

Europe in Works of Arab Travelers of the Middle Centuries

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Abstract

The article examines the essence of the travel genre in Russian and world literature. It presents the scientific views and points of view of several researchers on the definition of the travel genre. It is noted that the central figure in the literature of travel is a man, he wanders, goes to unknown countries and locations, learns their history, geography, and ethnography, sees the inside of foreign cultures, and life of the people, learns languages, that is spiritually developed and enriched. At the same time, on the way you are learning about yourself, better understanding your character, interests, spiritual roots and traditions, your country and people, you are learning everything by comparison. The attractiveness of the genre for writers and its popularity among readers is understandable. The article examines the descriptions of interesting information by Karakalpak writers who have travelled abroad in different years. In addition to descriptions of historical sites, educational and pedagogical matters are considered, and the personal evaluation and conclusions of the travellers are expressed. It is noted that the works of the travel genre first appeared in verse form, and then acquired prose form, describing the observations, impressions of the traveller, his discovery, and adventure. The article is an attempt to trace the main stages in the evolution of the literary journey genre, the peculiarities of its development, appearance, and functioning, to consider the uniqueness of the genre and its poetics, using specific works of travel literature.

Keywords: diary, encounter, essay, journey, motive, travel

1. Introduction

The travel genre is a relatively understudied form of literature. Literary travel is a genre of fiction based on the description of a real or imaginary journey in real or imaginary space by a travelling character, an eyewitness who describes little-known or unknown domestic or foreign realities and phenomena, his thoughts, feelings, and impressions that arose during the journey, as well as a narrative of the events that took place at the time of travel. The author's approach and artistic way of thinking are based on the unusual perception and reflection of the facts of reality which, together with the informational and cognitive plan and the hero's movement in space, form the basis for the plot of the works of this genre. However, the necessary research on the topic raised by the author has not been conducted to the necessary extent. It was the relevance and insufficient development of this topic that determined its choice.

2. Literature Review

Since ancient times people have been attracted by wandering and travelling, probably they were interested to know about life and culture of other people, another country. Not in vain, some people became dervishes, wanderers, leading an ascetic way of life, they learned a lot of interesting and unusual. The travellers, as time passed, learned about the culture and life of the local people, and the knowledge the travellers broadened, so they began to make profitable deals with foreign countries. They were the people who could manage to establish trade relations and bring valuable merchandise and fascinating books with them. These books were copied on the skins of animals and began to spread among the people. The people, in this way, formed a certain impression of their neighbours in the territory and foreign countries. In this, the role of the intelligent and literate people of the time was great and visible.

The scientific novelty of the work is determined by the fact that it contains an attempt to consider the peculiarities of the functioning of the genre in specific historical and literary eras.

3. Methods and Materials

This article uses a set of approaches to the phenomena of verbal creativity: historical and genetic, cultural and structural analysis elements were used. The author relied on the theoretical and methodological ideas of such researchers as O.G. Bolshakov, A.N. Mongait, G.L. Abramovich, and I.Yu. Krachkovsky, L.I. Timofeev, M.P. Vengrov, V.M. Guminsky, N.M. Maslova.

The problem of defining the genre of literary travel is relatively new. Back in the sixties this kind of literature was not unequivocally understood as a genre. For example, the "Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms" by M.P. Vengrov and L.I. Timofeev refers to a journey as "a literary work which recounts a real or imaginary journey to a foreign, unknown or unfamiliar land. The journey describes observations, impressions of the traveller, his discoveries and adventures" (Abramovich, 1964, p. 485).

4. Discussion

The most comprehensive and versatile approach is the view of Guminsky (1987): The journey is a literary genre, based on the description of the traveler (eyewitness) reliable information about something, primarily unknown to the reader or little known, countries, lands, peoples in the form of notes, notes, diaries journals), essays, memoirs. In addition to cognitive ones, the journey may have additional – aesthetic, political, journalistic, philosophical, and other tasks; a special kind of literary – narrative of fictional, imaginary journeys, with a dominant ideological and artistic element, to some extent following the descriptive principles of documentary travel. (p.34)

Among the genre-forming aspects of form and content, the author also notes «the complex interaction of documentary, artistic and folklore forms, united by the image of the travelling hero contrasting «his own». The author notes the characteristic focus of the narrative on the relationship to the homeland, which serves as the work's peculiar center.

Researcher N.M. Maslova considers «journey» as a special publicist form and as a «publicist genre»; «journey», in her opinion, is one of the names of «travel notes» that appeared and developed in the stream of publicist of the XVIII-XIX centuries (Maslova, 1977, p. 115). Among the genre features inherent in the genre, N.M. Maslova calls «the creation of a holistic picture of the displayed social reality, the versatility of its description and the active role of the author – «traveler», eyewitness as an actor in the events described, the subjectivity of the author's approach». Thus, N.M. Maslova's viewpoint contains elements of a different interpretation of the essence of the literary travel genre as a compilation of several genre forms. This view is all the more ambiguous because literary travels are, at their core, open compositional, and have a potential openness of form: the basis of travel is «a specific alternation of pictures of various social phenomena, historical excursions, sketches». Maslova divides journeys into «research-disclosure» and «relaxed narration about people, about the place», and remains faithful to her scientific position of considering the genre of «journeys» in terms of their belonging to publicism.

As you know that the travel essay gives the author unlimited opportunities for creativity. In addition to its cognitive nature, the travel essay may also have aesthetic, political, journalistic, philosophical, and other objectives. The material for the travel essay is, of course, observations and impressions of the author, meetings, new countries, cities, locations, etc. Characteristics of the genre are descriptions of the road, route, means of transport, landscape, architecture, house interiors, ethnographic observations, portraits of characters encountered along the way, dialogues, and confessions. The author of the journey describes not only what he has seen, impressions, and feelings, but also reflects and draws conclusions. The narrative peculiarity of the travel essay is the inseparability and consistency of description.

The names of famous travellers of the Middle Centuries such as Marco Polo, Plano Carpini, William Rubrik, and Afanasiy Nikitin are well known to the world. Their courage, persistence, and curiosity have helped Europe to get to know faraway semi-mythical lands, at least to dispel the fog of medieval fantasy worldview. But the Eastern travellers, who discovered Europe for their compatriots, are less known, although their information was not only interesting for their contemporaries but is still very important for the history of Eastern and Central Europe, for the whole world, first of all for the future generation (Bolshakov, 1971, p. 135).

Arabic geographical literature has preserved a lot of information collected from merchants, travellers, and scientists about the history and ethnography of many countries of the world. The information of Arabic authors about Eastern Europe is the most important historical source. Only three travellers have visited Eastern Europe and left compositions about Slavs: Ibn Fadlan, who was not actually in Slavic lands, but in Bulgar, on the Volga in 921-922 he met Slavic merchants; Ibn Yakub, who got extensive information about Slavs during his trip to Southern Germany to Otton I court in the second half of X century, and Abu Hamid al-Garanti, the only Arab traveller to have visited the Russian lands between 1150 and 1153 (Krachkovsky, 1939, p. 193).

Abu Hamid al-Garanti certainly does not stand up to comparison with Marco Polo, but his unassuming accounts of what he saw in the Volga region, Russia and Hungary are not only curious as eyewitness accounts but are also valuable historical documents.

As is usual in the writings of oriental travellers, Abu Hamid's notes of personal observations are mixed with heard legends and tales. Abu Hamid thought marvellous things that now seem commonplace to us. To a Grenadian native who had spent much of his life in Baghdad and Damascus, snow and skiing seemed an extraordinary wonder.

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahim al-Andalusi was born in Grenada in 1080. Grenada in Arabic is Garnata, hence the relative name of al-Garanti. He probably got the usual theological-philological education for his time, he was able to compose poems, but he did not feel attracted to poetry. His speciality was Muslim law, fiqh, in which he also made little progress. At a young age, al-Garanti left Andalusia to continue his education in the center of the Muslim world. By sea, past Sicily and Malta, he arrived in Alexandria in 1117-18, attended lectures by scholars, then moved to Cairo, then the second (after Baghdad) cultural center of the Muslim world. In Cairo and Alexandria, al-Garanti not only listened to the lectures of theologians and grammarians but also studied Egypt's antiquities with great interest. He saw the lighthouse of Faro, climbed inside the pyramid of Cheops, and saw the obelisk at Ain Shams, which, like the Faro lighthouse, had not survived. In the bustling bazaars of Cairo, he met representatives of various African nationalities and their outlandish wares. Egypt also had a lively trade with the Far East at that time, where one could meet people who had been to India and even China. All these impressions will be reflected in the writings of al-Garanti decades later.

After some time, al-Garanti headed for Baghdad, then the spiritual capital of the Muslim world. His journey lay through Ascalon, Baalbek, and Damascus, in the latter he lingered to teach hadith. From there through Tadmor (Palmyra) he arrived in Baghdad in 1122-23. In Baghdad al-Garanti lived for four years, enjoying the hospitality of Ibn Hubayrah, the future vizier of several caliphs. Such journeys from city to city «in search of knowledge» was common to Muslim scholars of the time. In 1130 he is in Abkhar, on his way to Ardebil, a major city of South Azerbaijan, although that was not the purpose of his journey, as in the same year he crosses the mountains to the Mugan steppe and from there he reaches Derbent via the Apsheron Peninsula. The following year al-Garanti was already living in Saksin, a town in the lower reaches of the Volga. In Derbent he was received by an emir, whom he taught lessons in Muslim law; local jurists gathered in Saksin, and people came to him to solve difficult cases. Saksin became al-Garanti's home for 20 years. From there he travelled to Bulgar (1135-36), where he

stayed for at least a winter and a summer, and twice to Khwarezm. It is possible that on some trips, especially to Khorezm, he may have carried out diplomatic assignments.

In 1150 al-Garanti from Bulgar goes to Russia, having passed on some of «the Slavic rivers». He is the only Muslim author who has visited Russia and informs such interesting information which is not found even in Russian sources. Acquaintance with Pechenegs, whose nomads stretched from the Volga to the Danube, undoubtedly played a role in the choice of the further route - Abu Hamid went to Hungary, where nomadic Türks, largely Islamized, were an important strike force in the hands of the Hungarian kings. Here al-Garanti acts as a mentor to the Muslim nomads: some he teaches rituals, and others become his disciples. Al-Garanti lived in Hungary for three years (1150-1153), and his old age approached, it was time to fulfil the duty of a Muslim to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. For forty years of wandering, al-Garanti had seen as many unusual things as his interlocutors in Baghdad had never dreamed of: the Pillars of Hercules and distant Hungary, the cold of Bulgar, and the short summer nights, log cabins, and the vast Itil River teeming with unusually tasty fish. All this was so amazing that the listeners willingly believed both the tale of the girl who came out of a whale's ear and all sorts of other wonders. The delighted listeners begged Abu Hamid to write down his account of what he had seen and heard. He hesitated, for he did not consider himself capable of composing, but the success of the book surpassed all expectations of the author. After writing *Magrib al-bad* in 1162, he wrote *Tuhfat al-* in Mosul, after which al-Garanti moved to Syria where he died in 1169-70, aged seventy. Al-Garanti's unsophisticated works became very popular. Subsequently, V.V. Bartold published a fragment of a text about zirihs from it. Muurib is essentially a record of the author's travels, of what he saw and heard in faraway countries. Its language is very simple with evident colloquial intonations and sometimes there are awkward repetitions typical for oral speech recorded by a listener rather than for a written work.

To what extent can we trust the reports of Muurib about Eastern Europe, not the fantastic and easily distinguishable stories about a girl who came out of a whale's ear, or about a wonderful domed building in Khorezm with inaccessible treasures, but such important information as, for example, about the fur money. The answer can be only one: the information of al-Garanti is the information of an eyewitness, the entire story is so direct that there is no reason to suspect him not only of fabrication but also that he borrowed it from unreliable informants. One can find obvious exaggerations like the miraculous lizard he saw somewhere in the Carpathians, but we must remember that we are faced with a typical man of the Middle Ages, easily allowing the miraculous and explaining everything that is not understood. On the other hand, in all that concerns every day, al-Garanti is scrupulously accurate. This work by al-Garanti is a story of a 12th-century Arab traveller who visited the territory of modern Dagestan, the Volga region, the Carpathians, and other places in Eastern Europe.

Travel notes occupy a significant place in Russian literature of the 18th and 19th centuries. Russian researcher Maltseva noted:

The increased interest in the age of science and enlightenment for cognition of the world in all its manifestations, including cognition of everyday life, culture, natural conditions of Russia and other countries, the study of the geography of the Earth, its flora and fauna, gave rise to numerous travels, which caused the appearance of a large number of their descriptions. A qualitatively new stage in the history of the development of the genre was the use of travel notes to create literary and artistic works of sentimentalism. (p. 130)

In such works, as a rule, the author's attention is focused primarily on describing the feelings, and experiences of the hero, everything is described in refraction through the perception of the traveller. For example, «Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow» by A.N. Radishchev, and «Letters of a Russian Traveller» by Karamzin.

5. Results

The development of the travel genre in domestic, particularly Uzbek literature of the early twentieth century was greatly influenced by the entire world and especially European literature of the eighteenth century. But here we can only talk about development, as the travel genre has existed in Oriental literature, including Turkic-speaking literature, for several centuries. Undoubtedly, the best works of classical oriental poets, such as Nasir Hisrav, Navoi, Bobur, Mukimi, Zavki, Furkat, etc., were written in the genre of sayakhatnama (lit. genre identical to that of travel in European literature). While studying the evolution of the development of Kazakh travel sketches, Toibaev noted that «...Kazakh travel sketches originate from medieval Turkic classical works, and the peak of such works is «Baburnama» by Zakhiriddin Babur» (Toibaev, 2008, p. 36). However, works written in the genre of travel in Uzbek literature of the early 20th century significantly differ from the classical genre of «sayakhatnama» in terms of ideological and aesthetic content, composition, poetics, and style. While works of the classical Oriental travel genre were written mainly in verse, in the early 20th century they acquired prose form implemented in travel notes, fictional accounts of journeys, and travel sketches that resembled similar works of European enlightenment literature in form and content.

The narration in Fitrat's «Tales of an Indian traveller» is in the first person, which is characteristic of works written in the travel genre. The transition from the third person of an objective narrator to the first person of a direct eyewitness creates the effect of verisimilitude and reality of what he has seen and a measure of the necessary closeness of the hero to the reader. Through the eyes of a representative of another world, more civilized and enlightened, the author portrays his native Bukhara. It is under this image of a foreigner that the author himself hides. Our fathers were well aware of the meaning of the great saying: “Are those who know and those who do not know equal? - And, fully appreciating the importance of the study of science, they built two hundred madrassahs, from 10 to 150 rooms in each, and established 11 libraries for the necessary reading for students, collecting all the books existing at that time. There is no doubt that our ancestors did all this for us” (Fitrat, 1990, p. 134).

Literary works about travel began to appear in Uzbek literature in the early twentieth century. This can be seen in the works of Abdurauf Fitrat who wrote two works in this genre: «A Dispute Between a Bukhara Mudarris and a Frenchman in India about New-Methodical Schools (The True Result of an Exchange of Thoughts)» (1911) and «Tales of an Indian traveller», published in 1912 in Istanbul. Inspired by the Jadidist movement, Fitrat travelled to many countries in the Middle East and Europe. His years of study in Istanbul and teaching at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow broadened his interests, activities, reading, and consequently the influence of European, including Russian, literature on his work. In the genre of travel, this influence can be seen in the proximity to the philosophical dialogues of ancient and European literature. “Fitrat was familiar not only with Ahmad Donish's Rare Events, which described the journey of the Emir's delegation from Bukhara to Petersburg but also with

Alexander Radishchev's Journey from Petersburg to Moscow and with the works of the great scholars of the Middle East Renaissance” (Jalilova, 2005, p. 98).

In literary travel, unlike scientific and other types, the material is illuminated based on the author's artistic and ideological conception. The genre of the literary travelogue content-wise and compositionally reflects the tendency to pose and solve socially important problems. Travel notes on the structural and content level can combine elements of different genre forms – essay, and reportage. Necessary attributes of the genre content are the presence of a wide informative and cognitive material, motives of the road trip and meetings, patriotism, and the national and aesthetic position of the author and the travelling hero are evident (Shadrina, 2003).

6. Pedagogical Implications

Several representatives of the Karakalpak intelligentsia have visited different parts of the world as part of various delegations over the years. Of them, scholar Tazhen Izimbetov visited such countries as Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam in 1978 and dedicated his book *Journey to five countries by the ocean*. In Japan he draws attention to how the Japanese teach children from an early age to be clean and work hard, to educate them with simple accessible words about what and how they should act in various situations, without raising their voice at them and without punishing them (Izimbetov, 2011).

In 1988, writer and scholar Kamal Mambetov visits India and Sri Lanka to share his experiences in education. In a travelogue entitled *A Journey to India, Sri Lanka, and the Caucasus*, he tells us that there are only two deaneries at Delhi University - a humanities and natural sciences. In these, students choose their professors according to their literacy level, and the professors teach a group of six to 60 students for six years. The secret is that each professor has his or her school of excellence and the proficiency level of the professor is determined by the performance of their students. The author points out that the cost of education for the poor is free, they are paid a stipend from the government fund (Mambetov, 1993).

The Karakalpak poet Maten Seitniyazov writes about his travels to India, Pakistan, Turkey, Italy, Morocco, Sierra Leone, and Senegal in his travel essay «*Journey to Seven Countries of the World*». The author visits several countries around the world in 1970 as a member of a delegation, including such African states as Morocco, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. He gives a detailed account of the sights of Morocco, after arriving in the port of Casablanca, the interpreter Mustapha tells about the history of Morocco. As the author tells it, Morocco is the land of the Berbers. Until now, science has not been able to determine what ethnic composition the Berbers belong to. First, the Phoenicians came to the land of Morocco in the 12th century, followed by the Carthaginians, then the Romans, the Gauls, and the Goths from the north of Italy. They were followed by the Bedouin Arabs. In the 14th and 15th centuries the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Negroes arrived from the south and this is a brief history of Morocco. The delegation visits the Mohammed V Palace and the United Nations Square. Besides Casablanca, the author talks about the cities of Al-Jadid and Rabat. To get acquainted with Moroccan life and everyday life, they visit the family of Ahmed and Urkiya, a young couple. In Rabat, they visit the palace of Hassan Khan. The author talks in fascinating detail about the beauty and decoration of this palace, that it is built of red bricks, and behind the palace, there is a mosque with blue domes. Hassan Khan visits the mosque on Fridays and performs Friday prayers.

He is traditionally served by magazine niggers and he follows the established rule. The author is interested in the customs and traditions of those countries and admires the industriousness and hospitality of the Africans in his book (Seitniyazov, 1990).

Karakalpak writer Gulaysha Yesemuratova visits the United States in 1992, at the invitation of a collaborative effort. The author writes that these are not all the impressions gained from a trip to America, there are many there that can be applied at home, let's say concerning education. In the USA, children are taught according to their level of ability in science (Yesemuratova, 1995).

And the writer Zubaida Ishmanova visits several European countries - Italy, France, and Spain - on a tourist trip in 2016. She describes her trip in her book *Journey to Europe* in a fascinating way. As a member of the creative intelligentsia, she is interested in the upbringing and education in these countries. In France, she learns that students are forbidden to use modern gadgets and the Internet during classes, and that reading books is only allowed through the book itself. She was also surprised that she did not see any schoolchildren wandering, because, from childhood, children are taught to save time and value work (Ishmanova, 2019).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the genre of literary travel is a genre of fiction, it has its subject matter, genre content, and form. It is based on the description of the journey and the itinerary of the travelling protagonist. It recounts the events during the journey and describes the traveller's impressions and thoughts about what he or she has seen. Literary travels contain a lot of informational and educational material. The interest in the unusual, unfamiliar, or unknown world and the self-expression of a vivid individual personality in the form of travel links these works with Romanticism.

Travelling, travels, and trips are among the oldest ways of communication between people, so it is not surprising that numerous travel notes and stories emerged, which later formed a unique, special genre – the travel essay. Travel notes on the structural and content level can combine elements of different genre forms – essay, reportage, etc., literary travel is open to synthesis with other forms of literature.

The necessary attributes of genre content are extensive informational and educational material, road-travel and meeting motifs, obvious patriotism and national-aesthetic position of the author and the travelling character, truthfulness or reliability of the described material, categoricalness of author's assessments, conceptual approach of the author, targeting of notes, a reflection of the main moments of the traveller's travel along a certain route, the space reflection in religious or aesthetic-cultural aspects. During its creative evolution, the genre showed close links with literary trends and socio-political and cultural developments.

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