

Historical Memory and Historical Prose

(Tradition of Georgian Historical Prose and “Zebulon” by Jemal Karchkhadze)

Abstract: The given paper discusses tradition of Georgian Historical prose and historical prose “Zebulon” by Jemal Karchkhadze. Georgian writers are using history and historical prose in order to create collective memory. The national collective memory has to confront the colonial policy; therefore in the colonial and post-colonial literature the memory policy is actively used. In the historical novel of J. Karchkhadze “Zebulon” the individual and his freedom is in the foreground. Certainly, history serves to the memory policy. Nevertheless, to point out this fact or form the anti-colonial identity is not the main idea of the author. For him the great importance represents the post-colonial reality preparation process and liberal ideology.

Keywords: Jemal Karchkhadze, Georgian historical prose, memory, national identity, liberal ideology.

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In the specific epochs and cultures, different political and socio-cultural factors influence the development of historical prose. Consequently, the interpretation of historical prose requires the genre-esthetical code as well as an inter-disciplinary theoretical paradigm to be taken into the consideration.

During the analysis of historical prose, we cannot put aside the issue of history. Besides the literary value, historical prose has a very important role as it preserves and transmits historical memory; Especially for Georgian culture, where historical memory is linked to the identity. It may be agreeable, that the reflected history in historical prose has no right to claim to be the historical truth, as the historical source and literary text are different from each other. Historical science is analytical. A historian tries to arrange the sources, to research and interpret them and on this base gives more reliable version of the past (Carr 2001:22). The literary text no matter how precisely repeats the historical sources and researches of the historians, is inconceivable without the specific fantasies. This is typical for the nature of the literary texts; moreover it is essential feature of it (in the other case we would have to deal with the documental prose). Therefore, during the discussion of historical prose it is essential to include the concept of the “memory”.

According to the classification of Pierre Nora so-called “sites of Memory” exist, such as: 1) Symbolic – holidays (calendar), rituals, anniversaries etc. 2) Functional – Handbooks, autobiographies, literary art etc. 3) Monumental – graves, architecture, statues etc. 4) Topographical – archives, libraries, museums (Nora 1989:19). Historical prose belongs to the functional area of memory. This takes a significant place in the formation of the collective memory because of its esthetical and mass sides.

A specific writer’s individuality as well as his or her collective memory reflecting the social environment emerges in a historical prose (Halbwachs 1992:54). On the one hand, the viewpoints of a writer are socially defined, but on the other hand, his or her individual memory influences the formation of the collective memory. This is a mutual process. However, in both cases not all the facts from history are equally important. This is defined by the writer and the social circle.

Exactly, because of the memory policy only some of the historic events are featured in historical prose (or in collective memory functional area), the rest is preserved in the historical archives and

paperwork of the historians. In the colonial or post-colonial epochs, historical prose is often used during the trauma experience. For the countries like Georgia, anti-colonial resistance instrument is revival of the national history: the underlining the best periods of history or adjusting the role of a victim.

During the colonial epoch, because of impossibility of direct confrontation and critical -analytical referring, literary-allegorical discourse develops (Tsipuria 2010:180). In this case, the most productive historical prose should be created, because by transferring the problem in the past a writer should have more opportunities using allegory. Moreover, the Georgian writers are using history and historical prose in order to create collective memory. The national collective memory has to confront the colonial policy; therefore in the colonial and post-colonial literature the memory policy is actively used. The review of the Georgian prose assures us in this. The formation of Georgian historical prose like the European historical prose as a genre does not take place before XIX century (Kankava 1969:72) (De Groot 2010:52). (Because of the research format, I am not able to stress the historical prose origins. e.g. hagiography, historical annals and poems created on historic themes during the late Middle Ages).

In XIX century, in Georgian literature increases the interest towards the historic themes. This period coincides with the loss of the Georgian State system hood and proclamation of Russian Tsarism colonialism. The generation of “Tergdaleulebi” gives the significant importance to the history and national ideology. The representatives of the 60s among them, the first to be mentioned Ilia Chavchavadze, are the authors of the national ideas, which mean support and practical embodiment of the national interests from the side of the Government. During the non-existence of the Georgian State System, the social leaders - “Tergdaleulebi”- of the country assume this function. (Chkhaidze 2009:15). XIX century is the epoch of the formation of nations. During the process, the intellectual part is very important, especially among the invaded ethnies (ethnic groups) (Smith 2010:76). The example of this is given in the works of the Georgian representatives of the 60s. The national vision does not imply only anti-colonial fight, but ideological and practical ways of State building the most crucial component of which is strengthening historical memory. The literature of “Tergdaleulebi” was subjected to these goals and imposed on it the important ideological meaning.

The part of the concept of the representative’s of 60s is their historical creations: I. Chavchavadze: “Demetre the Self-sacrificer”, “The Mother of Khartli”, “Nikoloz Gostabashvili”. A. Tsereteli: “Bagrat the Great”, “Tornike Overlord”, “A Little kakhi”, “Natela”, “Kokola’s tale” I. Gogebashvili: “The King Erekle and An Ingilo weman”, “Past of An Other”, “The Devout Priest Tevdore”, “A Nobleman Iotam Zedgenidze” etc. In the previous article, the accent is mainly placed on historical prose, but in 60s creations, historical theme is not only prosaic, but also is represented in the form of poetry. Despite of the genre differences we cannot avoid these authors and their works, as they influence historical prose and national ideas of the next generation. The memory policy, national identity and anti-colonial protests are actively used in the above mentioned literary texts. These texts do not offer us the wide historical panorama or the past reconstruction. For them the past is in service of the present interests.

Vasil Barnov represents the next stage of Georgian historic prose. He gave a new philosophical-moral dimension to the important national issues in his historical works so important to the previous Georgian authors (Kankava 1967:74). The writer increases the scale of historical prose and suggests the epoch reconstruction. Historical memory in his works is represented as the way of protection of the national self-originality. Role of the memory policy is important: key stages of history are put in the foreground and the stress is on the centuries-old fight of Georgian people. In the works of V. Barnov authentic historic event is merged with the fiction. Shalva Dadiani completes his creative way – in his historic prose the philosophical-moral aspect is deepened (Kankava 1969:90-96). The Soviet Union critics’ reviews on his works are not positive (the name changing of his work is a well-known fact; instead of “The Miserable Russian”, it is named “Giorgi the Russian”). After the rebellion of 1924, on the contrary to the existing pessimistic mood in the Georgian society “The Miserable Russian” represents the Georgian “Golden Age” – The revival of King Tamar epoch (Bakradze 2004:418-420).

The Soviet memory policy manages to inflict the Soviet interpretation to the already existed history and culture of the country and put its modern culture in the service of the Soviet realism. Consequently, in the Georgian literature priority is given to the sub-textual and allegorical texts. Moreover, in the literary text the official clichés, the codes of the Soviet realism, the mythos of the Soviet propaganda appear, which create the double contents of a text, one for the censorship and the other for a reader. In

addition, for the both type of the available codes are given for interpretation (Tsipuria 210:179-181). As a proof to the above-mentioned the work of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia "The hand of the Great Master" (1939) can be named, in which the strong State System era of Georgia is described. "Arsena Marabdeli" by Mikheil Javakhishvili is also created in this context and is a wide-scale, historical genre work of art. The writer tries to defend the esthetics of the Soviet realism; the main idea of the book is the theme of the people. However, the writer implicitly confronts the Soviet Russian colonial politics, and uses the Russian Tsarism as an allegorical means.

K. Gamsakhurdia and M. Javakhishvili seriously influence the Georgian historical prose. Their works establish the following firm features of the Georgian historical prose as a genre: 1) The promotion of the national issues; The usage of history for the different purposes (colonized and humiliated national self-appraisal rise, the wish to receive the appropriate conclusion from history); 2) To depict the specific historical epoch ("Epoch Soul" – as it is established in the Georgian Literary Studies later), which means – ethnography, toponymy, culture and the same characteristics study into the details (Kankava 1969:119) (epoch reconstruction); 3) the linkage of the given themes and problems to the modernity. The development of the latter, besides the literary-genre necessity is supported by the XX century political context (for the reason of censorship to cover them with allegory, sub-texts etc.).

According to the researchers, a new stage of the historical novel begins in the 70s-80s of XX century. In that period the following terms are created: The traditional and untraditional historical novel, as a new historical novel (however, in this work I am not using them as working terms as nowadays, historical prose is considered as a whole phenomenon, which unites many different kinds of it e.g. Gerome De Groot – The Historical novel, 2010. The traditional and untraditional historical novel is useful only to describe the literary processes of the 70s-80s of XX century).

In the 70s-80s of XX century, the Georgian historical prose changes its form. If before it was dominant to have authentic characters in novels, from now the invented characters changed it (khotivar-Junger 1993:25-26). (Miresashvili 2005:5). So-called epoch reconstruction or some other authenticity, for this kind of prose is not characteristic. Apparently, in the Georgian historical prose historical memory forms a strong instrument towards anti-colonial fight and identity strengthening; however from now history becomes a new field to analyze different problems. Good example for such historical prose is a historical novel "Zebulon" written by Jamal Karchkhadze (The novel is published as chapter series in the literature magazine "Mnatobi"; 1984-1986). We do not come across the chronological clues, authentic historical character or historic event. However, it is possible to reconstruct some historical period of the book. From the contents we see that this is the period when Georgia's territoriality is split, it is involved in the constant political turbulences and endless wars. In fact, it can be any late period of the Middle Ages of Georgia.

"Zebulon" is the name of the book, and the name of the main character himself. It represents the imaginary character created by the author. In fact, it is impossible to find the historic prototype of this character in history. If other characters dubiously remind us some of the historic heroes, here it will be difficult to find the similarity. The book represents the entire inner world of Zebulon, and that is why it is so difficult to reconstruct the authenticity of the historical epoch. Literary text's narrative structure is entirely built around the main character, and general historical background is used to show only the specific problems.

The concentration on the inner world of the imaginary character and no interest in the historical epoch reconstruction naturally changes the composition of historical prose. "Omniscient" author-narrator, who shows us the inner world of all characters and at the same time creates the wide-scale picture of historical epoch (or not so wide-scale, however still authentic) is interchanged by the personal narration. The text shows only the facts connected to the life and the thoughts of Zebulon. Moreover, the writer narrates only facts available for his mind and avoids telling the rest of the events.

Zebulon, the main character of the novel is a simple noble. His way of life is defined by the history of Georgia at once. For Zebulon as a noble is essential to be a warrior and protect his land. Nevertheless, in life he is given an alternative – the School of Iovel Batonishvili. In his childhood, there are many tales about the Batonishvili and from his early childhood it becomes his dream to attend his school.

Taking into consideration the situation in the country and his social status, the dream of Zebulon should never come true, if not an accident. One day the Batonishvili decides to collect young boys and girls from the villages for his school. Again, Zebulon has to face a new challenge: his father, Isakhar becomes a victim of the newly settled family in the village, and Zebulon chooses revenge for the death of his father.

This decision marks Zebulon for the rest of his life. The vengeance is not his desire. When his father's body is brought to the house, the whole village comes to attend the procession. *"As soon as he came out onto the balcony, the people who were gathered in the yard in apparent expectation immediately turned towards him and fixed innumerable eyes on him. On their grieving, troubled and stubbornly taciturn faces was written an apparent demand for something, and behind this demand, should Zebulon decline to carry it out, there stood pent-up and restrained fury"*. (Karchkhadze A, 2005:51). Zebulon cannot resist the collective will of village and carries out his revenge: The Daroashvilis, the family of the murderers, are slaughtered including children. The village meets him frightened: *"The village met Zebulon with hushed awe. No one knows from where or from whom they heard how the pursuit of the Daroashvilis had ended (Zebulon hadn't said a word to a soul), but it was clear that they had heard everything. Uncles and nephews would pat him on the shoulder and immediately get out of his way without saying a word but, as it appeared to Zebulon, with some embarrassment. Elderly peasants in the lane would raise their hats and deferentially nod to him. People gathered together somewhere or other, in front of some neighbour's yard and making a loud din, would quickly fall silent at his appearance, become hushed, would silently follow him with their eyes, and only after they thought he was a good distance off, would they continue their interrupted conversations. If respect is connected with awe, in the case of the awe of the people of Tsqarostvali it was fear."* (Karchkhadze A, 2005:86). Zebulon fulfills the demand of the villagers, but after he feels the fear towards him. He feels change in himself: *"Ogres and evil spirits did not call on him, but he did feel that he had gradually become another man. He had not been transformed, nor had he sprouted from what had existed up to then, as a plant will sprout from a root, but he had broken off entirely from his root and had become a separate plant. On the other hand, an eternal, painful, suffocating yearning for that root remained in his soul."* (Karchkhadze A, 2005:93). He does not dare to go to the School of Iovel Batonishvili as considers himself worthless.

This episode plays a key role in the rest of Zebulon's life. Onward, there is always a society around him who is ready to suppress Zebulon's freedom in the name of some great ideas. The example of this is Manuchar Batonishvili, who thinks that country needs the warriors and not the scholars. Zebulon does not think much as he agrees, he does not know what to do or where to go. Here is his response to the Manuchar's question: *'What are you doing here and where are you going?'* *'I don't know myself, Batonishvili, sir... I'm an orphan, without parents...'* – here he hesitated a little, wondering whether he should tell him the story of the Daroashvilis or not, then he continued – *'I no longer wish to stay at home... In my wisdom I've considered visiting Iovel Batonishvili, but I've not dared, and I've remained here.'* (Karchkhadze A, 2005:111) Zebulon finds a way to escape himself and his own wishes. He does not know how to behave even when he falls in love. Besides the social barrier, the future fate of the country is facing him when the Khan Iskander desires to marry his beloved Nestani: *"Now we must all do what our country commands us, and not what our heart tells us.'* *'If we were to do the slightest thing here against Iskander Khan, he would lay Kartli waste and, in an instant, Manuchar Batonishvili would breathe his last at the hands of the Shah of Iran. We must have great wisdom and great patience too.'* (Karchkhadze A, 2005:228,230). Zebulon refuses so many things in his life that he cannot stand up against the Beka Amilakhvari's arguments. His whole life becomes a great chain of his free will denial.

Living this kind of life, at the door of the death Zebulon addresses his country with the following lines in his monologue which are the key words of the novel and have a great importance: *"He had not lived one second for himself after he left the sweet, half-awake state of childhood behind... Hadn't he attempted to massacre the Daroashvilis? But he had massacred them because the village with quiet fury commanded him to massacre them. Didn't he prefer books to combat? But he had spent his days in combat because Manuchar Batonishvili had told him that the country needed warriors and not scholars. Hadn't he wanted to remain all alone in the world when others have families, roots, things to worry and think about?... Well, what time is it now for regret that Zebulon has done everything back to front... Zebulon should not have killed the Daroashvilis. What could have helped Isakhar! On the other hand, at least his mother would not have died so soon, so swollen and so blue... Zebulon should have gone to Iovel Batonishvili. Why, one wonders, would he not have received him?... Zebulon shouldn't have let Nestan go. Who gave the country the right to take everything from you and leave you with nothing? Or who gave Zebulon the right to sacrifice at someone's command a person who had entrusted to him their fear, their hope, their desire?..."* (Karchkhadze A, 2005:343). Zebulon does his best to protect his homeland. Although we see, that the author does not claim him to be a hero, on the contrary, gives a deep view in his inner world and at the same time in the inner world of the society of that period. The society, which is full

with warriors, heroes, but nothing changes around him. From this angle, the writer shows us the specific period of the historical stage of the Middle Age of Georgia.

In his historical novel, J. Karchkhadze discusses the freedom of the country in the context of the freedom of an individual. Zebulon is not a free person, like the environment around him. On the contrary, the invaded Kharti shares the Zebulon's fate. After a few years from the publication of the novel, the writer gives his point of view about the individual and national freedom: *"Today in the minds of the majority of our society, the concept of the "freedom" is similar to the national freedom, and the individual freedom is considered as the part of (of the national freedom – T. Ch.) the whole. It is extremely dangerous mistake, as here; the issue of the "majority" is upside down. In truth, the individual freedom is the whole, and the national freedom – is the part of it, for supporting this argument is enough to say, that a free individual is the will of the God, but a free nation is the will of the individuals... the national freedom – cut from the individual freedom – can compared to the some kind of fetish gods worshipping. The true god reveals only in the individual freedom, because the individual freedom is a ray through which an individual feels the God"* (Karchkhadze B, 2005:89).

The extract from the publication shows the viewpoint of J. Karchkhadze about freedom: the national freedom is incomprehensible without the individual freedom, as the free individuals create the free society and free country. The life of the main character, Zebulon and his monologue before death is the evidence of this. The underling the above-mentioned idea distinguishes "Zebulon" from the Georgian prose traditions. In the Georgian historical prose, especially from second half of XIX century before second half of XX century, is important anti-colonial protest, the memory policy and national identity: the heroic past self-appraisal rise, reminding of hero kings, the lives of the saints and awakening of the national feelings. However, in the novel of J. Karchkhadze history is just a background. For a reader it has neither function of outlining the historical epoch nor the national self-appraisal rise. In the book, the memory policy reveals through the constant battles repeating the historical picture of self-survival. The thought of the national mood is still popular, though accents are changed: the writer sees the nation's future fate in the context of the freedom of an individual. It is also defined by the change of the political context, as "Zebulon" is created in the period when from the colonial reality slowly the post-colonial reality is drawing up. Besides the national identity, it is also important to respect the individual and liberal freedoms, rational steps etc. In the novel "Zebulon", the individual is in the foreground, which is underlined in the number of passages of the text: *"Great things were happening in Kartli. Great things were also happening in Zebulon's heart. And no one knows which was the greater of these."* (Karchkhadze A, 2005:307). And his complaint: *"Who gave the country the right to take everything from you and leave you with nothing??!"* (Karchkhadze A, 2005:343). He does not depict Zebulon as a victim; on the contrary, he shows his doubts in the rightness of his deeds

In the society where the free will of the individual is suppressed and the society itself represents the collection of such individuals, the phenomenon of the victim is significant. In the literary prose and poetry, the idea of sacrifice of the romantic ideal in the name of great ideas is an important issue and analysis of it requires the wide-scale context. Akaki Bakradze discusses the victim idea in the Georgian national identity context in his book - "Taming of Writing". According to him after the rule of the Mongols, in order to save the country, self-sacrifice becomes significant. On the one hand, the country is proud of her devoted saints and kings but on the other, is accustomed to the passive life-style: all the time is waiting for a hero, a savior to show up meanwhile the people are relaxed. The country is divided into the provinces and realms and nothing is done to save the situation. Later this conception is changed by the idea of the political protector (Bakradze 2004: 432-433). This idea of A. Bakradze is supported by the specific facts from history.

The discussion about the victim phenomenon is also possible in the context of the work of Rene Girard – "Violence and the Sacred", where the first religious rituals are studied. The researcher notes that the violence created within a group must be discharged outside in order not to accumulate inside the group, causing the violence explosion. The aggression discharged outside will influence on the group positively. The researcher pays special attention to the "Lamb of God", to which the community transfers its aggression. In the other words, somebody is sacrificed in order to save the other members of the group from the confrontation with each other and further violence. In the primitive society a ritual sacrifice (e.g. of an animal) is made periodically by the collective as a mean of an aggression explosion (Girard 2000:89-100). In addition, according to the point of view of the E. Smith, the negative outer factors, e.g. wars in the ethnical groups help identity protection (Smith 2000:89-100) (The show of the entire nation as a victim so-called victimization). The idea of the victim is in all the religious systems and in XIX century after the

secularization, heroes devoted to the nation appear. Nevertheless, in the texts of Ilia Chavchavadze and the other “Tergdaleulebi” self-sacrifice for the homeland is given a significant part. They also are the authors of the number of the texts, wherein they establish the liberal values. However, in XX century, in the totalitarian world because of a great purpose, the idea of self-sacrifice becomes the everyday reality and a person’s life loses its price (Maisuradze 2012). This concept must be confronted by the idea of the supremacy of an individual, which takes its origins from the liberal ideology.

In the novel “Zebulon” the accent is made on the freedom of an individual and not the idea of self-sacrifice for the homeland, where the freedom of the individual is in the foreground and not the vice versa. In Georgia of XVIII century the character with the same moods and thoughts is less expected, such problems are mostly created at the end of XX century. The idea of self-sacrifice for the homeland is heard in numerous poetic texts, though at the end of the anti-colonial period it was expected to put the question in such way. The creation of the State and anti-colonial movement requires different activities. According to E. Smith, the vertical ethnies (the invaded groups of the ethnics) emotional bonds are different. They already have strategy that is expressed in the common memory, myths, culture in order to confront the hostile environment; they consider themselves as a nation. For creation of the State they believe that one of the conditions is to gain the independence. And the process is not simple; on the contrary, it is connected to the painful experience (Smith 2008:77). That is why in the 80s of XX century preparations for the country’s independent proclamation become important. If we take into the consideration creation epoch of “Zebulon” and the Soviet totalitarian experience in the literary text the individual supremacy and liberal values are pointed out.

In the historical novel of J. Karchkhadze “Zebulon” the individual and his freedom is in the foreground. Certainly, history serves to the memory policy and Georgia is depicted as an abused country fighting against the Muslim world. Nevertheless, to point out this fact or form the anti-colonial identity is not the main idea of the author. For him the great importance represents the post-colonial reality preparation process and liberal ideology. The Georgian historical prose review and analysis of “Zebulon” shows the differences of the historical prose between XIX century, first half of XX century and the 70s-80s of the latter. If in the Georgian historical prose the memory policy was much more important before, later the accents are changed and “Zebulon” by J. Kharchkhadze underlining the individual supremacy represents the undoubted example of it.

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