

# Documentary Fiction And Its Features In The Works Of Shukrullo

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**Abstract:** The article examines “The Buried Without Shrouds” and “Living Souls”, two memoir-novels by Shukrulla, People’s Poet of Uzbekistan, which stand out as remarkable events in his literary legacy. In Russian and European literary scholarship of recent decades, works of this nature have been categorized as “documentary-biographical prose,” “documentary-artistic literature,” “historical and documentary prose,” or “human documents.” Shukrulla’s novels embody vivid examples of documentary-artistic memoir writing, and the article reflects on their place within this tradition.

**Keywords:** Documentary-biographical prose, documentary-artistic literature, historical and documentary prose, Shukrulla, repression theme.

**Introduction:** It is difficult to imagine twentieth- and twenty-first-century world literature without documentary-artistic works. A major reason is the profound need for reliable information and knowledge about the relationship between the individual and society, the person and history; together with the growth of readers’ perception in line with social and spiritual-cultural life, this has driven the steady development of documentary-artistic literature. Today’s reader seeks—through documentary-artistic writing grounded in the author’s personality, memories, and verifiable facts—to grasp the distinctiveness of the author’s worldview as given artistic form, and to comprehend the objective visage of the world that arises from a subjective point of view.

The study of documentary-artistic prose and its genres—known under labels such as “documentary-biographical prose,” “documentary-artistic literature,” “literature of fact,” “artistic and documentary prose,” “historical and documentary prose,” “the human document,” and “the first-person novel”—began primarily in the second half of the twentieth century.

In Uzbek literary studies, the possibilities of memoir genres such as letters, essays, and recollections, as well as the biographical novel form of documentary-artistic prose, have been examined on the basis of the creative legacies of specific writers.

It follows that one of the urgent tasks is to conduct a focused scholarly investigation of the distinctive features of documentary-artistic works produced in the twentieth century and the years of independence (memoir-chronicle, memoir-novel, memoir-novella, memoir-sketch, memoir-essay), and of the relationships among author, narrator, and protagonist within them. With the aim of addressing this gap, we seek to study—using Shukrullo’s memoir-novels *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* (“Buried Without Shrouds”) and *Tirik ruhlar* (“Living Souls”) as examples—the artistic-publicistic potential of the memoir-novel genre; the roles and psychologies of the author, narrator, and protagonist; the place of fact and documentality in documentary-artistic prose; the thematic range and the distinctive features of these works’ artistic-technical arsenal; and a number of other theoretical issues.

## METHODOLOGY

References to theory and method. The study draws on the works and theoretical views of Russian and Uzbek literary scholars concerning literary theory and the scholarly-theoretical analysis of artistic texts. In particular, the issues raised in the article are elucidated on the basis of the theoretical perspectives found in the writings of L. Ginzburg, I. Shekhovtsev, R. Spivak, B. Nazarov, N. Karimov, and D. Quronov. The research

employs analysis, synthesis, and comparative-typological methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Scholars define documentary-artistic memoir prose as a metagenre that comprises various genre modifications and possesses the characteristic genre-forming dominants of “memory” and “subjectivity.” (A metagenre, by its nature, has a synthetic character: it differs from simple genres by its multifunctionality and is sometimes formed by the fusion of closely related or even disparate genres.) [4] Accordingly, the memoir-novel, which belongs to the documentary-artistic prose genre, arises from the synthesis of two genres; developing at the crossroads of the memoir and the novel, it integrates features typical of both the memoir and the artistic work.

In particular, the work exhibits several traits characteristic of the memoir genre of literary journalism: the clear manifestation of the author’s position; the subjective reflections, impressions, and associations of the author-protagonist who conveys the idea of reality; the predominance of narration in the voice of the author-narrator; documentality; the use of retrospective technique in presenting artistic material; the author’s appeal to the past and its evaluation from today’s vantage point; adherence to the chronological order of events and to their evidentiary grounding.

The artistic side of the memoir-novel, meanwhile, is determined by its compositional organization; the presence of a definite plot; the author’s methods of creating artistic images (in which facts are primarily reworked creatively and transformed into artistic images—S.K.); their typification; and the use of artistic representational devices within an imagistic interpretation.

In contemporary Uzbek literature, there are not many memoir-novels and memoir-essays as examples of documentary-artistic prose. Only a few writers and scholars who lived during the Soviet era and experienced the terrifying, turbulent years of Stalinist repression—such as Shukrullo, Said Ahmad, and Matyoqub Qo’shjonov—left behind memoir-novels and memoir-essays. In particular, “among the writers who returned safely from the torture sites of the land of eternal ice, only Shukrullo dared to set down what he had gone through” [1], and he created the memoir-novels *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* (“Buried Without Shrouds”) and *Tirik ruhlar* (“Living Souls,” about Ubaydulla Khojayev—S.K.), which reflect the events of the repressions of 1937. In the memoir works *Dagish*, *Diydor*, and *Alam* by the academician Matyoqub Qo’shjonov—who was highly productive in the genres of memoir-novel and essay-recollection in the final

years of his life—one observes the interrelation of life facts and documentality with artistic-publicistic interpretation. All of these mentioned works can be described as artistically rendered documentary prose.

Shukrullo’s memoir-novel *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* was published repeatedly in Uzbekistan. It was printed three times in Turkey in Turkish translation by Ahsan Botur and Shuayib Qaraqosh. The academician Baxtiyor Nazarov wrote the following about this work: “My friend Tohir Qahhor reports that a multi-volume set has recently been published in Turkey, consisting of works that depict the lives and fates of heroes who were repressed across the world’s literatures. From among Turkic-language authors, Shukrullo’s novel *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* was selected for the collection. This not only serves as further evidence of Shukrullo’s renown and popularity in Turkey, but also shows that in that country there are specialists and literature enthusiasts who can duly evaluate the value and significance of his works on an international level. *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* has also been published in German in Germany and in Russian.” [3]

Indeed, as the scholar notes, Shukrullo’s memoir-novels *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* and *Tirik ruhlar* have become known and celebrated both in the literatures of Turkic peoples and in the world’s literatures. For this reason, these two memoir-novels were swiftly translated into various languages around the world.

Both memoir-novels, as the author himself emphasizes above, are devoted to depicting the horrors and tragic events of the years of repression. In *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* (*Buried Without Shrouds*), the author recounts his own experiences—the tragedies of the Stalinist repressions of the 1950s—while the second memoir-novel, *Tirik ruhlar* (*Living Souls*), is written about Ubaydullakhoja Asadullakhojayev: the first Uzbek advocate, a public figure, one of the leaders of the Jadid movement, and Commander-in-Chief of the Ministry of War in Turkestan, who fell victim to the “red” repressive policy of 1937.

The novel *Kafansiz ko’milganlar* attracted the attention of readers worldwide for its truthful and documentary portrayal of the years of repression under the Soviet regime and for the memoir-like account of what the author-protagonist lived through. Likewise, the memoir-novel *Tirik ruhlar* was read with great interest for its artistic-publicistic narrative—combining lyrical, epic, and memoir principles—of the historical figure Ubaydulla Khojayev’s dedicated efforts to preserve Turkestan and the national identity and independence of the Turkic peoples, and to protect the Turkestan Autonomy from the oppression of Tsarist Russia and later from Soviet colonial rule.

As noted above, both Kafansiz ko'milganlar and Tirik ruhlar display key features characteristic of documentary-artistic memoir prose. They prominently feature the authorial "I," the figures of the "author-protagonist" (in Kafansiz ko'milganlar) and the "author-narrator" (in Tirik ruhlar), the author's turn to the past and his evaluation of it, and the clearly presented life paths and tragic fates of historical personalities (in both Kafansiz ko'milganlar and Tirik ruhlar).

Furthermore, the works Kafansiz ko'milganlar and Tirik ruhlar are valuable for a number of features characteristic of the memoir-novel, such as the use of retrospection in presenting artistic material ("The essence of the method called 'retrospection' is that the writer, as it were, stops time—which otherwise flows only forward—in the plot and turns to depicting an event that took place in the past" [2]) and the act of recollection as its expressive vehicle; the clear manifestation of the author's position; the directness of the author-protagonist's and author-narrator's attestations; the narration of events in chronological order; adherence to documentality and factographic accuracy in illuminating historical reality and the hero's life; the associative interpretations of figurative artistic depictions in the text; the presence of publicistic (journalistic) pathos; and the predominance of typifying and evidentiary techniques.

The composition of both memoir-novels consists of various structural components—interior monologue, lyrical digression, insert constructions (various documents; different stories and narratives; dreams; stories told by secondary characters; accounts about other characters of the work, etc.), direct addresses to the reader, landscape descriptions, portraiture, critical reflections, and so on—which are unified by the figures of the author, the author-narrator, and the author-protagonist.

In Kafansiz ko'milganlar and Tirik ruhlar, the method of narrating events in chronological order predominates. Specifically, in Kafansiz ko'milganlar the chronological sequence of events is as follows: arrest → interrogation → imprisonment → release. A chronological or sequential presentation of events serves to systematize the historical and social occurrences in the author-protagonist's life that are based on concrete facts.

While most documentary-artistic works begin by expressing the writer's reflections on why they decided to record their memories; some works open with the author's initial report conveying information about the reality under discussion; and some documentary-literary works begin in an unconventional way of presenting what the author, author-narrator, or author-protagonist wants to say to the reader and the

content of the work itself (for example, by citing literary facts, by means of a landscape description, etc.—S.K.). In this sense, when explaining the reason for writing the work in the memoir-novel Kafansiz ko'milganlar, the author clarifies his thoughts on why he decided to write his memories in "The Reason for the Memory" as follows: "One of those present looked at me as if to say, 'Let this generation know its bloody history—speak.'"

"Saying 'Tell us' is easy. Any terrible, tragic events can be listened to as if one were hearing a fairy tale. But can this heart, torn to shreds in prisons, these shattered nerves, endure recalling anew the torment of slander and insult?!" [5]

In the memoir-novel Kafansiz ko'milganlar (Buried Without Shrouds), the artistic depiction of reality is created on the basis of a narrative technique—that is, the plot emerges not along the plan of a single concrete event but along the plan of storytelling. Events are narrated in the first person, in the voice of "I," and as a result a special field arises in the work in which time can pass freely among past, present, and future. Another important factor in the text of the memoir-novel is the category of memory, which serves as the principal substance that shows the author-protagonist's connection with reality. The memoir-novel begins with the story "Ko'zi bog'liq odam" ("The Blindfolded Man"), which relies on the method of retrospection to reconstruct reality and memory.

The documentary nature of the memoir-novels Kafansiz ko'milganlar and Tirik ruhlar (Living Souls) draws strength from the various techniques of narration and the multilayered structure of the works. Features such as presenting historical reality on a documentary basis and addressing the issues of fact and factographic accuracy in portraying the life of the memoir-novel's hero; the associative interpretations of figurative artistic depictions in the text of the memoir-novel; and the predominance of publicistic (journalistic) pathos ensure both the artistic and the social significance of these two memoir-novels. Indeed, documentary-artistic prose is "a distinct type of literature that expresses the harmony of a documentary (factual) foundation with epic, lyric, and publicistic elements." [6]

The foundation of documentality in memoir-novels is, first, constituted by original documents (archival materials, historical records, court-investigation files, various certificates, etc.); second, by life, literary, and publicistic facts, contemporaries' oral testimonies, and information related to the author-protagonist's biography, which are likewise presented as documents.

In the memoir-novel Tirik ruhlar (Living Souls), events are narrated in the voice of the author-narrator. The

opening story of the work is titled “Faryod” (“Cry/Lament”), and its exposition begins with a landscape description.

In *Kafansiz ko‘milganlar* (Buried Without Shrouds) and *Tirik ruhlar*, the tragedies of the repressive policy are revealed through court-investigation documents from the archives of the KGB (State Security Committee) of that period, historical information, the protagonists’ biographies, oral accounts, and life, literary, and publicistic facts. The documentary facts in both novels serve as a basis for truthfully illuminating the socio-political reality and the panorama of the historical era.

It is known that documentary-artistic prose involves a synthesis of documentary-factual material and a distinctive artistic technique of representation. In documentary-artistic prose, the writer retains the right freely to select and evaluate the facts of real reality, and it is precisely this circumstance that underlies the formation of points of contact between documentary and artistic literature. The documentality in the works, once logically enriched and refined through the author’s perspectives, attains a certain artistic completeness and emerges as a means of comprehending genuine philosophy. Thus, although documents and facts serve as the basis for depiction, in accordance with the laws of artistic creation they are re-created.

In *Kafansiz ko‘milganlar* (Buried Without Shrouds) and *Tirik ruhlar* (Living Souls), a number of documents serve, first, as artistic details that describe reality, situations, or characters; second, in some episodes they constitute the very basis of the plot; and third, they function as a means of expressing the author’s stance. In particular, in the “Story of My Nephew Badriddin” in *Kafansiz ko‘milganlar*, the court indictment describing him as a “systematic propagandist of counterrevolution, nationalism, and Trotskyism” is presented; it operates both as an artistic detail characterizing the reality and the hero, and as a device conveying the author’s attitude toward that reality. Although *Kafansiz ko‘milganlar* does not include many original documents, information related to the author-protagonist’s biography, historical and literary facts, and the oral accounts of the personages all serve to shape the author’s evaluation of the depicted reality.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that in the novels *Kafansiz ko‘milganlar* and *Tirik ruhlar*, which are examples of documentary-artistic prose, documentality and the real-life publicistic interpretation of events occupy a leading place. However, these are not works in which every detail of events is strictly documented; rather, they are novels that, on the basis of a synthesis of life’s truth,

documents, and an artistic worldview, create the visage of a particular era and the image of a concrete individual. The documents and facts cited in these memoir-novels serve as artistic details in depicting certain situations or conditions and the characters; they ensure the credibility of events and help substantiate, complement, and explain the author’s ideas. Drawing on real documents and facts, the author conveys—through an artistic-publicistic mode, with vivid, compelling expression—the horrors of the years of repression and the tragedies inflicted upon innocent people. As you read each event, each detail, each fact, you feel in your heart the truth of life and the oppressive stamp of those years of terror.

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