



**“YALDO KECHASI” (“THE NIGHT OF YALDO”): A
NEW FORM OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL**

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ABSTRACT

The article examines Xayriddin Sulton’s novel “Yaldo kechasi” (2025) as a work that has created a new form of the historical novel in contemporary Uzbek prose. The aim of the study is to systematise the genre features of the novel theoretically and to substantiate it as a new stage in the development of the genre. The study applies a genre-typological analysis based on classical (including G. Lukács’s concept) and national interpretations of genre theory, supplemented by a review of recently published scholarly articles on the work. Three distinctive artistic-typological features of the novel are identified: the “sequel novel” model created through literary mystification; the synthesis of documentary and fictional principles; and the concept of national memory expressed through the fates of three generations. The review of recent publications shows how the novel is currently being studied in contemporary Uzbek literary studies. The findings provide sufficient scholarly grounds to regard “Yaldo kechasi” as a new stage in the development of the Uzbek historical novel.

INTRODUCTION

The historical novel is regarded as one of the most complex and multifaceted genres in both world and Uzbek literary studies. According to the classical theory of the Hungarian scholar György Lukács, the historical novel is an epic form that portrays an individual’s fate within the context of broad historical and social processes and builds an artistic and philosophical bridge between the past and the present. In Uzbek literature, the genre found its classical exemplars in



Abdulla Qodiriy's novels "O'tkan kunlar" (Bygone Days) and "Mehrobdan chayon" (Scorpion from the Altar), and the historical works created over the following decades have, to a large extent, relied on this tradition. It is on this theoretical and historical-literary foundation that Xayriddin Sulton's novel "Yaldo kechasi", published at the end of 2025, is being recognised as a work that has extended the boundaries of this traditional genre and combined stylistic and compositional solutions not previously used in Uzbek prose.

Scholars who spoke at the presentation of the work – among them Nurboy Jabborov, Doctor of Philological Sciences and Professor, and Ibrohim G'afurov, a literary scholar and Hero of Uzbekistan – assessed the novel in contemporary Uzbek literature as "a complete discovery" and "an example of artistic courage". Determining the scholarly basis of these assessments, that is, analysing which typological and genre features raise the novel to the level of a "new form", is a pressing scholarly and theoretical task, because in recent months a number of scholarly articles on the novel have begun to appear, including studies devoted to the interpretation of historical memory and national thought in the work, to the analysis of national and cultural values, and to introductory and parenthetical constructions from a linguistic point of view. This shows that "Yaldo kechasi" has become an object of research that is relevant not only to the general public but also from the standpoint of scholarly literary studies. The aim of this article is therefore to systematise the genre features of the novel theoretically and to substantiate it as a new stage in the development of the historical novel genre.

To accomplish this task, it is first necessary to turn to the theoretical foundations of the historical novel genre. Genre theory offers two main interpretations: the first takes the artistic reworking of historical fact as its main criterion, while the second takes as its criterion the dialectical connection between the individual and the epoch, between individual fate and social process. In Uzbek literary studies, the genre has been examined mainly through the work of Abdulla Qodiriy in the research of scholars such as T. Boboyev, O. Sharafiddinov and U. Normatov, and the historical novel is interpreted as a means of national self-awareness, of artistically restoring the past and of deeply feeling the tragedies of an era. "Yaldo kechasi" has emerged on this same theoretical foundation, yet enriched with new artistic and stylistic devices.

To understand the historical basis of such a renewal of the genre, it should also be noted that in the Soviet period the historical novel in Uzbek literary studies often developed under ideological control, and the interpretation of historical figures and events was adapted to the politics of the day. From the years of independence, in particular after the restrictions on the theme of Jadidism were lifted, the historical novel was enriched with new sources and stylistic possibilities: free access to archival documents, the opportunity to write openly about the victims of repression, and the opportunity to broaden the gallery of national heroes. "Yaldo kechasi" is a product of precisely this historical and literary situation and represents the next



qualitative leap in the chain of the three-stage development of the Uzbek historical novel – the Qodiriy period, the Soviet period and the period of independence.

METHODS

The object of the study is Xayriddin Sulton's novel "Yaldo kechasi" (Tashkent: Xaybar-25, 2025) [10], and its subject is the genre-typological features of the work. The theoretical basis of the research consists of the classical theory of the historical novel (G. Lukács) [1] and the interpretations of the genre in national literary studies (T. Boboyev, O. Sharafiddinov, U. Normatov) [2]. The empirical material comprises the text of the novel, the author's own genre definition and his statements about how the work was created, the assessments given by scholars at the presentation of the novel, and scholarly articles and media materials about the work published in recent months [3]–[9]. The study applies genre-typological analysis; historical and literary contextualisation of the novel within the three stages of development of the Uzbek historical novel; comparative-typological analysis of the novel against the tradition of sequels and rewritings of classical works in world literature; and a descriptive review of the current scholarly literature on the novel.

RESULTS

In defining the genre features of "Yaldo kechasi", the author's own definition – "artistic fiction based on historical documents" – is of particular importance. In contrast to the traditional term "historical novel", this definition directly indicates that the work was created on two planes, at the boundary between documentariness and artistry.

The novel demonstrates the renewal of the genre through several interrelated artistic-typological features. The first and most distinctive of these is that the work was created as a "sequel" to Abdulla Qodiriy's novel "O'tkan kunlar" in the manner of literary mystification. The author presents the work as if it were Qodiriy's discovered manuscript, a document later delivered to a publishing house by an unknown émigré. Literary scholars note that this is a technique used for the first time in Uzbek national prose, through which the writer establishes a new kind of artistic and aesthetic link between a classical work and the modern reader. Although the "sequel novel" model is known in world literature (for example, the tradition of independent sequels written to classical works), in Uzbek prose it has for the first time been filled with historical and national content on such a broad scale. The artistic function of literary mystification is that it strengthens the reader's belief that the work is based on a genuine historical document, as a result of which the artistic interpretation of historical events is perceived as more impactful; at the same time, this technique gives the author the freedom to continue Qodiriy's style while introducing new ideological and artistic layers from the standpoint of his own time.

The second feature, organically linked with literary mystification, is the deep fusion of documentariness and artistic fiction in the novel. As the author acknowledges, the work is the



result of studying, over almost six years, thousands of documents found in archives and collections, materials of the Jadid-era press (in particular the newspaper “Najot”) and historical sources. As Nurboy Jabborov, Doctor of Philological Sciences, has noted, the author took on a great historical responsibility and, relying on extensive archival materials, portrayed through the images of three generations the historical trials that the people and the Motherland have lived through, according to artistic logic. As a result of this approach, in contrast to the traditional historical novel, the work offers the reader a new reading experience that invites the reader to grasp independently the boundary between document and artistic imagination. This is a distinctive synthesis that stands close to the trend known in contemporary world literary studies as “documentary prose” or the “factographic novel”, yet is enriched by the national tradition of literary mystification.

In turn, this synthesis of documentariness and artistry acquires broader artistic and philosophical content through the third important feature of the novel – the fates of the three generations that form its compositional basis (the generation of Otabek, Yodgorbek and his contemporaries, and the generation that followed them). Through this, the work embraces the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the 1920s–1930s – Tsarist and Soviet colonial rule, the Jadid movement, the tragedies of famine and repression – as a unified historical and artistic panorama. According to literary scholars, it is precisely through this chain of generations that the novel forms the concept of “national memory”, that is, creates a holistic image of the nation’s fate through a chain of personal destinies. From this point of view, the title of the novel, “Yaldo kechasi”, also carries deep symbolic meaning: through the metaphor of the longest and darkest night of the year, the author expresses the hard period the nation has lived through; yet, just as every night gives way to dawn, the work in its essence also embodies the idea of hope and spiritual revival. Such a symbolic and metaphorical device creates in the historical novel not only a system of events but also a philosophical and conceptual layer.

The analysis shows that Xayriddin Sulton’s novel “Yaldo kechasi” has renewed the Uzbek historical novel genre in three main directions: first, through literary mystification it introduced into national prose the model of creating a “sequel” to a classical work; second, it synthesised documentariness and artistic fiction at a new level; and third, through the fates of three generations it turned the concept of national memory into a holistic philosophical and artistic system. Together, these three features provide sufficient scholarly grounds to distinguish the novel from traditional examples of the historical novel and to assess it as a new stage in the development of the genre.

DISCUSSION

Considering the literary mystification used in the novel in the context of world literature helps to define its novelty more precisely. The tradition of “sequels” or “rewritings” of classical works is not new in world literature; as examples one may cite works found in various national



literatures that continue the plotlines of famous works or extend the fates of their characters. In most such works, however, imitation of the original author's style remains largely an artistic game or a stylistic exercise, whereas the distinctive feature of "Yaldo kechasi" is that stylistic imitation is closely bound up with historical and documentary grounding: the author applies not only Qodiriy's language but also the source-studies methodology of his time; that is, the work is not merely "writing in Qodiriy's manner" but also performs the task of "researching history by Qodiriy's method". It is therefore insufficient to explain the novel only through the terms "stylisation" or "pastiche"; what is at issue here is a new genre form of a genuinely creative and research character, which may provisionally be called "documentary mystification" or the "historical-archival novel".

The scholarly soundness of these three features (and of a fourth, revealed through typological comparison) is also confirmed by research published in recent times. That a number of scholarly articles on "Yaldo kechasi" have been published in recent months shows how relevant the subject has become among researchers. In particular, studies devoted to the interpretation of historical memory and national thought in the work have examined the historical-artistic and aesthetic aspects of the novel and the relationship between the individual and society. Another study has analysed, using the same work as an example, the ways in which historical truth is transformed into artistic truth in Uzbek national novel-writing. Another group of researchers has studied the artistic interpretation of folklore elements in the novel and the ways in which national and cultural values are expressed, while in linguistic research the semantic features of introductory and parenthetical constructions in the language of the work have become a separate object of analysis. All of these studies provide grounds for interpreting "Yaldo kechasi" not one-sidedly but as a complex literary phenomenon that must be studied in many dimensions – historical-philosophical, artistic-aesthetic, national-cultural and linguistic-stylistic; therefore, the genre-typological analysis proposed in this article can also be regarded as a part of this broad scholarly discussion.

At the same time, it should be emphasised that the scholarly and literary discussion of the novel is still an ongoing process: its genre nature, the degree of its connection with the Qodiriy tradition, and its typological comparison with the experience of the world documentary-historical novel open a wide field for future research. In particular, a comparative analysis of the novel with the tradition of "sequels to classical works" in the literatures of other peoples, as well as the prospects of including it in school and higher-education literature curricula, may become a separate research topic. In conclusion, "Yaldo kechasi" is a phenomenon that, in terms of not only content but also genre and form, should be entered into literary history as a work marking a new stage in contemporary Uzbek prose.



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