

THE PROBLEM OF DETERMINING THE RELIABILITY OF THE IMAGE OF AMIR TEMUR IN THE ASPECT OF HISTORICAL LEGENDS

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Abstract. The problem of determining the degree of historical authenticity of the image of Amir Temur in the aspect of historical legends about him is considered using the example of Christopher Marlowe's drama "Tamerlane the Great". Based on a number of different sources, the author comes to the conclusion that K. Marlowe does not set out to adhere to historical truth, since the main ideological content of the drama is addressed to current socio-political and social problems of contemporary reality.

Key words: poetics, historical genre, historical legends, fiction, image.

Introduction. Christopher Marlowe is a playwright and poet of the English Renaissance who created a large dramatic work about the commander Amir Timur, "Tamerlane the Great." Noteworthy for us is the fact that the author portrays the great commander as so cruel and bloodthirsty that this cannot but cause bewilderment even in a reader who is not experienced in matters of the history of Central Asia.

The natural question is what exactly made Christopher Marlowe "exaggerate" so much - simple ignorance of the historical truth or his chosen aesthetic program? To answer this question, one should turn to both the personality of Amir Timur himself and the creative principles of creating the drama "Tamerlane the Great".

Main body. Indeed, without complete and reliable information about the life path and activities of A. Timur, a modern literary historian will find himself in a certain difficulty. The famous Timur scholar Harold Lamb argued: "In order to understand what Tamerlane was up to, we need to take a closer look at his life. To do this, it is necessary to put aside the history of Europe and close our eyes to modern civilization with its prejudices. And look at Tamerlane through the eyes of those who accompanied him on his campaigns" [1]. Otherwise, we become the reason for the development of one-sided views of a great personality and the formation of incorrect concepts about him in the minds of younger generations.

Russian literary critic A. Parfenov states: "Marlowe found historical and pseudo-historical information about the life of Timur mainly in the Latin treatises of the Florentine Pietro Perondini "The Life of Tamerlane the Great, Emperor of the Scythians", the Genoese Baptista Fregoso "On Memorable Sayings and Deeds", as well as in English translation of the "Collection of Various Instructions" by the Spaniard Pedro Mejía." Such information can also be found in the book "Tamerlane: Conqueror of the World" by the American writer Justin Marozzi: "Marlowe carefully studied the latest sources at that time, using books such as "The Life of Timur" by Pietro Perondini and "The English Mirror" by George Wheatstone." Ellis-



Fermor, a famous European researcher of the work of Christopher Marlowe, writes: “The main sources for the creation of the drama “The Great Tamerlane” were the works of Halcondylos, Haytn, Fregoso, Mejia, Primadeus and Pirondin” [2].

It is known that the most reliable sources about Amir Timur are the books “Zafarnama” by Nizamidin Shami, “Zafarnama” by Sharafidin Ali Yazdi and “The History of Timur” by Ibn Arabshah. These works were translated into European languages only in the 18th-19th centuries. In particular, R. Vautier translated Ibn Arabshah's "History of Timur" into French in 1658, the book "Zafarnama" by Sharafidin Ali Yazdi was partially translated into French by Petius de La Cruz in 1722, and "Zafarnama" by Nizamidin Shami - in 1937 by Felix Tower. This means that the most reliable sources about Amir Timur began to be translated into European languages only half a century after the death of Christopher Marlowe. But, according to Justin Marozzi, “Marlowe carefully studied the sources of that time, and therefore he knew very well about the life of the emperor (Timur)” [1].

It is true that for Europe at that time the works of Halcondilos, Haytn, Fregoso, Mejía, Primadea and Pirondina served as the latest sources for that time, however, it is no secret that these works were written to a greater extent on the basis of information passed from mouth to mouth. None of the above authors was at the center of the civilization they described, was not a direct eyewitness to the events that took place in the life of Amir Timur, and also did not create directly or indirectly based on reliable sources, as did the historians Yazdiy and Shomiy.

After reading the drama “Tamerlane the Great,” it becomes obvious that there is practically no real similarity between its main character, the godless and predatory Tamburleng, and the historical figure Amir Timur.

Fiction was widely used not only in relation to a historical figure, but also in the description of historical events. The thoughts expressed by some foreign literary scholars on this matter are worthy of attention. In particular, the point of view of J. S. Cunningham, stated in the introduction to the publication of the drama “The Great Tamerlane”, is interesting: “If you do not take into account the scene of the battle with the Turks, then the similarity between Marlowe’s artistic description and historical facts is extremely small” [1]. Thoughts belonging to the English orientalist Hilda Hookham also bring some clarity to the issue under consideration: “The sources that Marlowe used were in fact not documentary sources, but were just heroic novels” [2]. Consequently, the drama "Tamerlane the Great" by Christopher Marlowe was not based on historical facts and documents. However, it is also difficult to believe that Marlowe, an intellectual who amazed his society, who reached the pinnacle of fame while still a very young man, could write a work that was not conscience-free.

It is known that historical events are considered the main material and are an independent object of depiction in fiction, at least in historical drama. The typical reality of the era being described, the creation of lifelike and believable characters is considered the most important principle of artistic knowledge. This is based on the writer’s description of reality, in particular, the historical past. The famous Uzbek literary critic M. Koshzhanov states: “Although a writer who works in the historical genre, as well as a writer who creates works on other topics, uses artistic fiction associated with his personal experience at a level that requires historical truth, he looks at historical facts as an important source. Therefore, a decisive place in historical works is occupied by historical events and incidents and, based on this, the character of a historical figure is recreated” [3]. Based precisely on these criteria, which require practical implementation when creating historical works, we can say that when creating the drama “The Great Tamerlane”, artistic fiction of the level of historical truth was not used, and historical



facts were not considered as an important source. Thus, researchers consider the drama “Tamerlane the Great” to be a work about a historical figure describing an image in the aspect of historical legends.

Here it is appropriate to mention works that reveal the image of the European conqueror Iskander - Alexander the Great in Eastern literature. “The image of the legendary conqueror has always been the center of attention in human society. Over time and with the change of centuries, the personality of Alexander, his numerous campaigns and victories, which turned into a legend, began to be perceived with a distortion of his historical appearance and the facts associated with him, as a result of which many different works appeared that were far from historical reality. The image of Alexander, who turned into a legend, under the name Iskander, served as a prototype for the heroes of the works of poets of the eastern peoples” [2].

One of the most important features of works of historical genres of the modern type is the principle of historicism. Historicism requires a description of the historical era, specific unique qualities inherent in human life and psychology in their unchanged form. But this quality is practically absent in works of the historical genre, written based on the methods of romanticism and classicism. The same applies to works of the English Renaissance. Thus, in Navoi’s romantic work “Saddi Iskandari” there is no historicism. Although it seems that the great writer, turning to the materials of the era of Macedonian and Aristotle, did not actually set himself the goal of describing with historical accuracy the qualities described by the era, the activities and psychology of the two-great people.

Representatives of classicism, which occupied a huge era in the history of European literature and art, turning to history, did not set out to achieve a historically accurate description. Historical materials served as a means for them to describe the most important social problems of their time.

It should be especially emphasized that the real Amir Temur plunged Europe into horror, and his person simply could not be perceived with any impartiality. This means that Christopher Marlowe, using the image of Timur as a prototype for the hero of his work, did not set himself the creative task of creating an objective narrative about the life of a historical figure in its pure form. Similarly, “it is completely unfounded and erroneous to consider the biography or campaigns of the great conqueror in dastans dedicated to the image of Iskandar as a chronicle. Dastans addressed to this famous personality always reflect the authors’ own socio-political, philosophical, moral and aesthetic views” [3]. Thus, we can say that Marlowe needed exotic names of people and places to describe current problems, ideas, political and religious views in the aspect of historical legends.

In our opinion, there are a number of reasons that explain the assignment of such a significant role to artistic fiction in the drama “Tamerlane the Great.” The first, as mentioned above, is that as a result of the change of eras, the great personality of Sahibkiron, his campaigns and conquests acquired the shell of a legend, that is, they began to be perceived distorted. The second reason is the foreign cultural perception of the historical conceptual sphere of Amir Timur, which cannot be completely objective. Here, a particularly important role belongs to legends and tales, passed on from mouth to mouth as eyewitness accounts, but undergoing inevitable changes along the way.

Another reason: K. Marlowe, being a civil servant, resorted to exotic eastern “realities” and names in order to satirically depict representatives of certain strata of society in his state, where an absolute monarchy reigned. Russian literary critic A. Parfenov, having analyzed Marlowe’s drama “Tamerlane the Great,” wrote the following: “It would be wrong to look here for the



poet's desire to recreate the true character of an eastern despot; English reality provided him with enough psychological "material" for observations" [2]. Orientalist scholar S. Greenblatt also draws attention to this very thing: "Although Marlowe in his works uses images of a Scythian cattle breeder, a Maltese Jew, a German wizard, through them he describes his compatriots" [4].

Conclusion. The general conclusion from our article could be the following. K. Marlowe does not aim to adhere to the historical truth regarding the life and work of Amir Temur as a real historical figure, sacrificing the principle of historicism in favor of the main ideological content, which is aimed at solving pressing socio-political and social problems of the author's contemporary reality.

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