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FOLKLORE CHRONOTOPE IN MODERN UZBEK PROSE: THE ARTISTIC FUNCTIONS OF THE "OWN SPACE – BOUNDARY – OTHER SPACE" MODEL

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Abstract. In modern Uzbek prose, space is not merely a setting in which events unfold or an environment inhabited by the characters. Rooted in folkloric thought, the model of "own space – boundary – other space" acquires new meanings in literary texts and becomes closely associated with the characters' inner transformation, choices, and trials. This article examines the chronotopic functions of the home, road, threshold, gate, bridge, cemetery, desert, mountains, and other liminal spaces. Particular attention is paid to the semantic shifts that occur when a character leaves a familiar space, crosses a boundary, and enters an unfamiliar or alien domain. The analysis shows that this ancient spatial model inherited from folklore does not function in modern prose as a fixed narrative pattern mechanically transferred from traditional folklore. Rather, it is reinterpreted as a poetic principle that retains its artistic significance and serves to reveal the character's fate, memory, fear, alienation, and sense of identity.
Keywords: folklore chronotope, modern Uzbek prose, literary space, literary time, own space, other space, boundary, liminal space, road chronotope, folkloric thought, spatial model, character, memory, alienation.

INTRODUCTION.

In a literary work, space is not merely the geographical setting in which events unfold. It also reflects where a character feels a sense of belonging, what they are separated from, what boundaries they cross, and how their psychological state changes upon entering a new environment. From this perspective, the model of "own space – boundary – other space," deeply rooted in folkloric thought, provides an important theoretical framework for examining the poetics of modern prose. While the home, homeland, city, or other familiar territory may signify stability and belonging, such spatial elements as the road, threshold, gate, bridge, river, and mountain pass function as points of transition from one state or space to another. Beyond the boundary lies an unfamiliar or alien space, often associated with uncertainty, danger, and various forms of trial.

In modern Uzbek prose, this model is not reproduced as a fixed narrative pattern inherited from folklore. Rather, writers reinterpret its traditional semantics by relating it to historical realities, human memory, the sense of homeland, exile, alienation, and psychological choice. In particular, in Pirimqul Qodirov's **Starry Nights (Yulduzli tunlar)** and Odil Yoqubov's **Ulugbek's Treasure (Ulug'bek xazinasi)**, a character's departure from their own space often coincides with a decisive turning point in their fate. Images such as the bridge, gate, road, stream, cave, frontier, and mountain pass serve not only as physical markers of spatial transition but also

signify the character's separation from a former way of life and entry into a new existential condition. Accordingly, this article examines the **"own space – boundary – other space"** model not simply as a surviving trace of the folklore chronotope in modern Uzbek prose, but as a poetic principle through which historical and individual experience is artistically structured.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

M. M. Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope provides one of the principal theoretical foundations for examining the interrelationship between space and time in literary texts. Bakhtin defines the chronotope as the intrinsic unity of temporal and spatial relations artistically expressed in literature [3, pp. 234–235]. Yu. M. Lotman, in turn, relates literary space to the semantic structure of the text and emphasizes the role of spatial oppositions in revealing the nature of characters and events [4]. In his studies of folklore narratives, V. Ya. Propp identifies the hero's departure from a familiar space, the crossing of a boundary, and the trials encountered in an unfamiliar or alien space as significant structural features of the folktale [5]. V. N. Toporov's studies of the relationship between space and text provide an important theoretical basis for understanding the semantic functions of boundaries, roads, and other transitional or liminal spaces [6, pp. 227–284]. E. M. Meletinsky's research on mythopoetics offers a broader theoretical framework for interpreting the ways in which spatial oppositions rooted in archaic thought are preserved and reinterpreted in literary texts [7]. Drawing on these theoretical perspectives, the present article examines, through close analysis of specific literary works and textual passages, how the "own space – boundary – other space" model acquires new artistic meanings and functions in modern Uzbek prose.

ISCUSSION AND RESULTS.

From the opening pages of Pirimqul Qodirov's Yulduzli tunlar (Starry Nights), space is represented within an atmosphere of historical instability. A long wooden bridge over the Quvasoy is crossed by "countless people, horses, livestock, and carts, swarming like ants"; they are fleeing the Samarqand army in search of a safer place [1, p. 3]. The significance of the bridge extends beyond its physical function. Those crossing it leave behind a familiar environment and move toward a territory whose future remains uncertain. In folklore narratives, bridges, rivers, gates, and thresholds frequently mark the boundary between two different states or spaces: upon reaching such a point, a character is faced with the necessity of remaining within the familiar world or leaving it behind. Qodirov relocates this traditional semantics into a historical context. The people crossing the bridge are not setting out in search of adventure like folktale heroes; they are being displaced by war. Thus, while retaining the folkloric pattern of trial, the motif of crossing a boundary becomes associated with historical tragedy.

The artistic significance of the bridge does not end with this episode. Later, when Mulla Fazliddin is told that the people still bless him for designing the bridge, he replies that enemy troops may soon cross it as well and expresses his willingness to have it burned [1, p. 11]. Tohir develops this idea further, realizing that there is no other crossing through the surrounding marshes and reed beds: if the bridge is destroyed, the enemy will be unable to advance. In the first episode, the bridge serves as a route by which people escape danger; in the second, it becomes a passage through which danger may enter "one's own space." The same spatial object therefore performs two opposing functions: it both connects and separates. From the perspective of the folklore chronotope, this duality is particularly significant. A boundary does not possess a fixed meaning;

its function changes according to who crosses it and in which direction. A bridge that offers salvation to local people may become a route of invasion for the enemy. Tohir's decision to destroy it can therefore be interpreted not merely as a military measure, but also as an attempt to close and protect the boundary of his own world.

Alongside spatial imagery, this part of the novel also reveals a folkloric perception of time. Robiya tells Tohir about her dream in which a black ox gores her with its horns and she begins to bleed. Tohir recalls his father's interpretation that "blood in a dream means light" [1, p. 3]. This brief episode introduces a different perception of time into the narrative. An event that has not yet occurred seems to be experienced in advance through the dream, while the present becomes overshadowed by a sense of future danger. The dream is significant not as a reliable means of predicting the future, but as an expression of the character's attempt to comprehend an uncertain future through traditional forms of dream interpretation. Thus, historical time and the folkloric perception of anticipatory time coexist within the episode, while Robiya's personal fear becomes inseparable from the broader threat of war.

These observations suggest that the folklore chronotope in Yulduzli tunlar cannot be reduced solely to Babur's long journeys or his separation from his homeland. From the beginning of the novel, spatial instability is already evident in the lives of ordinary people: a previously peaceful place becomes dangerous, inhabitants are transformed into refugees, and a bridge originally built to connect people must be destroyed in order to protect them. Against this background, Babur's subsequent journeys between Andijan, Samarqand, Kabul, and India acquire a broader historical significance. His movement between "own" and "other" spaces is therefore not merely an individual trajectory associated with the fate of a ruler; on a larger scale, it continues the spatial instability that has already entered the lives of the people. In Qodirov's novel, the folkloric model of road and boundary consequently functions not as a decorative traditional motif, but as an artistic principle that reveals how an individual's bond with the homeland is disrupted, under what circumstances one enters an alien space, and how such a transition changes one's fate.

In Odil Yoqubov's Ulug'bek xazinasi (Ulugbek's Treasure), space likewise extends beyond the geographical environment inhabited by the characters. Samarqand, the observatory, madrasa, Ko'ksaroy, the city gate, roads, streams, mountain passes, the Urgut Mountains, and Ajdar Cave all mark significant changes in the characters' destinies. The spatial structure of the novel thus clearly reflects the folkloric model of "own space – boundary – other space." Here, "own space" denotes a territory to which the character feels a sense of belonging through memory, belief, and lived experience; the "boundary" marks the point at which this stable condition is disrupted; and "other space" emerges as a new domain associated with uncertainty, danger, exile, or trial. Significantly, this triadic structure recurs in the destinies of different characters and contributes to the novel's overall chronotopic organization.

For Mirzo Ulugbek, Samarqand represents the fullest embodiment of "own space." It is not simply the city over which he has ruled. The madrasa, observatory, library, and banks of the Zarafshan are inseparable from his life, scholarly activity, and personal memories. The closing of the city gates against him therefore acquires a meaning that extends far beyond an ordinary political event:

"The gates are closed. The guards refuse to open them, Your Majesty... The gate of the capital is closed! The gate has been shut to the sovereign who ruled for almost forty years and held absolute power over all of Transoxiana!.." [2, pp. 90–91].

Here, the gate becomes one of the clearest manifestations of the boundary within the folklore chronotope. On one side lies Ulugbek's own city, realm, and cultural world; on the other lies the space of dispossession and alienation. The most striking aspect is that, although the character remains physically close to Samarqand, he has already been symbolically excluded from his own space. The firmly closed Darvozai Ohanin and the fact that the ruler's command to "open the gate" no longer has any force turn this transformation into a tangible spatial image. From this moment onward, the gate separates not merely two territories, but two different states of existence: Ulugbek the ruler and Ulugbek condemned to exile.

This model becomes even more pronounced as Ulugbek prepares to leave on pilgrimage. He imagines travelling to Mecca and then perhaps to Damascus or Cairo, where he might spend the remainder of his life among scholars. Yet his thoughts are dominated not by anticipation of a new land, but by the pain of separation from his own space:

"Only... to leave Transoxiana, the land of his ancestors where his umbilical blood had been shed, his beloved Samarqand, the banks of the Zarafshan where his childhood had passed, to part from this place that had witnessed both his good and difficult days, and to become an exile in foreign lands... it was this thought alone that tormented him" [2, p. 140].

The spatial system in this passage is divided into two poles: Transoxiana–Samarqand–Zarafshan on one side and Mecca–Damascus–Cairo–Baghdad on the other. The first is associated with the idea of "one's own," while the second represents an "other" world that has not yet been experienced. Expressions referring to the land of birth, beloved Samarqand, and the places of childhood transform "own space" from a purely geographical category into a space of ancestry, memory, and personal history.

Ulugbek's departure from Ko'ksaroy marks the actual beginning of his transition from his own space into another:

"Although the old palace somehow seemed cold to him, Mirzo Ulugbek suddenly stopped when he realized that he was bidding farewell forever to the place where he had spent his entire life... mastering his emotions with great effort, he walked toward the gate. As he passed through it, four horsemen met them outside" [2, p. 141].

The sequence "stopped – walked toward the gate – passed through the gate" is particularly significant. The transition from one space to another unfolds through three successive stages: stopping expresses inner hesitation; approaching the gate marks movement toward the boundary; crossing it signifies separation from a former life. The gate of Ko'ksaroy therefore functions not merely as an architectural feature but as a liminal point dividing two periods in the character's life.

After this moment, even the familiar streets of Samarqand acquire a different meaning. Ulugbek moves through places he knows well, yet he can no longer exercise any authority over them. He wishes to visit Go'ri Amir, enter his madrasa, and bid farewell to his students, but he is denied permission. He then realizes that he is no longer a ruler but "a poor man condemned to lifelong wandering" [2, p. 142]. Thus, the boundary between "own" and "other" space is not necessarily a geographical line. Ulugbek is still within Samarqand, yet the city no longer belongs

to him in the same sense. One of the distinctive features of the novel is precisely this process whereby "own space" becomes alien before physical departure actually takes place.

A second important manifestation of the model is associated with Ali Qushchi's removal of Ulugbek's scholarly treasure from Samarqand. In this instance, it is not only the character who moves from one space into another; Ulugbek's intellectual legacy itself is displaced:

"They had left Samarqand at midnight, travelled until dawn, and at daybreak stopped in the walnut grove at the head of the ravine... Ali Qushchi intended to reach Ajdar Cave before the next dawn" [2, p. 121].

The spatial model is explicit: Samarqand → road/ravine/walnut grove → Ajdar Cave. Samarqand is initially the treasure's "own space"; the nocturnal road, ravine, and mountain foothills form a transitional zone; and Ajdar Cave represents a mysterious "other space." The fact that the journey takes place at night and that the characters disguise themselves as shepherds further reinforces the semantics of boundary crossing. Upon leaving their familiar environment, they also conceal their previous social identities.

The boundary chronotope becomes even more pronounced in the mountainous landscape. In the recollection of an earlier hunting expedition involving Ali Qushchi and Ulugbek, a stream and floodwaters function as a natural boundary between two spaces. After Ulugbek crosses the rushing stream and reaches "the other side" [2, p. 124], the familiar hunting landscape gives way to rocks, precipices, and unknown caves. The distinction between "this side" and "the other side" is especially significant: the water functions as a natural threshold leading from an ordinary, familiar environment into a mysterious and unfamiliar domain.

The culmination of this transition is Ajdar Cave:

"A cave! he whispered, for some reason in an anxious voice. 'An endless cave, Ali Qushchi! ...'Shall we enter? Mirzo Ulugbek asked. Sensing hesitation in his voice, Ali Qushchi was the first to step into the cave" [2, p. 125].

The phrase "was the first to step into the cave" is chronotopically significant. The mouth of the cave marks the boundary, while its interior constitutes "other space." Familiar nature remains outside; within the cave begin darkness, uncertainty, interconnected chambers, and narrow passages. The succession of inner caves and dark openings transforms the cave from an ordinary shelter into a mysterious spatial world that must be penetrated progressively.

At the same time, Yoqubov subsequently changes the semantics of the cave. Initially represented as dark, frightening, and alien, it eventually becomes the safest refuge for the scholarly treasure:

"Yes, there is no better place for this treasure than Ajdar Cave!.. Until better times come, these books will rest peacefully like a child in its mother's womb" [2, p. 126].

The comparison with a child in its mother's womb fundamentally alters the function of the cave. What initially appears as "other space" is transformed into a protective and almost sacred refuge. The categories of "own" and "other" are therefore not fixed in the novel. As the political situation changes, the observatory and library in Samarqand become dangerous, whereas the mysterious Ajdar Cave assumes the function of a safe "own space" for the preservation of

knowledge. This reversal of spatial functions constitutes one of the most significant features of the folklore chronotope in the novel.

At the end of the novel, the same model reappears in Ali Qushchi's own fate. Like his teacher, he is compelled to leave his homeland, although his departure is motivated not by political ambition but by the desire to preserve and disseminate knowledge. His intention to spread Ulugbek's writings and scientific discoveries throughout the world leads him to leave his native land and cross the borders of Transoxiana [2, p. 364]. Here, the sequence "homeland → frontier → world" becomes the most generalized expression of the "own space – boundary – other space" model. The explicit reference to the frontier is particularly important because the boundary acquires not only symbolic but also geographical and political meaning.

Ali Qushchi's act of taking a handful of soil from his homeland and carrying it with him further suggests that "own space" can symbolically accompany the character beyond geographical borders. Although he physically leaves his homeland, he carries a fragment of it with him. This detail creates a semantic connection with traditional notions of homeland, soil, departure, and exile.

The image of the mountain pass at the end of the novel completes the model:

"Ali Qushchi kept looking back until he reached the top... Samarqand, and even the nearby gardens, were no longer visible... Ali Qushchi waved his hand for the last time, bid farewell to his students, wiped away his tears, and turned his horse toward the mountain pass..." [2, p. 366].

Here, the mountain pass ceases to be merely a geographical feature and becomes a boundary between two stages of life. Behind Ali Qushchi lie Samarqand, the memory of his teacher, his students, his homeland, and the treasure hidden in Ajdar Cave; ahead lie exile and an uncertain road. His final backward glance followed by the act of turning his horse toward the pass marks the completion of his psychological separation from his own space.

Thus, in Ulug'bek xazinasi, the folkloric model of "own space – boundary – other space" connects the destinies of the two principal characters. In Ulugbek's story, it takes the form Samarqand/Ko'ksaroy → gate and road → exile; in Ali Qushchi's efforts to preserve the scholarly treasure, it appears as Samarqand/observatory → nocturnal road, ravine, stream, mountains → Ajdar Cave; and at the end of the novel, it assumes the form homeland → frontier/mountain pass → world. Most importantly, Yoqubov does not present "own" and "other" spaces as fixed opposites. Political betrayal makes Ulugbek's own city alien to him, whereas the dark and unfamiliar cave becomes a secure refuge for his intellectual legacy. In this way, the folkloric spatial model acquires a new function within the poetics of the historical novel: crossing a boundary changes not only the character's physical location but also their status, fate, and purpose in life.

CONCLUSION.

The analysis demonstrates that in modern Uzbek prose, the "own space – boundary – other space" model, rooted in folkloric thought, functions not as a fixed narrative pattern but as a poetic principle through which the characters' destinies and historical circumstances are revealed. In Yulduzli tunlar (Starry Nights) and Ulug'bek xazinasi (Ulugbek's Treasure), "own space" is associated with the homeland, city, palace, knowledge, and memory, while such transitional spaces as the bridge, gate, road, stream, frontier, and mountain pass mark decisive turning points in the characters' lives. Crossing a boundary therefore signifies more than physical movement from one place to another; it also entails a break with a former status, way of life, and sense of psychological stability.

Importantly, "own" and "other" spaces do not remain fixed categories in these novels. As historical circumstances change, even the homeland may become alien to the character; conversely, a space initially perceived as unfamiliar and dangerous may become a place of refuge and preservation. A striking example is Ajdar Cave in Ulug'bek xazinasi, which is transformed into a secure refuge for the preservation of Ulugbek's scholarly legacy. Thus, the ancient spatial model inherited from folklore brings together questions of history, homeland, exile, memory, and identity in modern Uzbek prose. Its artistic significance lies in its capacity to demonstrate that crossing a boundary transforms not only the character's spatial position but also their fate, psychological state, and purpose in life.

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