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THE RISE OF THE NOVEL IN KAZAKH LITERATURE

As one of the most important literary genres, the novel of new characteristics first emerged in Kazakh literature at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, early Kazakh novels have been questioned for their short length and immaturity in composition over the years. In the Soviet period, some scholars even suggested that the works before the October Revolution, such as Jamal the Unfortunate, Kalyn Mal, Girls Let's Have a Look, Beautiful Kamar and Sorrowful Mariam were not novels in real terms. In response to these questions, our article attempts to reinterpret prerevolutionary Kazakh novels from a new perspective and reveal their unique artistic value. With the help of Ian Watt and Michael Mckeeon's theories of the novel, our article re-examines the prerevolutionary Kazakh novels in terms of narrative, language, and thoughts, using historical and inductive methods. Our textual analysis proves that realistic narrative, prose language, and enlightenment thoughts are the main contributions of prerevolutionary Kazakh novels to Kazakh literature and the fundamental reasons they can be recognized as novels.

Key words: prerevolutionary Kazakh novels, Kazakh literature, enlightenment thoughts, realism.

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Қазақ әдебиетіндегі роман жанрының өрлеуі

Роман әдебиеттегі маңызды жанрлардың бірі деуге болады. Қазақ әдебиетінде жаңа сипатты роман XX ғасырдың басында пайда болды. Алайда, ұзақ жылдар бойы қазақ романдарының көлемі қысқа және композициясы жетілмеген деген пікірлер айтылып келді. Кеңес дәуірінде кейбір ғалымдар көзқарасы бойынша қазан төңкерісіне дейінгі «Бақытсыз Жамал», «Қалың мал», «Қыз көрелік», «Қамар сұлу», және «Мұңлы Мариям» секілді шығармалар нақты мағынада роман емес деген пікірлер де айтылды. Осы сұрақтарға жауап ретінде біздің мақалада жаңа сипатты қазақ романдарын дәстүрлі көркемдігін жаңа көзқараспен қайта қарастыруға және олардың бірегей көркемдік құндылығын ашуға әрекет жасалады. Ян Уотт пен Майкл Маккеонның роман теорияларын қолдана отырып, біздің мақаламызда Қазан төңкерісіне дейінгі қазақ романдары тарихи және индуктивті әдістерімен зерттелді. Олар баяндау әдісі, тіл және ой-санасы бейнелеу ерекшеліктері тұрғысынан қарастырылады. Көркем мәтінді талдау арқылы Қазан төңкерісіне дейінгі қазақ романдарының қазақ әдебиетіне қосқан негізгі үлесі реалистік баяндау мен басқа да бейнелеу тәсілдерін қолдануы бағытында талданады. Көркем проза тілін ағартушылық-демократтық ойлады суреттеуде шебер қолданылатыны дәлелденеді. Бұл шығармалардың роман жанры талаптарына сай екендігі нақты талдаулар арқылы көрсетілді.

Түйін сөздер: қазан төңкерісіне дейінгі қазақ романдары, Қазақ әдебиеті, ағартушылық ойлар, реализм.

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Возникновение романа в Казахской литературе

Роман – один из важнейших жанров в литературе. В казахской литературе новый характерный роман появился в начале XX века. Однако в течение многих лет были высказаны мнения о том, что у казахских романов короткий объем и несовершенная композиция. В советское время некоторые ученые утверждали, что такие дореволюционные произведения, как «Несчастливая Жамал», «Калым», «Смотрины», «Красавица Камар» и «Печальная Мариям» не были романами в реальном смысле. В ответ на данные вопросы наша статья пытается пересмотреть традиционное художественное оформление казахских романов и раскрыть их уникальную художественную ценность. Казахские романы, написанные в период до Октябрьской революции,

рассматриваются в работе с точки зрения исторического подхода и индуктивного метода. С этой целью автором используются теории романа Яна Уотта и Майкла Маккеона. Проводится анализ особенностей авторского мышления, повествования и языка. Анализ текста показывает, что основной вклад новых казахских романов в казахскую литературу состоит в их реалистическом повествовании и других изобразительных приемах. Доказано, что язык художественной прозы искусно используется в изображении просветительно-демократического мышления. То, что эти произведения соответствуют требованию жанра романа, было продемонстрировано путем детального анализа.

Ключевые слова: дореволюционные казахские романы, Казахская литература, идеи просвещения, реализм.

Introduction

As Mikhail Bakhtin once remarked, that the great heroes of literary and language “turn out to be first and foremost genres,” and the “trends” and “schools” are “but second – or third rank protagonists” (Bakhtin, 1981: 7). Indeed, genres have always been one of the most critical themes in literary researches. The field of genre studies blossomed in the twentieth century and witnessed a series of widely respected works such as Vladimir Propp’s *Fairy Tale Transformations*, Rosalie Colie’s *Genre-systems and the Functions of Literature*, Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Origin of Genres*, and so on. However, no matter how many works are dedicated to genre studies, researchers’ attention has always been focused on the novel, which is “the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted” (Bakhtin, 1981: 3). Since the novel as a genre is still developing, let’s not predict what it will be in the future, but concentrate instead on tracing the novel’s birth in our literature.

There are thousands of definitions of the novel in literature studies, but none of them can define it precisely, nor do they agree with each other; Someone says novels are “a book-length fictional prose narrative” (Quinn, 2006: 293), while the others claim, “the novel disregards the constraints that govern other literary forms, and acknowledges no obligatory structure, style, or subject-matter” (Baldick, 2001: 173). Maybe we have to agree with Cuddon that “If proliferation is a sign of incipient death, then the demise of the novel must be imminent” (Cuddon, 2013: 478). As a result, any attempt to confirm the birth of the novel by definition will end up in vain because works that satisfy some of the definitions must violate the others simultaneously, and the problem is that none of them endorses absolute authority.

When it comes to Kazakh literature, it will be even more complicated to find out the first novel as different versions of the History of Kazakh Lit-

erature have different sayings about it. For example, most scholars of the Soviet period, including B. Shalabaev, S. Khirabaev, and B. Kenzhebaev, agree that the novel *Kalyn Mal* (Dowry) is the first Kazakh novel. Scholars today tend to attribute the wrong view about the first Kazakh novel to the ban on the publication of the novel *Jamal the Unfortunate* during Soviet times. However, they ignore the fact that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, when scholars could discuss *Jamal the Unfortunate* publicly, some of them had already questioned its status as the first Kazakh novel. Akhmet Baitursynov, the founder of Kazakh literature study, once affirmed, “Although Mirzhakyp’s *Jamal the Unfortunate* is described as a novel, it is closer to a long story due to its short length” (Baitursynov, 2003: 166).

Baitursynov pointed out a common problem of early Kazakh novels, that is, their short length. This problem is not only seen in the novel *Jamal the Unfortunate* but also can be found in other prerevolutionary works. However, in existing Kazakh literature studies, we can not find any explanations of the reason why these works are taken as novels despite their short length. “There used to be no novel in Kazakh literature. The first one of us to write a novel was Mirzhakip Dulatov. His novel *Jamal the Unfortunate* was published in 1910” (Bokekhan, 2010: 255), affirmed Alikhan Bokhekan in 1914, as if the birth of the first Kazakh novel was self-evident. The only exception is perhaps the 10-volume “*History of Kazakh Literature*” published in 2010, which offers us an answer by making the following statement

Taiyr Zhomartbaev’s *Girl Let’s Have a Look* is a novella-level work in length. However, in the researches of literary critics such as Mukhtar Auezov, Beisenbai Kenzhebaev, Kaltai Mukhamedzhanov, Belgibai Shalabaev, this level of work at the beginning of the twentieth century, to be precise, Mirzhakip Dulatov’s *Jamal the Unfortunate*, Taiyr Zhomartbaev’s *Girls Let’s have a look*, Spantiar Kopeev’s *Kalyn Mal* (Dowry), Sultanmakhmut Toraiyrov’s *Beautiful Kamar*, Shakarim Kudaiber-

diev's Adil and Maria, and Mukhametsalim Kashimov's Sorrowful Mariam are all studied as novels according to the author's definition. (Egeubaev & Ismagulov, 2006: 241)

This statement identifies the problem but fails to provide a reasonable answer. By saying this, we do not deny that the author's own opinions can serve as important evidence for our judgment. Somehow, it is not academic rigor to base our judgment solely on authors' words. Although Dulatov claims in the preface of the work that Jamal the Unfortunate is a novel, Toraigalov also asserts in his novel *Whose Fault* that "Now there isn't the novel and its critic; then it will be" (Toraigalov, 2006: 65). Or let's put it differently, if the publisher happened to miss the first few pages of Jamal the Unfortunate, making us unable to read the writer's own definition, can we still say that Jamal the Unfortunate is a novel? In the end, all of these arguments end up owing discrepancy between early Kazakh novels and the novels in the modern sense to the immaturity of the former.

Our article must be severely mistaken if it is regarded as an attempt to overturn the saying that Jamal the Unfortunate is the first Kazakh novel. On the contrary, we believe in the correctness of scholars' judgments. However, in our point of view, the reason why these novella-level works can be taken as novels doesn't lie in any definitions but their differences from previous Kazakh literary works. As Dennis Walder once remarked, "Genres can be interpreted through their formal characteristics, or in terms of their historical context, or both" (Walder, 1995: 5). The genre of early Kazakh novels should be interpreted by their specifics or historical context, rather than scholar's claims or writers' own opinions. The purpose of our article is to find out the characteristics of early Kazakh novels, proving that their identification as novels is not a tolerance of their creative immaturity but a recognition of their artistic achievements.

Material and Methods

Our article attempts to clarify the rise of Kazakh novels, an issue that has been studied by many scholars but remains unclear. It seems that each one expressed a supposedly self-evident conclusion, which can be neither proved nor refuted. There is no denying that the birth of the novel is not a new topic in Kazakh literature studies. Still, so far, researchers have paid too much attention to specific works and ignored the critical question of why they can be characterized as novels.

In our opinion, the answer to this question is central to the rise of the novel in Kazakh literature. After all, if we take the author's words as the only basis for classifying their works' genre, we will fail to respond to the questions raised against early Kazakh novels and underestimate their great significance to Kazakh literature. Such short works as Jamal the Unfortunate can be called novels because they are fundamentally different from previous literary works in narrative methods, language, and thoughts.

The earliest research on the Kazakh novels can date back to 1914 when Alikhan Bokeikhan published an article in the magazine *Aikap* called "What is a novel?" Since then, the social background at the beginning of the twentieth century, the writers' biographies, characteristics of the novel as a genre, the themes, content, and narrative techniques of novels all have been studied to some extent. But when it comes to what makes works like Jamal the Unfortunate so different from its predecessors and why the first Kazakh novel is considered to be Jamal the Unfortunate rather than the other literary works, the existing studies are either too vague or too general.

The novel is a grand theme in literary studies, and critics from around the world have contributed a large number of theories of the novel over the years. Their studies have provided us with a rich methodological basis. In particular, contemporary literary critics incorporate multiple perspectives such as structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, modernism, and postmodernism into their theories of the novel. However, since our article focuses on the origins of the Kazakh novel, it is based on the theoretical model, drawn primarily from Ian Watt's "The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding" as well as Michael McKeon's "Rethinking the Rise of the Novel." The methodology they used to study the rise of the novel in English literature could offer new insights into the reevaluation of early Kazakh novels.

The peculiarity of Watt's theory is that he neither defines Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding's work by existing definitions of the novel, nor does he rely on authors' own interpretations. In his opinion, the reason why Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding's works are taken as novels is that these writers "make an extremely significant break with tradition" (Watt, 1957: 15), evidenced by the Realism in their works as well as the emphasis on time, space, and individual life. Watt's theory not only clearly points out the characteristics of the first novels in British literature but also uncovers the great changes in

philosophical thoughts and social consciousness behind the novels.

Ian Watt's theory opened up new ideas for the study of the novel and received considerable attention in academic circles. Subsequently, another famous literary critic, Michael McKeon, further complemented Watt's study by putting forward "questions of truth" and "questions of virtue" (McKeon, 2000: 383), indicating not only the rise of new philosophical ideas but also the decline of old social consciousness in the process of the rise of the novel.

Although there are lots of differences between the first British novels and Kazakh novels at the beginning of the twentieth century, Watt and McKeon's methodology of defining the rise of the novel by its aesthetic and philosophical characteristics can be undoubtedly applied to our research. Moreover, revealing the specifics of early Kazakh novels also requires historical and inductive methods. The former enables us to understand the traditions of Kazakh literature, developed over the last few centuries. The latter helps us to find out the characteristics of early Kazakh novels. Through historical and inductive methods, we analyze and generalize the Kazakh novels of the early twentieth century represented by Mirzhakip Dulatov's *Jamal the Unfortunate* in the context of the development of Kazakh literature. In our opinion, their breakthrough in tradition, such as realistic narrative, the prose style of language, and enlightenment thoughts can serve as the fundamental reason for their becoming novels.

Literature Review

As a problem of enduring significance, the early Kazakh novels have been studied from almost every aspect over the years. For example, S. Mukanov's "Kazakh Literature of the 20th Century" (1932), B. Kenzhebaev's "Democratic Writers of the Kazakh People in the Early Twentieth Century" (1958), B. Shalabayev's "History of the Essays in Prerevolutionary Kazakh literature" (1958), A. Derbisalin's "Kazakh Democratic Literature Before the October Revolution" (1966), B. Kenzhebaev's "Kazakh Literature at the Beginning of the 20th Century" (1976), Sh. Eleukenov's "From Folklore to Novel-Epopee" (1987), B. Mamraev's "Kazakh Literary Relevance of the Early Twentieth Century" (1991), T. Kakishev's "Kazakh Literature of the 20th century" (1994), R. Nurgali's "the Golden Age of Kazakh literature" (2002), O. Abdimanuly's "Kazakh Literature at the Beginning of the 20th century" (2010), and Z. Beisengaliyev's "Kazakh Prose at the

Beginning of the Twentieth Century: On the Way to the New Novel" (2010). These studies provide us with a broad perspective and a solid foundation for exploring the formation process and aesthetic characteristics of early Kazakh novels.

Furthermore, lots of research also focuses on the writers of early Kazakh novels, for example, M. Absemet's "the Return of Mirzhakyp" (1995), S. Kirabaev's "Spandiyar Kobbey" (1958), E. Saduakasov's "S. Kobeyuly's Legacy" (1991), B. Kenzhebaev's "The Problem of Research and Recognition of Sultanmakhmut Toraiyrov" (1969), and A. Espenbetov's "Sultanmakhmut Toraiyrov" (1992). These researches provide us with comprehensive materials of the background and motivation of the rise of the Kazakh novels.

Results and Discussion

According to some scholars, Realism is a mode, which first emerged in Rembrandt's works when he refused to idealize his subjects. In 1856 some French critics published a journal called *Realism*, marking the consecration of Realism as a special literary term. It will be challenging to find another concept that suggests more and signals less than "realism." As Mathew Arnold once said, "Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration: no single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures" (Arnold, 2015: 50). So as to Realism, which not only appeared in literature but in fine art, music, and philosophical sphere as well. Our article is preoccupied with the Realism in literature, which spread from the French novelists and soon passed to all over the world. In our opinion, it is Realism, a concern to render the concrete life of a given time and space, that distinguishes Dulatov's *Jamal the Unfortunate* from all the Kazakh epic literary works before it. The Realism represented in *Jamal the Unfortunate* and recurs in its contemporary works such as *Beautiful Kamar* and *Kalyn Mal* has marked a new stage of Kazakh literature and proclaimed the rise of the Kazakh novel.

Before we begin our analysis of Realism in early Kazakh novels, we must first define what Realism is. This is not an easy question to answer, bearing in mind that even today it remains unresolved at the philosophical level, and in literature, the situation is not much better. Yet, it is a crucial question for the study of modern novels because in some circumstances, the definition of Realism determines the birth of the novel. For example, M. Qarataev once

asserted, “Before the revolution, narrative prose in Kazakh literature was mainly in the framework of short stories and did not reach the level of a realistic novel. Beautiful Kamar and Kalyn Mal, which are called novels, are not novels in real terms, but stories” (Qarataev, 1965: 237). Clearly, Qarataev came to this conclusion because he defined the novel by referencing the criterion of Socialist Realism, which is more of an idealized realistic art with the depiction of communist values.

However, despite multiple claims about what Realism actually is, there is no denying that representing the real world should be the general criterion of Realism. Authors of the ninth edition of *A Glossary of Literary Terms* claimed, “Realism is said to represent life as it really is,” and the novelists we identify as realists must “render their materials in ways that make them seem to their readers the very stuff of ordinary experience” (Abrams & Harpham, 2009: 303). And in the book *Key Concept in Literary Theories*, critics also agreed that realism “describes a common tendency from the early nineteenth century onwards to represent real-life in fiction and painting and to do so using common conventions of representation” (Wolfreys, Robbins & Wolmack, 2006: 85). In this sense, *Jamal the Unfortunate* and his contemporaries can be considered the first realistic narrative proeses in Kazakh literature.

Before the twentieth century, Kazakh literature was dominated by folklore, whose content often combined reality and legend and whose plots overlapped with each other. The Realism in Kazakh literature is supposed to first emerge in Abai’s prose. However, it was Dulatov and his contemporaries who first applied it to narrative prose. Whatever later literary critics may say about the maturity of their works, there is no doubt that early Kazakh novels already had a realistic style. According to Mirzhakip Dulatov’s biography, Jamal’s story is taken from Dulatov’s personal experiences. In 1908, when he was teaching at the village school in Kokshetay, he heard about the tragic experience of a girl named Jamal. Out of great sympathy for the girl, Dulatov wrote about her experience as *Jamal the Unfortunate*. Again M. Kashimov wrote in the preface of the novel *Sorrowful Mariam* that, “The sorrowful Mariam mentioned here is an event that I have personally experienced from beginning to end” (Kashimov, 2014:119), indicating the realistic style of his work.

We can see the Realism in early Kazakh novels through the writers’ treatment of time. Before *Jamal the Unfortunate*, Kazakh literature, both written and

oral, rarely had a clear indication of time. The representation of time in Kazakh epics tends to be very vague. For example, in the lyric epic *Kyz-Zhibek* the author does not specify the time when the story takes place but only says in general that the story takes place in the past. Even in historical epics such as “the History of Tole Bi” the time is also simplified to be “in earlier times, within the people in the past” (Qorabai, 2009: 9). This kind of situation remains unchanged until the publishing of *Jamal the Unfortunate*. Dulatov wrote: “the last winter” (Dulatuly, 2013:101) in the first chapter of the novel, which clearly indicates the time of the story, making the time in the work to be infinitely close to the time of our present life.

Moreover, the passage of time in early Kazakh novels appears to be much more objective and realistic than in the Kazakh literature of the past. Unlike the protagonists of heroic epics, who can be gestated for several years, often abnormally, in their mother’s body, and once born, grow up unusually fast, Jamal’s birth and growth follow the general rules of time. The novel begins with Jamal’s birth and depicts how she starts her studies at the age of nine and falls in love with Gali at the age of seventeen, giving a sense that she is a person who does exist in real life. Similarly, in the novel *Beautiful Kamar*, time passes as if it was in the real world. Kamar’s falling love with Akhmet, her marring to the landlord Nurym and her illness, everything in the novel is depicted in chronological order. Particularly noteworthy is the end of the novel, where Toraigylov deliberately mentioned the time after describing Akhmet’s plunging of the dagger into the shaman’s body. The last sentence of the novel, “It was a Friday evening” (Toraigylov, 2006: 64), proves that the author pays more attention to time than his predecessors. In a word, time plays an essential role in the composition of Dulatov and his contemporaries’ works, distinguishing them from those of their predecessors.

Early Kazakh novels also differ from previous Kazakh literary works in their location settings. Kazakh narrative literary works before the twentieth century tend to emphasize the tribe of the protagonists rather than the geographic location where the story takes place. For example, in heroic-epic *Batyr Olzhabai* from the Middle Zhyz, the author mentioned the ethnic origin of the hero rather than the geographical location where his heroic deeds takes place. Sometimes indicating locations is to introduce the tribe of the protagonists; for example, in lyric-epic *Kyz-Zhibek* description of the location goes like “On the backside of Ural mountains, near

the river Shybyk, there was a tribe called Kypchak” (Qosan, 2008: 28).

However, in early Kazakh novels, locations are described more precisely, with distinct administrative and geographical attributes. M. Dulatov begins *Jamal the Unfortunate* by specifying the location of the story, down to the exact village and pasture. As the plot proceeds, readers can even draw a map of Jamal and other protagonists’ movements. According to Dulatov’s description, Jamal and Gali elope to a city 120 versts away from their village. At the end of the novel, Jamal gets lost in a snowstorm and is found half a verst from the main road. All these details show the essential role of geographic location in the author’s plot planning.

It is not difficult to see from such works as *Kalyn Mal* and *Girls Let’s have a Look* that Kazakh writers of the early twentieth century have developed a new understanding of space, which is different from their predecessors. At the beginning of the novel *Kalyn Mal*, through the eyes of landlord Torlykor, the author depicts the interior layout of the yurt in a very detailed way. This perspective rarely appeared in Kazakh literature before. In the novel *Girls Let’s Have a Look*, all cities mentioned by the author, such as Semipalatinsk, Paris, London, and Berlin, are true and testable. Moreover, despite the fairytale motifs of the novel, the author makes relatively realistic estimates of the transportation required to reach these places. All above proves that the Kazakh intellectuals of the early twentieth century have already had a considerable spatial awareness and took location as an essential part of their narrative.

The realist tendency of time and space is only one of the important signs of the rise of the novel in Kazakh literature at the beginning of the twentieth century; in fact, works of this period also developed significantly in terms of language. Although Abai is known as the founder of the modern written Kazakh language, it was undoubtedly the early twentieth-century Kazakh novelists, led by M. Dulatov, who developed the contemporary written Kazakh language in their works. As a follower of Abai and Baitursunov, Dulatov has an aspiration to perfect the written Kazakh language. Compared to his predecessors, Dulatov used fewer foreign words in Arabic or Russian in his works, making his narrative as fluent and accessible as possible while maintaining the purity of the Kazakh language.

Before the publication of *Jamal the Unfortunate*, Kazakh literature, both written and oral, was mainly presented in verse. However, by the early twentieth century, the society in which the writers lived had

changed considerably. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the schools built by the tsarist government gradually produced an increasing readership for the society. Meanwhile, the publishing boom and the emergence of cities also enabled the printing and distribution of books, leading to a radical change in the ways in which literary works are received. Kazakh people who lived nomadically on the steppes for generations started to shift from listening to books to reading books; consequently, prose narrative gradually replaced verse and became the mainstream of Kazakh literature. Although traces of folklore, such as *Aitys*, remain in early Kazakh novels, narrative prose has become the dominant mode of expression in these works. Kazakh novels of the Soviet period were indeed more mature in their language and composition techniques, but the change in narrative language should be dated back to *Jamal the Unfortunate*, which served as one of the most important signs of the birth of the Kazakh novel.

Finally, compared with previous Kazakh literary works, the major characteristic of M. Dulatov and his contemporaries’ works is their enlightenment consciousness, which is also an important feature of modern novels. The Kazakh intellectuals of the early twentieth century attacked gender inequality and urged for social progress, setting exposure of social problems as the primary goal of novels. When recalling his writing experience, S. Kopeev mentioned, “There was a view that the only way to fight against ignorant, antiquated and blind feudal customs is to inspire the people’s wisdom, educate children, and teach people to read, so that they can become civilized. In the past, I was also one of the supporters of this view. However, after being a teacher for eight to nine years, I firmly believe that education is not enough to fight against feudal customs. Here the struggle seems to need some weapons that can have a greater impact on people’s consciousness. On the road to achieve this goal, I have been exploring and finally determined that literature is one of the most suitable weapons of enlightenment” (Kopeev, 1960: 246). In order to enlighten the masses, Kazakh intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century wrote such works as *Jamal the Unfortunate*, *Kalyn Mal*, and *Beautiful Kamar*, which so profoundly reflected the social inequalities that moved many women readers to tears. Therefore, in our opinion, works we mentioned above have already acquired the characteristics of modern novels in terms of progressive ideology and serve as the beginning of Kazakh novels.

Conclusion

In the Soviet period, there were different opinions about the beginning of the Kazakh novels. After Kazakhstan declared its independence, scholars affirmed Jamal the Unfortunate as the first Kazakh novel. However, early Kazakh novels have been questioned for their immature style and short length for years. The question of why early Kazakh novels are taken as novels without meeting the contemporary definition of the novel has not yet been fully answered.

In this article, with the help of classical theories of the novel, we try to find out the reason why literary works such as Jamal the Unfortunate, Kalyn Mal, Girl Let's Have a Look, Beautiful Kamar, and Sorrowful Mariam are recognized as the beginning of Kazakh novels. Our research shows that these works are considered to be novels not because literary critics had lowered the criteria for novels in view of the times when they were written. On the con-

trary, they are novels because they have the basic characteristics of modern novels in terms of narrative methods, language, ideas, and thoughts, which are fundamentally different from previous Kazakh literary works.

From the narrative perspective, the setting of time and space in early Kazakh novels is infinitely close to real life, marking the emergence of Realism in Kazakh narrative literature. In terms of language, writers of early Kazakh novels used more prose rather than verse to write their works. From the perspective of the idea and thoughts, the propagation of Enlightenment ideas became a common theme in early Kazakh novels, which reflects the modernity of these works. In conclusion, the realistic narrative techniques, the prose style of language, and the modern enlightenment ideas witnessed the rise of the novel in Kazakh literature, laying a solid foundation for the future development of the novel in Kazakh literature.

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