

**TERMINOLOGY OF HISTORICAL PROSE AND THE GENRE ISSUE IN UZBEK
LITERARY STUDIES****Dildora Inomjonovna Ibragimova**

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Abstract: This article analyzes the formation, theoretical foundations, and scholarly usage of the terms “historical genre” and “historical prose” in Uzbek literary studies. The research examines the emergence of these concepts within literary-historical thought, elucidating their differences and shared features through established methodological approaches in literary criticism. The paper also substantiates the scope of application and terminological precision of these notions in Uzbek literary scholarship, emphasizing their significance for the study of contemporary historical prose. The findings are valuable in that they provide a conceptual framework for the scholarly analysis of literary works with historical themes.

Keywords: historical genre, historical prose, literary terminology, historical fiction, genre theory, literary studies.

Historical-themed works in Uzbek literature have deep roots in the distant past, as the earliest written literary monuments encompass themes related to the history of the people. These early written sources combine the features of chronicles and memoirs, and in Turkic literature the origins of historical prose can be traced back to the development of these genres.

In his studies on this subject, the literary scholar and textual critic N. Shodmonov [1] emphasizes that recollections concerning historical events and the lives of prominent individuals played a crucial role in the emergence of literary-historical works. Analyzing the genesis of historical writings through the example of genealogies, the scholar notes that the earliest genealogical records were simple in form, whereas later ones were enriched with artistic elements. From the perspective of broader public interest, genealogies gradually acquired literary refinement and passed through successive stages of development until they reached the level of historical prose.

As N. Shodmonov states, “Such monuments,” he writes, “are referred to in sources of world literary scholarship by terms such as historiography (историография) or historical prose (историческая проза)” [2].

In Uzbek literary studies, the term “historical prose” has been recorded in the works of only a limited number of scholars. This term appears primarily in academic studies written in Russian by E. Samandarov [3], Z. Nurmuhamedova [4], A. Arkhangelskaya [5], and A. Zayniddinova [6]. In research conducted in the Uzbek language, however, the term is often replaced by or used interchangeably with notions such as “historical genre,” “literary-historical work,” and “fictional-historical work.”

In scholarly sources, the term “historical genre” is defined as one of the major genres or thematic categories in literature and the arts, encompassing works devoted to themes of the historical past [7]. This concept, which unifies various historical forms of artistic creativity under a single designation, aims to represent history in its authentic dimensions and is widely

employed not only in fiction but also in music, painting, sculpture, and other forms of applied art.

Examining the significance of this term in literary studies, A. Hayitmetov writes as follows: “The term ‘historical genre’ is often applied to works with historical themes. This is scientifically inaccurate. The qualifier ‘historical’ does not denote a specific type of genre; rather, it emphasizes the characteristics of the material of a work associated with its subject matter or with another genre. Each of the existing genres in Uzbek literature may be devoted to various themes of interest, and no genre is ‘specialized’ exclusively in historical topics. Consequently, the term ‘historical genre’ cannot be regarded as successful either scientifically or practically” [8].

A careful consideration of the scholar’s views makes it evident that the term “historical genre” is gradually losing its relevance within the system of modern literary genres. However, in classical Uzbek literature there exist specific genres dedicated to the representation of historical themes—such as chronicles, memoirs, autobiographical writings, and records of reminiscence—and in the collective designation of these genres, the term retains a certain degree of validity.

In order to clarify more precisely the semantic scope of the term “historical genre,” the present study undertakes a comparative analysis of several forms of historical prose. As is well known, in literary theory the concept of genre is determined primarily by the author’s creative intention. In other words, defining the genre of a literary work falls within the author’s prerogative. The extent to which a work conforms to the genre designated by its author may later be assessed by critics; however, this constitutes a separate issue. What is essential is that the author’s intention plays a decisive role in determining the genre of a literary work. Accordingly, the genre of works with historical themes should be analyzed primarily on the basis of the author’s intention.

The earliest example of the historical genre is the memorial inscription (yodnoma), which represents the most ancient genre of Turkic artistic creativity preserved through stone inscriptions. These monuments, written in the Turkic runic script and dating back to the 6th–8th centuries CE, constitute the earliest extant specimens of Turkic historical prose. Along with their antiquity in terms of the period of their creation, memorial inscriptions differ from other historical genres by virtue of their specific purpose.

The memorial genre consists of prose and epic inscriptions composed with the aim of commemorating individuals who lived in the past and preserving their memory over long periods of time. Prose memorial inscriptions do not contain rhyme or stanzaic structures characteristic of poetry, while epic memorials also include memoir-like forms (for example, the Tonyukuk inscription). These monuments reflect the origins of the Turkic Khaganate, its system of governance, military campaigns, and the overall condition of the state; they convey a strong political spirit, depict internal and external struggles, and narrate the process of liberation of the Khaganate from Chinese domination.

It is noted that certain features of memorial inscriptions were later developed in both oral and written literary traditions. Another designation for memorial inscriptions is memoir (from French *mémoire* — memory, recollection). A memoir, or reminiscence, is a work based on the

recollections of a participant in or witness to real historical events. The defining characteristics of memoirs include narration in the first person, the abundance of historical events and factual material, and the distinctive expression of the author's subjective attitude toward the depicted events.

In memoirs, the presentation of real events is often closely intertwined with political chronicles as well as materials of biographical and scholarly significance. Narrative techniques typical of fictional literature are used sparingly; however, the author may employ descriptive devices when appropriate. The meaning of the term "memoir" has been interpreted differently by scholars since the late twentieth century. The Russian researcher A. G. Tartakovsky [9] unites memoirs and diaries under the general concept of "memoir," considering them interrelated forms of writing. In his view, memoirs represent the historically primary and simplest form of reflecting an individual's personal participation in historical life.

Chernomorsky [10], for his part, classifies memoirs according to their structural characteristics into the following types:

Below is an academic, polished English translation, maintaining terminological precision, scholarly tone, and logical clarity, suitable for a dissertation chapter or journal article:

personal memoirs — recollections of the author's life path;

memorial records — works that illuminate particular events in which the author participated;

diaries;

literary notes.

In contemporary source studies, personal correspondence, memoirs, and works belonging to the historical genre are classified according to a single criterion, namely sources of personal origin. This approach is considered the most accurate, as memoirs and historical prose reflect events through different modes of representation. Memoir works are written on the basis of the author's personal initiative, whereas in the compilation of memorial records, the initiative does not always originate from the author.

It is well known that by the twentieth century, the practice of writers recording their own life trajectories became widespread. Numerous biographical works reflecting the lives of Soviet-era authors exist, which raises the question of whether the genre known as autobiography (tarjimai hol) should be classified as a form of memoir. It should be emphasized that autobiographies are works closely connected with historical events. Although some scholars note significant commonalities between these two genres, autobiographies are nevertheless treated separately from memoirs.

In global literary practice, autobiographies are usually created not solely on the author's personal initiative but often under the influence of certain external factors. It should also be noted that such works do not always constitute comprehensive narratives of the author's personal life. Considering that an autobiography, by its content, is a historical and biographical text incorporating elements of memoir, this genre—primarily characteristic of twentieth-century

literature—may be understood, in semantic terms, as a process of artistically revitalizing events personally witnessed by the author.

In historical genres, historicity pertains to all components of the work, including its subject matter, central problems, and ideological orientation, whereas in historical prose, historicity is primarily associated with the thematic dimension of the work. The purpose of the historical genre is to comprehend the past, while historical prose aims to familiarize readers with significant events of historical antiquity and the lives and activities of historical figures; to cultivate respect for the historical past of one's people; and, through this process, to educate an enlightened generation. Furthermore, historical prose encourages contemporaries to draw lessons from past events and exemplary aspects of historical personalities' lives and activities, and to express attitudes toward certain unfavorable phenomena of present-day reality through the depiction of historical events.

Among the literary genres that enriched Uzbek literature in the second half of the twentieth century, historical-themed short stories, novellas, and novels occupy a significant place. However, the term "historical prose," which denotes prose works narrating events of the past, has regrettably not yet secured its rightful position in the terminological framework of Uzbek literary studies.

By examining genres with historical themes in relation to the author's position and degree of participation within the work, and on the basis of the findings obtained, greater conceptual clarity has been introduced into the content and classification of these genres as follows:

Most historical genres today represent outdated artistic forms that are no longer actively employed in contemporary literature. In the present day, existing modern literary genres have proven more productive in representing history, with prose being widely used as the most effective mode of historical narration. In contemporary literature, various prose genres have become convenient instruments for depicting both large-scale and small-scale historical events. While historical short stories tend to portray events of limited scope, historical novellas and historical novels are preferred for rendering multilayered and complex historical processes.

In recent years, the emergence of the term "historical fantasy" has radically altered readers' perceptions of history. Whereas earlier writers sought to remain close to historical authenticity in interpreting historical facts, historical fantasy has effectively removed such constraints. Authors of historical fantasy demonstrate the highest degree of creative freedom in their engagement with the past, often astonishing readers with bold imaginative approaches. However, it must be acknowledged that excessive exaggeration in historical fantasy can result in the complete loss of history's scholarly value, reducing it to a merely decorative or even disruptive element within the work.

In conclusion, when classifying works with historical themes into genres, the author's intention, position, and degree of participation within the narrative are of decisive importance. Memoirs, according to the author's intent, aim to provide a broad and often romanticized depiction of past events, including related and ancillary occurrences. Memorial writings (yodnomalar), by contrast, focus on historical figures personally known to the author and on events directly associated with them, frequently presenting reality from the protagonist's perspective and often

in the protagonist's favor. Biography represents a chronologically structured form of memoir, in which the author relies more heavily on personal recollections than on strict historical accuracy. These three forms may be classified today among historical genres that are relatively infrequently employed.

In contemporary Uzbek literary studies, works with historical themes are often designated by terms other than "historical genre," such as "literary-historical work" or "fictional-historical prose." This terminological variation indicates that the concept of "historical genre" no longer adequately conveys the meaning intended by literary critics. In our view, drawing on the practices of world literary scholarship, it would be more appropriate to refer to prose works with historical themes under the unified term "historical prose."

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