characteristics appear in varying proportions in different works, together they define the essential nature of the historical novel.

The tradition of portraying historical figures in Uzbek literature can be traced back to Alisher Navoiy's *Khamsa*, particularly the epic *Saddi Iskandariy* (*The Wall of Alexander*). However, the creation of historically realistic characters in the modern sense began with Abdulla Qodiriy's novels *O'tkan kunlar* (*Bygone Days*) and *Mehrobdan chayon* (*Scorpion from the Altar*), which marked a new stage in the development of Uzbek historical fiction. Oybek's novel *Navoiy* laid the foundation for the historical-biographical novel in Uzbek literature. Nevertheless, due to the ideological constraints and censorship of the Soviet period, the protagonist's personality could not be portrayed in its entirety. This gap was later addressed in Isajon Sulton's novel *Alisher Navoiy*, which illuminated the religious and spiritual dimensions of Navoiy's character.

The artistic interpretation of Jaloliddin Manguberdi constitutes a distinct literary phenomenon in Uzbek literature. The image of this historical hero was first introduced into Uzbek literary discourse by Maqsud Shayxzoda in his 1944 drama *Jaloliddin Manguberdi*, while Nazar Eshonqul's 2019 play represents one of the latest dramatic interpretations of the same figure. Within the genre of the historical novel, however, Erkin Samandar's *Sultan Jaloliddin* (2007), Shahodat Isaxonova's *Sultan Jaloliddin Manguberdi, or the Princess Trapped by Genghis Khan* (2018), and Mahmud Nazarov's *Jaloliddin Manguberdi* (2024) are recognized as significant achievements of historical fiction produced during the independence period. Notably, Isaxonova's psychological portrayal of the protagonist exhibits stylistic and figurative similarities to Abdulla Qodiriy's depiction of Otabek, demonstrating that *Bygone Days* continues to serve as the classical model of Uzbek historical novel writing.

In conclusion, the historical novel occupies a vital place in Uzbek literature by contributing to the formation of historical consciousness, national identity, and patriotic values. The theoretical foundations of the genre—including historical distance, the balance between historical fact and artistic imagination, and the principles of historical characterization—develop in harmony with the traditions of world literature represented by figures such as Walter Scott and Jurji Zaydan, while simultaneously reflecting the unique stages of Uzbek literary evolution, from Alisher

Navoiy and Abdulla Qodiriy to Oybek and contemporary writers of the independence era. The continuing reinterpretation of historical personalities, particularly Jaloliddin Manguberdi, by a new generation of authors demonstrates both the enduring significance and the promising future of the historical novel in Uzbek literature.

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