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Stylistic Originality in the Depiction of Historical Colour in Erkin Samandar's Prose

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Abstract. The article examines the stylistic features of the creation of historical colour in Erkin Samandar's novels Traces of the Whirlwind, or Ogahiy, Sultan Jaloliddin, The Wheel of Doom, and The Shore That Lost Its River. It shows that the writer recreates the spirit of an age through details of political and court relations, military life, crafts and everyday life, religious belief and ritual, and professional activity (irrigation management and shipbuilding), and that he links social problems to the fate of individual people.

Keywords: historical colour, style, individual style, historical novel, historical vocabulary, archaism, everyday detail, diary, repression, Erkin Samandar.

In imaginative literature, a writer's individual style is a major factor that ensures the ideological and artistic integrity of a work and defines its aesthetic character. This quality becomes still more important in works on historical subjects, because the credibility of a historical world is not established merely by the citation of dates, political events, or the names of historical persons. The quality of historical colour depends on how vividly an artistic interpretation reflects the worldview of the people of that age, their social standing, their everyday life, and their attitude to complex historical situations [1]. In the prose of Erkin Samandar, historical colour is created on the basis of distinctive stylistic principles. The present article analyses those principles in four of the writer's novels.

In the novel Sultan Jaloliddin, life in the state of the Khwarazmshahs at the beginning of the thirteenth century is rendered in close connection with political government, court relations, military order, and the social estates. The conversation between Jaloliddin and Alauddin Khwarazmshah in the prologue discloses opposing views of how the state should be governed. Jaloliddin says: "You know better than I do that what protects the sultanate from the enemy is not defence but, on the contrary, attack" [4]. By showing the influence exerted on the ruler's decisions by the Qipchaq commanders under Turkon Khatun, and by the viziers and officials, the narrative demonstrates that government is determined not by the ruler's will alone, but also by the interests of court factions and by ties of kinship.

The depiction of military life forms another important layer of historical colour. The siege of the fortress of Ilol opens with a precise date: "AD 1220. Autumn." Details such as the fortress standing on high cliffs, the narrow and stony road that leads up to it, and the difficulty of hauling mangonels to the heights reveal the character of the defensive works of the period. In the sentence "For three months the sky has either forgotten this fortress or has deliberately withheld rain from it," drought is fused with the mental suffering of the people inside the walls. The portrayal of the forced labour of craftsmen brought from Otrar, Khujand, Samarkand, and Bukhara shows that the invasion was not confined to the battlefield.

The writer does not confine historical colour to the deeds of rulers and commanders. He also turns to the lives of the craftsman, the peasant, the musician, and the ordinary townspeople. The workshop of the blacksmith Abdul Mahak, who makes implements of iron and copper together with his son Tog'onbek and his apprentices, embodies the craft milieu of the age. When Jaloliddin and his companions — commanders such as Jahon Pahlavon and Yigit Malik — prepare food around a

campfire, recite poetry, and listen to music, the historical figures are kept from being confined to a one-sided image of heroism, and art and literature are shown to have had a place in the life of the military class.

The religious conceptions of the age are likewise given a wide place in the novel. The shamanic rite at the headquarters of Chingiz Khan (Genghis Khan), the movements performed over the fire, and the appeal to Kök Tengri carry the Mongol worldview into the artistic depiction. Khwarazmian performers are compelled to sing in the conquered cities, and Boyimkhan is forced, in the invaders' camp, to tell stories of the lives of the Khwarazmshahs. Cultural life and the tradition of oral art are thereby shown to have been turned into instruments of violence. In the mosque at Isfahan, Jaloliddin asks first about the mood of Ramadan and of the festival, rather than taking immediate measures against the enemy. The episode is interpreted as a deliberate act aimed at overcoming the fear in people's hearts.

In The Wheel of Doom, historical colour is created through details of water management, agriculture, and local government in the Khwarazm oasis. The figures of Muhammad Hoji and Safo Makhsum display a tradition in which the calling of the mirob — the master of irrigation — passed from one generation to the next: Safo Makhsum's grandfather served under Ogahiy in the digging of canals and in the work of irrigation [5]. Documentary sources record that Muhammad Hoji was himself a chief mirob in real life and took a direct part in the begor, the corvée devoted to clearing the waterways [6]. In the episode of the Ayronchilar bend, Muhammad Hoji foresees the danger that the riverbank will give way — the dag'ish — and, when the officials refuse to believe him, he secretly relocates the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Details such as the carrying of property onto the slope of Qoratog' and the appointment of shepherds and watchmen disclose the order of mutual aid in the rural life of the time.

Place, too, is depicted with precision. Names such as Khonqa, Shovot, Urganch, To'rtko'l, Shuroxon, the fortress of Monoq, and the Shohobod canal fix the geography of the action. Among these places, the tribunal at G'ujumtagi occupies a special position. This institution, whose official name was the NKVD, was called bor-yo'qmas — "the place of no return" — in popular speech, and the name reveals its fearful reputation. A tribunal standing beneath a g'ujum tree, which for centuries had sheltered people from the heat, becomes a place of death. The transformation produces a powerful contrast of meaning. If the Amu Darya is a place of life, labour, and memory, G'ujumtagi is a symbol of violence and repression. The opposition of these two places determines the ideological direction of the novel.

In The Shore That Lost Its River, historical and domestic colour arises from the tension between traditional village life and modern construction. For the inhabitants of the village of Qorayantoq, the boat is an inseparable part of daily existence: it carries firewood, travels out to the sands, and serves at wedding ceremonies. The consecutive account of the way Buva chooses turon wood, places it in the water, dries it in the sun, wets it once more, splits it into planks, and builds a boat brings to life a craft tradition formed along the river [7]. A reservoir, a hydraulic complex, a dam, and construction machines stand on one side; boat-building, the keeping of horses, and excursions on the river stand on the other. Set side by side, they reveal the social and ecological problems of the age.

Erkin Samandar's skill in creating historical colour appears most clearly in verbal style. In the speech of the characters of Sultan Jaloliddin, words that mark the period and social rank are used together with forms characteristic of the older Uzbek literary language. The former include padari buzrukvor ("august father"), yog'iy ("enemy"), dor us-saltana ("seat of the sultanate"), valiahd ("heir apparent"), noyon ("Mongol commander"), and xoqon ("khagan"). The latter include ermas, aylagay, bo'lg'ay, bilursiz, and ayturmen. In The Wheel of Doom, words such as mirob, bosh mirob ("chief irrigation master"), beklik ("the authority of a bek"), qazuv ("canal-digging"), dag'ish, darg'a ("local

official"), rus-tuzem maktabi ("Russo-native school"), mahkama ("tribunal"), and surgun ("exile") name particular occupations, forms of authority, and historical processes. The author explains the meaning of local words such as dag'ish within the text itself and makes them intelligible to the reader.

The essential point is that the writer does not make historical speech artificially obscure. The thoughts of the characters are also conveyed through a fluent narration that a present-day reader can follow. A stylistic balance therefore arises between historical vocabulary and the author's own discourse, which remains close to the modern literary language [8]. In The Shore That Lost Its River, the speech of figures drawn from different social layers — Ganja, Obod, Buva, and Aminov — distinguishes their occupations and their ways of seeing the world. Concepts of water management and ecology predominate in Obod's speech, while the tone of administrative command and of promises predominates in Aminov's words.

Erkin Samandar creates historical colour through exact dates, places, and events, and also through the spiritual conceptions of the people. In the closing part of Sultan Jaloliddin, the bringing of the body of Alauddin Khwarazmshah by caravan for burial, the nights spent on the desert roads, and the torch-bearers and guard soldiers who accompany the caravan bring out the details of the funeral rite and of the order of travel in that age. A cloud that forms in the sky and moves together with the caravan binds the historical event to popular belief. The death of Jaloliddin, the failure to recover his body, the spread of rumours that the sultan was still alive, and the appearance of a man who declared himself to be Jaloliddin show a historical person passing from the sphere of real life into popular memory and legendary imagination. This circumstance is recorded in the historical sources as well, and the writer turns it into the spiritual layer of historical colour.

In The Wheel of Doom, popular conceptions become a means of revealing the inner lives of the characters. The dreams of Khadicha Begim, the scenes she discerns in the shapes of clouds, and her beliefs connected with rain and thunder express her suffering, her longing, and her hope. The author treats the distance between the prison and the family not merely as geographical remoteness, but as a spiritual rupture and a break in the flow of information. Historical colour is thus not confined to political events. It also encompasses the extent to which those events enter family life and the human mind. Different periods are joined within a single compositional system. Although the principal events are linked with the repressions of 1937, the diary of Muhammad Hoji brings into the narrative the life of Khwarazm, Istanbul, and France at the end of the nineteenth century. Details such as the hero's living as a lodger in the house of Mustafa Efendi in Istanbul, his teachers, his study of shipbuilding and irrigation in France, and his pilgrimage lend the work a documentary quality. A maxim entered in the diary under the name of Abulghazi Bahadur Khan — "A people that does not unite has no tomorrow" — turns historical memory into a criterion for judging present reality [5]. A composition of this kind sets the hero's earlier life of enlightenment in sharp contrast with his present tragic condition, and heightens still further the injustice of the age.

In conclusion, Erkin Samandar creates historical colour through the social relations characteristic of an age; through court and military life; through craft, custom, and religious belief; through professional activity; and through the details of everyday existence. These elements ensure the credibility of the historical setting.

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