

HISTORICAL TRUTH AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION IN M. NIZANOV'S
NOVEL-ESSAY "THE KARAKALPAKS"

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Abstract. *The article discusses the artistic-publicistic synthesis of historical events, mythological legends, and ethnographic materials in M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks". The portrayal of the origin (ethnogenesis) of the Karakalpak people, the history of their statehood, their religious-spiritual worldview, and their diplomatic relations with the Russian Empire are evaluated from a scientific-critical perspective. It explores the author's masterful utilization of historical sources (archive documents, genealogical records) and examples of oral literature (legends, epics) within the framework of the "novel-essay" genre, as well as the work's role in restoring the national mentality and historical memory of the Karakalpak people.*

Keywords: *novel-essay, ethnogenesis, historical truth, genre synthesis, mythological legends, ethnographic portrait, M. Nizanov, national mentality, historical past.*

Introduction. In contemporary Karakalpak literature, artistic-documentary works on historical themes—particularly within the novel-essay genre—occupy a special place due to their vivid, publicistic, and philosophical content. In this direction, M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks" is considered a monumental creation that comprehensively examines the multi-century history, ethnogenesis, tribal-clan relations, and national mentality of the Karakalpak people. The work is not merely a historical chronicle, but rather a philosophical and artistic evaluation dedicated to the past, national formation, and spiritual path of the Karakalpak people.

In terms of genre, M. Nizanov's novel-essay goes beyond the boundaries of the classical historical novel and is evaluated as an intertwined model of fiction, historical research, folklore legends, and ethnographic data. Rather than narrating historical events chronologically year by year, the author aims to reveal them through artistic images, authorial commentary, and publicistic reflections. The work's inclusion of periods ranging from religious-mythological sources to the political relations with the Russian Empire demonstrates its encyclopedic nature. This article analyzes the genre characteristics of M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks", the harmony between historical truth and artistic imagination within it, and the author's perspectives on historical figures and eras. In determining the place of the work in Karakalpak literature, the role of the authorial "I", the craftsmanship in utilizing historical sources (archival documents, genealogical records), and its significance in restoring national history are treated as the primary objects of study. M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks" [1] is distinguished by the fact that, in its search for the ancient historical roots of the Karakalpak people, it diverges from traditional viewpoints and relies on mythological layers that align with its genre nature. The first section of the work begins the origin of the people with religious-mythological narratives about the creation of the world—specifically, the creation of Adam and Eve, the bringing of soil by the Angel

Gabriel, as well as the legends concerning the division of the world among Prophet Noah's three sons (Japheth, Shem, Ham). Here, the naming of Japheth as the ancestor of the Turkic peoples (Abul-Turk) is presented by authorial design in connection with the historical genetics of the people. The legends and mythological plots in the work are aimed not merely at illustrating the ancient past, but at revealing the depth and spiritual layers of the nation's history. For this purpose, in "The Narrative of the Massagetae", the author devotes significant space to the Massagetae tribe, their habitat, their lifestyle, and particularly the legendary events associated with the life of Tomaris, who was called the "Daughter of the Sun". Here, Tomaris's bravery, the battle with the Persian King Cyrus, and her victory formed the foundation for the development of the heroic archetype in the national mentality. In the section of the novel-essay titled "The Narrative of the Pechenegs", the fact that the Pechenegs were a tribal union, their migration toward Europe, and their connection to the Karakalpaks through the historical sources' "black hoods" (Chyornye Klobuki) are explained with concrete facts. Here, the author takes the Pechenegs' relations with the Russian princes, particularly their defeat by Yaroslav the Wise in 1036, as the core of the narrative. The data concerning the significant role of the black hoods in defending the lands of Kievan Rus, along with their military skills and tactics, demands a fresh perspective on the historical evolution of the people. In contemporary Karakalpak literature, artistic-documentary works on historical themes—particularly within the novel-essay genre—occupy a special place due to their vivid, publicistic, and philosophical content. In this direction, M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks" is considered a monumental creation that comprehensively examines the multi-century history, ethnogenesis, tribal-clan relations, and national mentality of the Karakalpak people. The work is not merely a historical chronicle, but rather a philosophical and artistic evaluation dedicated to the past, national formation, and spiritual path of the Karakalpak people. In terms of genre, M. Nizanov's novel-essay goes beyond the boundaries of the classical historical novel and is evaluated as an intertwined model of fiction, historical research, folklore legends, and ethnographic data. Rather than narrating historical events chronologically year by year, the author aims to reveal them through artistic images, authorial commentary, and publicistic reflections. The work's inclusion of periods ranging from religious-mythological sources to the political relations with the Russian Empire demonstrates its encyclopedic nature. This article analyzes the genre characteristics of M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks", the harmony between historical truth and artistic imagination within it, and the author's perspectives on historical figures and eras.

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In the section titled "The Narrative of Great Rulers," the military paths of Alexander the Great (Iskander Zulqarnayn) and Genghis Khan, the battles with Jalaladdin Manguberdi in Khwarazm, and Genghis Khan's campaigns in Khwarazm are narrated. Through the synthesis of historical information and artistic-literary elements in these sections, hypotheses regarding the origin and historical past of the Karakalpak people are artistically put forward. By employing these methods, the author enriches historical truth with legends preserved in the memory of the people, creating an opportunity for the reader to delve deeper into the meaningful layers of the historical past. M. Nizanov's enrichment of the history of the Massagetae and Pechenegs with mythological plots aligns with Mircea Eliade's theory that "myth is the spiritual model of historical reality" [2]. Furthermore, his scientific hypotheses in demonstrating the ethnic formation of the nation are reinforced by L.N. Gumilev's theory of "Ethnogenesis" [4] and S.P. Tolstov's [4] archaeological data, which enhances the scientific-historical value of the work. The intertextual system in M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks" is not a mere collection of citations. It is an artistic synthesis of historical archival documents, folklore legends, and examples of classical literature that restores the historical memory of an entire nation. In accordance with G. Genette's transtextual model [5], the author has rewritten past historical texts

within the publicistic context of the present day, creating a new artistic text of national history. In M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks," the historical development of the people's statehood and the formation of their legal culture constitute sections that deserve special attention. The author analyzes the periods of the Golden Horde and the Nogai Horde (Manghit Horde) not merely as a sequence of political events, but as an era of unification and spiritual formation for the Karakalpak tribes. In demonstrating the succession of statehood traditions, he specifically highlights the historical contribution of the Manghits, revealing the importance of preserving historical continuity.

The central figure of this section is Sasyq Biy, the universal judge (*biy*) of the Karakalpak community, a prominent political figure, and a thinker of his time. The law code "Jeti Jargy" (Seven Charters), formulated under his leadership, was the fruit of the joint efforts of the Karakalpak, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz tribes to unite and establish common rules and regulations. Evaluated as the "constitution" of that era, "Jeti Jargy" outlined mechanisms for defense, warfare, resolving inter-tribal disputes, and regulating international relations. M. Nizanov deeply analyzes how Sasyq Biy influenced the Karakalpak mentality through the "Jeti Jargy." The strict prohibition of marrying within close tribal relations through the legislation served to preserve genetic purity, while the establishment of severe punishments for those who insulted their parents contributed to the formation of moral and ethical norms. In matters of violence and theft, the introduction of paying a fine (*qun*) instead of blood revenge (blood for blood) was one of the sole ways to maintain peace and stability in society. The author portrays Sasyq Biy not just as a historical figure, but as a thinker who shaped Karakalpak statehood traditions and legal culture.

This information clearly and artistically substantiates the historical past of the nation, along with the legal and ethical stages they have traversed.

In M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks," the political destiny of the Karakalpak people in the 18th and 19th centuries, their joint diplomatic endeavors, and their struggles amidst the competing interests of major empires are deeply analyzed. The most difficult and tragic event of this period is the forced migration (posyw) of the Karakalpaks from the Turkistan region to the shores of the Amu Darya. The author evaluates this process not merely as a geographical relocation, but as a period of national crisis where the people fell victim to politics. The policy of the Lesser Horde's ruler, Abulkhair Khan, aimed at taxing the Karakalpaks and rendering them entirely dependent on him, provoked deep resentment among the people and their leaders (biys). Although the Karakalpaks sought protection from Dzungar and Kyrgyz invasions by striving to accept the citizenship of the Russian Empire, Russia's promises yielded no practical results. Relying on materials from the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Foreign Policy Archive, M. Nizanov thoroughly depicts the journey of Maman Batyr and Qaliwet Shaykh to Saint Petersburg, their audience with Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, and their diplomatic efforts. In particular, Abulkhair Khan's execution of a terrifying policy against the Karakalpaks to preserve his own dominance further aggravated the hardships continuous throughout the nation. In the 19th century, the Karakalpaks faced the unjust policies and aggression of the Khiva Khanate.

In 1811, the Karakalpaks were completely subjugated, and the heavy taxes imposed on them (ten tillas) worsened the economic condition of the populace day by day. Although heroes like Aydos Biy (known among the people as the "half-khan") and Ernazar Alakoz spearheaded resistance against this tyranny, the uprisings were defeated due to the khanate's cunning maneuvers and instances of betrayal. The execution of Aydos Biy and the subsequent repressions targeting his family became a clear manifestation of the khanate's oppressive policies. As a new phase of the diplomatic struggle, the activities of Erejep Biy (1801–1888) merit special mention.

As one of the most prominent diplomats of the 19th century, he strove to protect the interests of his people and preserve national administrative traditions within the complex relations

involving Russia, Iran, and the Khiva Khanate. The author evaluates the Russian Empire's military expeditions to the Khiva Khanate in 1717, 1839, and 1873 not as a "voluntary unification," but rather as "aggression" and "bloodshed." Crucially, the tragic fate of the Karakalpak people, who were split between the two banks of the Amu Darya during the events of 1873, serves as the main axis in uncovering the political-philosophical substance of the novel. By merging these political and diplomatic struggles with archival and literary sources, M. Nizanov demonstrates how the Karakalpaks preserved their national identity while caught between competing states, presenting this arduous path as a profound historical heritage. The second part of M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks" holds a special significance in creating the historical portrait of the nation, as well as revealing its inner world and lifestyle. Rather than focusing on historical events, the author here pays deep attention to the daily life, material and spiritual culture of the Karakalpak people, and their harmonious relationship with nature. The yurt (qara úy) is depicted as the "microcosm" of the Karakalpaks, and a profound philosophical explanation is provided regarding the aesthetic and functional meaning of its construction, interior decorations (the shimildiq curtain, weaving arts, embroidery), and utilitarian household items (the qorjin saddlebag, wooden utensils). The traditional crafts and occupations of the people—agriculture, fishing, hunting, as well as blacksmithing and weaving—are narrated as manifestations of the people's industriousness and their skill in struggling for survival. The author presents these crafts not merely as an economic necessity, but as a primary tool for preserving national identity. Furthermore, folk traditions (rituals from birth to the end of life) and ethical norms, such as hospitality and respect for elders, are evaluated as the spiritual sustenance of the national mentality. National dishes, their preparation methods, and their compatibility with ecological culture demonstrate the people's skill in utilizing natural resources. This ethno-panoramic description takes the reader out of a dry historical chronicle and allows them to perceive the past through the perspective, lives, and values of the people of that era. Through these sections, M. Nizanov reveals not just the history of the nation, but its "heart"—that is, its spiritual values and aesthetic world—which drastically increases the artistic and ethnographic value of the work. M. Nizanov's novel-essay "The Karakalpaks" is not merely a literary work, but is considered a monumental creation that restores the historical past of the Karakalpak people and serves to cultivate national self-awareness. Synthesizing historical events with publicistic reflections and encyclopedic data, the author has created an artistic panorama before the reader that uncovers the connection between yesterday and today. The primary value of the work lies not in a dry narration of historical facts, but in its philosophical evaluation, passing them through the prism of the people's spiritual world, moral-ethical norms, and national mentality. The portrayals of the Massagetae and the Pechenegs, the statehood policies of Sasyq Biy, and the tragic events around the Aral region depicted in the novel-essay prompt deep contemplation in the reader as reflections of the arduous paths traversed by the nation.

Through this work, M. Nizanov initiated a new stage in historical themes within Karakalpak literature and created a model for reflecting national history in an artistic-publicistic style. The work serves as a valuable source of information and spiritual sustenance not only for the Karakalpaks but also for every reader interested in regional history and ethnography.

In conclusion, the novel-essay "The Karakalpaks" is a mirror of national history—a multi-layered encyclopedic work that connects its past, present, and future. This creation holds great significance in preserving the historical past of the Karakalpak people, strengthening the national spirit, and delivering historical truth in a scientific-artistic manner, and it remains one of the weighty works entering the golden treasury of Karakalpak literature.

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