

GENRE SEARCHES IN THE CHECHEN PROSE OF THE 50S-80S

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Abstract: *The article considers the period of development of Chechen literature after the return of Chechens from Stalin's deportation to Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The 50s and 80s are characterized as the years of the revival and further development of various genres of Chechen literature. In this regard, the authors of the article pay attention to the creativity not only of the initiators of Chechen literature, but also to the achievements of their followers and successors, such as S. Baduev, S. Arsanov, A. Mamakaev, N. Muzaev, M. Mamakaev, H. Oshayev, R. Akhmatova, A. Aydamirov, S. Okuev, M. Bek Sultanov, K. Ibrahimov and others. The article discusses the genres of poetry, drama, tales, story and novels. The interrelation of Chechen literature with the literatures of the peoples of the North Caucasus is indicated.*

Keywords: Chechen literature, classics, deportation, drama, genre, Kazakhstan, novel, poetry, revolution, story, tale.

Chechen literature in the second half of the 50s is distinguished by thematic and genre diversity. In the formation of the literature of this period, an important role was played by the new moral atmosphere in society after the return of the Chechens and Ingush from the Stalinist deportation. The end of the 1950s is a time of fundamental changes in the inner world and in the civic position of people.¹ This was reflected primarily in poetry. Its standard-bearers were poets of the older generation: M. Mamakaev, N. Muzaev, B. Saidov, A. Mamakaev, A. Suleymanov, M. Sulayev, H. Edilov, and others. Some of them were the founders of Chechen poetry in the 20s. The topic „Personality and Society” occupied a special role in their work, interrupted by war and expulsion to Siberia and Central Aziai in 1944. The years spent far from the homeland exacerbated the sound of this topic. The poetry of those years is filled with thoughts about the fate of the people; it gave depth and sincerity to new verses. At the same time, there are not only national, but also universal problems in poetry of the 50s.²

A characteristic feature of the works of poets of the 60-80s was a lyrical and philosophical understanding of the life of the people. The lyrical hero of

¹ Kh. V. Turkaev, *The problem of the moral choice of the lyrical hero in Chechen poetry of the second half of the 50s-early 60s. Poetry and timeliness. Questions of creative individuality of the poets of the Chechen-Ingush Republic and the mutual enrichment of artistic cultures*, Grozny, 1989, p. 22.

² A. M. Khusikhanov, *Ideological and philosophical quest in poetry N. Muzaeva. Poetry and timeliness. Questions of creative individuality of the poets of the Chechen-Ingush Republic and the mutual enrichment of artistic cultures*, Grozny, 1989, p. 109.

their works is guided in life by three values. The first is his homeland where the fathers lived; the second topic is the Caucasus. Finally, the third is the Soviet Union, Russia.

The theme of the story was continued in prose of the 50s - 80s. The novels of H. Oshayev „Fiery Years”, M. Mamakayev „Murid Revolution” and „Zelimkhan”, A. Aydamirov „Name of Freedom” and „Long Nights”, Sh. Okuev „Red Flowers on Snow” and „Prologue” appeared. In these works, the authors associated significant events in the history of Chechnya with the fate of the heroes. The synthesis of documentary, journalism and artistic fiction became the background on which it was told about the fate of a person at a specific historical moment. The heroes of the novels, Russians and Chechens, are fighting together for a bright future.

In the second half of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s, writers focused on topical issues of modern times that required artistic understanding. The genres of the novel and the romance became popular in literature, including: „Rise” by A. Aydamirov, „At dawn, when the stars are extinguished” by M. Akhmadov, „Smell of rotten foliage” by I. Elsanov, and „Melodies of the Motherland” by S.-H. Nunuev. Each author in his own way decides the theme of the formation of the moral position of the hero in the modern world. Chechen writers considered the problem of man, his historical roots, inheritance of the moral and ethical traditions and ethics of the people.³

The end of the 50s - the beginning of the 80s of the 20th century is a new stage in the development of Chechen literature. Young authors, whose work later had a strong influence on the spiritual atmosphere of the modern Chechen society, appeared at that time along with the older generation of writers S.-B. Arsanov, M. Mamakayev, H. Oshayev.

S.-B. Arsanov in the novel „When Friendship is Cognized” describes life in Chechnya at the crossroads of epochs, relationships within Chechen society, its relations with the tsarist administration, and the fate of individuals. The writer shows the great events of the revolutionary time through the life of his main character, through his experiences and reflections. Times change, society changes and the main character comes to the idea of the need for an active, constructive position in life, the need to protect his own human and national dignity.

In this novel, Arsanov appears as a mature writer, a master of words, who creates vivid pictures of the life of Chechens, the spiritual and socio-political atmosphere of turbulent events at the turn of the century.

A notable event in the cultural life of Chechen society was Khalid Oshayev's novel *Fiery Years*. Due to the fact that the author was an eyewitness and participant in the revolutionary events, he met N. Gikalo, A. Sheripov and other revolutionaries, knew the background of many events in the Caucasus, he manages to create a realistic, almost documentary, picture of the fiery years of

³ A. M. Khusikhanov, *Genre originality of Okuev's dilogy „Red flowers in the snow”*, Grozny, 1986, p. 109.

revolution.

A novel by another Chechen literature classic by Magomet Mamakayev „Murid Revolution” is dedicated to the same era. The writer tells about the bright and tragic fate of Aslanbek Sheripov, the commander of the Chechen Red Army, the leader of the revolutionary movement in Chechnya. Aslanbek, an educated and courageous man, saw in the revolution the only opportunity for his people to become free and build a new life, get rid of royal oppression, poverty, outdated traditions and obscurantism. He firmly believed in the ideals of the revolution and gave his life for it.

The next novel, *Zelimkhan* (1968), is also devoted to a historical figure - the famous abrek (brigand) Zelimkhan Kharachoevsky, a man who, during his lifetime, became a legend, who terrified royal officials and gendarmes of the North Caucasus for many years.

Zelimkhan of Mamakayev also has all the qualities of a hero, but at the same time, he remains an ordinary person who dreams of a quiet and peaceful life. The writer shows how Zelimkhan, because of the arbitrariness and stupidity of the tsarist officials, is forced to choose the path of the abrek (brigand) and to protect himself and all the dispossessed. However, his every victory turns into brutal repression against his relatives, friends, ordinary people who helped and sympathized with him. Faced with a huge and ruthless state machine, Zelimkhan understands the doom of his struggle, but he has no way back.

The novel touches upon such problems of oppression of Chechens by tsarist officials. In Zelimkhan's face, the writer shows us the Abrek as a people's avenger and a fighter against social injustice.

„Zelimkhan” is not just a novel that glorifies the exploits of the main character, Abrek Zelimkhan, but also the personification of the pain and helplessness of the Chechen people in the face of power.

The story takes its origin from the Maiden Spit spring, where the beautiful Zezag, taking water into a copper jug, met Soltamurad, Zelimkhan's brother. Their love will cause a very unexpected turn of events, without which both the patriotism of our heroes and their courage would cover oblivion.

*„Is she to blame if the time has come and the desire to love and be loved by a person worthy of her has awakened in her soul?”*⁴ However, this love led to the death of innocent people and marked the beginning of feats in the history of the Chechens. In her deep reflections, Zezag attributed the blame for the terrible events to the meeting place with Soltamurad.

⁴ M. Mamakayev, *Zelimkhan*. Grozny, Chechen-Ingush book publishing house, 1981, p. 2.

„Maiden Spit” is not the only name of the spring, but it is also called „Spit of unhappy girl”. The legend tells about a girl who intended to flee with her beloved from her father's house, but an angry father threw a dagger at them, which was stuck in the back of his daughter. Having scattered a long braid over the stones, she fell on a hillock, over which the silver spring ran the next morning, resembling the poor maiden's scythe. So the people called him "Spit of unhappy girl."

The happy lovers were not destined to stay together, because not only Soltamurad but also the son of the foreman of the Vedeno district fell in love with the daughter of Khushulla. Having enlisted the consent of the police officer Chernov, they took her away from Soltamurad, accusing him of forcibly abducting the girl, and placed her in the house of Kharachoevsky elder Adoda. There was no one to rescue her from this captivity, even the old father only muttered that this was the will of Allah. Zezag could not reconcile with his bitter fate, but she could only obey the desires above it. *„Her parents brought her up like this-obedient to the ancient customs of the mountains, accustomed to conceal their desires and thoughts, accustomed to obeying the will of the strong”*.⁵ This story marked the beginning of the struggle of the main character with the power and his victory over them. His life and death were proof of the inexorable fervor of the true sons of his people, who, even after his death, will continue this struggle in the name of the Motherland and of their nation.

Before the outbreak of events, Zelimkhan was a family man and did not even think about the fate of the abrek. When he set out to marry Sotamurad's younger brother, this attempt led to a sudden conflict: the relatives of Zezag gave her away for another. There was a clash between young people, during which a relative of Zelimkhan was killed. In response, a person from a hostile family was punished. Later they concluded a truce, but the authorities began to make inquiries. The head of the precinct, who received a bribe for a false accusation, pointed to Zelimkhan, his father and two brothers. Thus, a legal justification was found for the arrest of Zelimkhan and his relatives.

*„Soltamurad was not killed or imprisoned, but left lonely in the wild, so people would laugh at him... Yes, so they would laugh at him. Is it possible to come up with a more severe punishment for a man?”*⁶ This book reveals the customs and traditions of the Chechen people. The above quotation is evidence of the extraordinary manners of this extraordinary people. Not educated, living in poverty, they have not lost their true values and are ready to fight for

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

them at the cost of their own lives. Words of honor and dignity are not empty sounds for them, it is the air with which they live-if they are deprived of it, then life will lose its meaning. Zelimkhan, finding like-minded people interested in escaping from prison, can escape from there. This is the beginning of his hectic life, full of hardships, wanderings and struggles.

„Zelimkhan did not become an Abrek from an easy life. The tsarist regime's breakdown of national traditions, vital principles, injustice overwhelmed patience"- they write in the newspaper after the death of the abrek.

„The law of the ancestors can ensure order and restore justice”.⁷ Subjecting to this rule, he administered the trial of the oppressors and gave the poor what was rightfully theirs. He was a problem for the authorities, from which it was necessary to get rid of, but the people called him „the defender of the disadvantaged”. He was a hero and protector of the people, a symbol of the struggle for justice and freedom.

„All people are divided into two parts: some are rich and strong, others are weak and poor. The rich and powerful rob and offend the weak and the poor. I don't rob, just take the loot from the rich and return this wealth to its owners-the poor”.⁸ Zelimkhan says so to his mother. The conviction of the correctness of his decisions and the whole nation that rebelled with him supported his spirit in this difficult struggle. He lost his father, brothers, friends, but did not put weapons, and fought even harder. Abreks had massive support among the mountaineers and reflected popular discontent with colonial oppression. The people looked at the Abreks as their defenders and defended them, sheltering from the royal authorities. The opposition of the Abreks to the authorities was widely reflected in the folklore of the Chechens and other peoples of the Caucasus. Without this support, Zelimkhan could not fight. There was this battle of the whole nation.

The proverb says that "one man in the field is no warrior." However, the abrek showed that one in the field can not only be a warrior, but also a winner. After the revolution, the Bolsheviks declared him a national hero of the Caucasus, wrote in books and magazines that Zelimkhan was not just an abrek, but an abrek revolutionary. The Ossetian writer Dzaho Gatuyev, to whom Magomet Mamakayev devotes his work „Zelimkhan” as a teacher and mentor, published the biographical book about Zelimkhan.

The article by A. Makeyev „The Hero Killed” appeared in the newspaper „Responses of the Caucasus” dated October 8, 1913 after the death of Zelimkhan. The author wrote: „I cannot believe that Zelimkhan was killed. We see a hero in him. He refused to go to the ministers of the Persian Shah, saying: "I do not want to

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

fight against some people." He loved freedom, was brave, noble. He went to his wife and children when he was killed. Those who caught him are black people. They will remain unknown. No tales will be told about them, no songs will be sung. A poem will be composed about Zelimkhan, maybe an opera. Pushkin and Lermontov admired such highlanders. I don't want to believe in Zelimkhan's death!" A film about Zelimkhan was shot, poems are composed, a book was written, and the other „black people” have sunk into oblivion of the darkness of time. „I have erected a sign of immortality for myself”⁹-these words of the Russian poet and physicist Lomonosov can also be attributed to Abrek Zelimkhan. Zelimkhan fought for the truth and died for it, like a true man and a highlander. After his death, the Chechens lost their support and their powerful force, but the struggle will continue, as this people is a holder of a free spirit who will not submit to anyone. „They can disfigure my body, break my bones and even kill me. Then they will have only my corpse, but not my submission”⁹ said Zelimkhan during his lifetime and did not retreat from his words.

Three love live in the hearts of the mountaineers until their last heartbeat: to the fatherland, their people, Freedom! Mamakayev does not consider his struggle vain and useless. Zelimkhan showed that one must fight for one's human dignity and freedom. He gave hope to ordinary people for the possibility of justice in this world, that even evil, no matter how omnipotent, can be punished. Abrek inspired such fear to the enemies that they were afraid of him even the dead.

Along with the image of Zelimkhan, the writer creates realistic and lively, psychologically authentic characters of his companions, relatives, royal officials, details of the life of the Chechens, the atmosphere of the life of the society of the beginning of the XX century.

Roman Abuzar Aidamirov „Long Nights” is dedicated to historical events of the second half of the XIX century in Chechnya. This work had a strong influence on the spiritual and moral state of Chechen society. The point is not in the artistic merit of the novel, but in the philosophy of Chechen history, in the new assessment of the role of famous historical figures in the fate of Chechnya, first of all Imam Shamil. A. Aydamirov shows Shamil as an intelligent, educated person, a subtle politician, and a good commander. However, the interests of the Chechen people are completely alien to him. The Imam uses the love of freedom, courage, and militancy of the Chechens to achieve their goals - the creation of a hereditary theocratic monarchy. Nevertheless, being sure that these same qualities of Chechens can prevent him from establishing unlimited personal power in the Imamate, he destroys their traditional culture, free spirit and independence, ethnic identity, self-esteem under the pretext of strengthening Islam.

According to A. Aydamirov, spiritual death, the loss of national dignity, ethnic identity is much worse than the burned houses and arable land, cut down forests for the people in their consequences. The novel „Long Nights” was a

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

warning to modern generations of Chechens, but, unfortunately, no one heard him.¹⁰

Roman "The Republic of the Four Rulers" of Shima Okuev is a wide epic canvas, with a large geographic coverage and event and time layers. The writer appears in it as the established master of the word, a great connoisseur of the native language, oral folk art. The novel came out after the writer's death, but became a real literary event for the Chechen society.

In the 1950s – 1980s, along with prose, Chechen dramaturgy also developed, especially the comedy genre. New names appear in it (Abdul Khamidov, Bilal Saidov, Lecha Yakhyayev, Ruslan Khakishev, Said-Khamzat Nunuev).

A. Khamidov's play „The Fall of God Ali” became popular. It was a comedy with a rich, aphoristic language. Although its characters were caricatured, they were alive, recognizable, as if snatched from real life. The realism, domestic and psychological authenticity of the characters that made this comedy legendary. Many quotes from the play have become sayings.

If Chechen prose is dominated by interest in the past, in history, in historical events and personalities, then Chechen poetry of this period (late 50s - early 80s) is characterized by a special attention to the inner life of a person, to his feelings, philosophical understanding of life, lyricism. This is a feature of the poetic creativity of not only young authors (Magomed Sulaev, Khasmagomed Edilov, Bilal Saidov, Musbek Kibiev, Sheikhi Arsanukaev), but also poets of the older generation (Magomet Mamakayev, Nurdin Muzaev).

In the 1980s, a new generation of Chechen writers and poets appeared, whose work determines the level and condition of Chechen literature today. They are Musa Akhmadov, Musa Beksultanov, Said-Khamzat Nunuev, Aпти Bisultanov, Umar Yarichev, Kant Ibragimov, German Sadulayev.

Modern Chechen literature today is represented by a huge number of genres and writers, some of which have already become classics (Musa Akhmadov, Musa Beksultanov, Umar Yarichev), others have received the recognition of critics and readers (Kant Ibragimov, German Sadulayev).

¹⁰ Kh. V. Turkaev, *In the family of fraternal literatures*, Groznyi, 1983, p. 101.