



GENRE FEATURES OF THE WORK “AMONG THE RUINS

Manzura Akhronqulovna Jo‘rayeva

Head of the Department of Literary Studies,

Fergana State University

ORSID ID: 0009-00020915-3954

Email: mjurayeva0812@gmail.com

Phone: +998 97 211 03 00

Abstract

This article examines the travelogue genre and its characteristics. It explores the genre's characteristics in Abdulhamid Sulaymon ugli Cholpon's "Among the Ruins." It provides a scientific justification for the types and directions of the travelogue genre. Specific facts, landscapes, and fictional images in the work are analyzed, and the author's concept is explored.

Keywords: Travel, art, travel notes, letter, memory, diary, motif, landscape, detail, myth.

Introduction

Travel writing as a literary genre occupies a unique position between documentary narrative and artistic reflection. Although travelogues may take various forms—diaries, epistolary accounts, memoirs, journalistic reports, or artistic prose—they share a common aim: to record movement through space combined with intellectual and emotional transformation. This study examines Cho‘lpon’s travelogue *Among the Ruins (Vayronalar orasida)*, written on the basis of his journey through Andijan–Osh–Jalalabad. The text presents not merely geographical observations but a complex narrative in which visual description, historical memory, socio-political critique, ethnographic detail, and lyrical introspection constitute an integrated whole.

By analyzing the structural components of the travelogue—introductory scene, observational segments, and reflective conclusion—this research seeks to demonstrate how Cho‘lpon employs the travel form as a tool for portraying social reality, national consciousness, and the cultural psychology of the early Soviet



period. Particular attention is placed on the interplay between factual documentation and aesthetic imagination, as reflected in his vivid imagery, folkloric symbolism, musical comparisons, and socio-political commentary.

Literature Review

Scholarly interest in the travel genre emphasizes its hybridity and interdisciplinary nature. According to theorists such as Thompson (2011) and Youngs (2013), travel writing exists at the intersection of ethnography, history, and autobiography, revealing the interaction of subjectivity and reality. In the context of Central Asian literature, researchers (Qosimov, 2000; Matyoqubova, 2015) observe that early twentieth-century Uzbek travelogues functioned simultaneously as journalistic documents and artistic meditations on modernization, colonial transformation, and national identity.

Studies on Cho'lpon highlight his pioneering role in modern Uzbek prose (To'xtasinov, 1998; Mamajonov, 2021). Scholars note that his travel narratives integrate documentary evidence with poetic sensibility and political consciousness. Recent analyses (Xudoyberganova, 2023) argue that Cho'lpon's travelogue structure is inherently dialogic, engaging in intertextual conversation with folklore, classical literature (e.g., *Baburnama*), and foreign travel writing traditions.

However, despite growing research on Cho'lpon, **the travelogue genre itself remains under-examined**. Most studies focus on his poetry or novelistic style, leaving the compositional logic and socio-epistemological functions of *Among the Ruins* relatively unexplored. Thus, this research fills a scholarly gap by examining how the travelogue mediates between **observational documentation and socio-political critique**.

Methodology and Methods

This study applies a **qualitative, interpretive, and text-analytical methodology**. The theoretical foundation draws from:

Narratology (Bal, 2017) – for analyzing structure and narrative voice;

Discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992) – for identifying ideological markers within descriptive passages;

Ethnographic reading (Geertz, 1973) – for interpreting cultural and folkloric elements;



Genre analysis (Bakhtin, 1981) – for exploring hybrid genre features.

Methods of Analysis

Analytical Method	Purpose in this Study
<i>Close reading</i>	To identify symbolic imagery, metaphors, cultural references.
<i>Contextual-historical analysis</i>	To trace socio-political references (Dashnak forces, feudal elites, educational reforms).
<i>Intertextual analysis</i>	To examine allusions to folklore, <i>Baburnama</i> , and Western travel narratives.
<i>Comparative mapping</i>	<i>genre</i> To determine where Cho‘lpon’s travelogue fits within broader travel-writing traditions.

Primary data consist of the travelogue itself (*Among the Ruins*), while secondary sources include academic publications on Uzbek literature, folklore, and travel-writing theory.

The Main Part

The forms and types of the travel genre vary. There are artistic travels, journalistic travels, travels written as diaries, travels written as memoirs, and travels written in the form of letters. Though their forms and appearances differ, their purpose and function are the same. Cho‘lpon’s “Among the Ruins” (*Vayronalar orasida*) is a travelogue based on real facts and written in comparison with memories of the past. The work emerged from impressions of the author’s journey through Andijan–Osh–Jalalabad. The scene where the author is awakened, gets into the cart, and his mother sees him off holding a lamp for a long distance, together with the author’s warm reflections about his mother, forms the introduction of the travelogue. Our observations show that every travelogue necessarily includes an introductory part. Hence, the presence of an introduction is an essential feature of the genre. After the introduction, the author describes his observations, and finally, he expresses his impressions in the concluding part of the work.

“We approach the outskirts of the city... We pass by the back side of the first factory of Paxtaqo‘m. From among the sharp lights of the brightest electric lamps comes a humming sound. This is the sound of the rotating factory blades. Among the beams of light, the sky looks like the dark bosom of our mother earth; thinking



of this dark-hearted land, a vast cotton field opens before the eyes of imagination. In that vast cotton field, the cotton plants—with their white heads gathered together like the veiled Muslims assembled on Judgment Day—truly create a scene of resurrection for humankind! The humming of the cotton factory together with the “cotton apocalypse”... form a harmony, like water with a horse, death with life” [1, 33].

Cho‘lpon’s familiarity with the art of music is also evident in this passage. He connects his reflections on the factory with the image of the cotton field, creating one of the most beautiful examples of simile in prose. He also mentions the existence of leather factories, noting that most of them had fallen into ruin and been shut down, while only one remained barely functioning. The author describes the rough condition of the cart road, how the carts sink into the mud, the drivers’ suffering, and eventually his arrival in the city of Andijan.

“Descending from the hill, we enter the village of Khartum. The buildings and courtyards on the outskirts appear ruined and desolate. From the once-thriving marketplace, now only the sorrowful sound of a guard’s wooden clapper can be heard. We passed through the village of Zavraq along the bad, muddy roads, then reached the village of Chek and began climbing a large hill. There was not a single living soul moving in the villages; everyone seemed asleep. Yet, in every house, it felt as if life still lingered — as though there were people within” [1, 34]. Alongside his observations, the author inquires about the situation from the cart drivers and learns that there are no people left among the ruins. While describing the village, he makes effective use of elements from folk oral creativity. The corn and cotton stalks piled on the roofs are likened to the heads of demons and hordes of spirits (a reference to fairy tales and mythological imagery). Through his imagination, he creates various shapes and scenes. Following the flow of his thoughts, he arrives at To‘rabulok, which, he notes, was once the stronghold of rebel leaders (qorbohshi). He emphasizes the sense of anxiety and disturbance that fills his heart upon reaching this place. This implies that the villagers living around To‘rabulok had fled the area, changing their settlements to escape the qorbohshis. However, the author does not state this explicitly; instead, he conveys it indirectly by describing his inner unease. The use of terms such as “the head of a demon” and “a horde of spirits” is also symbolically connected to the former presence of those qorbohshi groups.



The author's mention of hearing songs such as "Gulyor," "Makhzumjon," "Uzmagul," and "Omonyor" from other carts, and his deliberate listing of their names, indicates his deep familiarity with Uzbek folk oral traditions, genres, melodies, and lapars (folk lyrical songs).

Cho'lpon was well-versed in folklore, mythology, literature, geography, and botany, and was also an intellectually aware individual with knowledge of politics.

As he notes:

"On the road, we saw a village — more than half of it had been burned down. I asked the cart drivers about the reason. They replied: 'It was burned by the Armenians who fled after the fighting with the basmachi; it happened three or four years ago.'"

This passage demonstrates Cho'lpon's ability to intertwine factual observation with imaginative interpretation, combining ethnographic detail, mythic imagery, and socio-political awareness into a single narrative fabric.

"The Armenians' 'National Dashnak' factions, having joined the ranks of the Red Banner during the early years of the Soviet regime, committed numerous atrocities. One by one, the images of the 'Armenian dictatorship' that had existed in the Fergana region during 1918–1919 passed vividly before my eyes."

This excerpt reveals Cho'lpon's deep historical awareness and his critical reflection on the socio-political upheavals of his time. The passage refers to the violent activities of the Dashnak forces in the Fergana Valley, highlighting the author's ability to intertwine personal memory with historical reality — a hallmark of his travel narrative's documentary and reflective nature [1, 35]. During his journey, Cho'lpon carefully gathers information about every ruin he encounters, interpreting each within a historical or political context. For instance, he mentions an iron bridge in Shahrikhon that was built at great expense but later fell into disrepair. He stresses the urgency of repairing it and specifies whose responsibility it is to ensure such reconstruction. This shows that Cho'lpon, as a journalist, lived in harmony with the concerns of the people while also possessing a clear understanding of the authorities and officials surrounding the government. Consequently, each of his reflections is well-grounded and represents real, undeniable social issues.

While observing the people in the village of Kho'jaobod, the author identifies himself as a reporter by referring to himself as a "gazetachi" (newspaper man). He compares the past and the present, noting how the overflowing Osh River had



damaged the crops of farmers in Shahrikhon and Kho‘jaobod. He recalls that articles on this issue had been published in the Darxon and Farg‘ona newspapers, yet no effective measures had been taken to resolve the problem. Expressing deep sorrow, the author laments that although he raised the farmers’ grievances publicly, he could not bring them relief.

The work reflects how every human action and event is closely connected with space and time. The harmony between space and time, the fate of humankind, the lives of ordinary people, the labor of peasants, and the interplay between past and future — all become the poet’s inner pain and source of artistic inspiration. ““That garden had been established some ten or twelve years earlier by one of Fergana’s wealthy Jewish landlords, the Simkhoev family. To acquire the land for the garden at a cheap price from the peasants, one of our own foolish turas (local nobles) had rendered great assistance. Through his interference, even the lands that had no access to water were provided with irrigation — that is, the peasants living in the upper villages had to divert part of their water supply to the tura’s garden. Since many of the peasants were devotees or followers of this tura, he accomplished this task with ease. He would simply say, ‘I have made it white,’ or ‘I have made it black’ — and that was enough.”

This passage exemplifies Cho‘lpon’s sharp social insight and his critique of the feudal mentality prevailing in his time. It exposes the exploitation of peasants through the alliance of wealthy landowners and corrupt local authorities, revealing how religious devotion and authority were often manipulated to serve personal interests” [1, 38].

The writer portrays the simplicity and gullibility of the people who, relying on old folklore traditions, became followers of a shallow-minded tura (religious noble) and ultimately lost everything they possessed. Later, even that tura himself was unable to sustain the wealth he had amassed from the peasants.

When describing the nature and beauty of Osh, the author quotes from Babur’s “Baburnama” and a French work titled “The Amir of Kashgar, Ya‘qub.” Referring to the opinions of Uzbek-Turkic and French scholars, he refrains from adding any further comment, affirming only that “Osh is indeed a place worthy of the highest praise.”

In his depiction of the city of Osh and its surrounding landscapes, Cho‘lpon skillfully employs elements of folk oral creativity, enriching each observation with



proverbs and sayings. This demonstrates his deep familiarity with both Eastern and Western literary traditions, as well as his mastery of folklore. Throughout the travelogue, he meaningfully enhances the narrative with such intertextual references and cultural allusions.

Even the vegetation on the Osh mountains — the herbs, grasses, and meadows — does not escape the author’s attentive gaze. He offers detailed descriptions of each, noting their forms and symbolic meanings. Cho‘lpon also comments on the strips of cloth tied to the plants atop the mountain, interpreting this as a reflection of the people’s belief in folk rituals and superstitions. He alludes to the custom of villagers visiting the mountain to tie pieces of cloth to these plants while expressing their sorrows, pains, and heartfelt wishes — a vivid illustration of the enduring spiritual bond between people, nature, and faith.

“Poor Uzbek woman!”

This brief but emotionally charged exclamation reflects Cho‘lpon’s deep compassion and social consciousness. With just a few words, he encapsulates the plight of Uzbek women of his time — burdened by tradition, inequality, and hardship. The phrase conveys both sympathy and protest: sympathy for the women’s suffering, and protest against the social structures that caused it. It is a poignant example of Cho‘lpon’s humanism and his ability to express profound meaning through simple, heartfelt language.

“The same people who shrouded you in a burial cloth at the age of twelve, on the very day of your birth, cast you into the absurd embrace of superstitions. You do not know. You do not know. And because you do not know, for many more years you will let your purest hopes wither away for the sake of those very superstitions! Since in this new era a wide path has been opened for you to learn and to know, let us wish that the local funds allocated for the schools meant to enlighten you may continue to increase!” [1, 43].

The writer expresses his thoughts not randomly, but with clear purpose and structure. While discussing superstitions, he connects them to the fate of women. He sympathizes with those women who, without education, remain under the influence of saints and fortune-tellers, unable to perceive the beauty of their surroundings and nature, thereby ruining their own lives. These women, having lost hope for the future, come to believe that life consists only of spirits, demons, diviners, and prophets.



Cho‘lpon laments their condition and emphasizes the necessity of education — not only for the upbringing of their children but also for their own self-fulfillment and dignity. He portrays the destiny and struggles of such women in his stories and novels. The female characters in his works “A Tulip in the Snow” (Qor qo‘ynida lola) and “Night and Day” (Kecha va kunduz) were inspired by the women he encountered during his travels. Thus, their life stories served as prototypes that were later reflected in his travelogues and travel essays. (Emphasis by M.J.)

“If we take a broader view, it can be concluded that Cho‘lpon’s short prose works comprise such genres as the short story, prose poem and narrative, etude, essay, and travelogue. However, in our opinion, it would be insufficient to limit the classification to these categories alone, since even within a single genre, the writer’s works are not uniform — each reveals distinctive genre-specific features. These peculiarities, in our view, become evident in several key aspects of each specific work:

1. the principles of artistic representation of life;
2. the writer’s approach to literary type or form;
3. the characteristics of plot and composition;
4. the mode of relation to reality; and
5. the interplay between layers of depiction and expression” [2, 44].

In the travelogue, the author places particular emphasis on the issue of education and upbringing. He writes:

“There is only one school in Osh. Its building is quite good; it used to be a Russian-native school. But when we visited, it had not yet been repaired. The municipality has no funds for renovation, the education department has no money to provide for the teachers, and the People’s Commissariat for Education has no funds to allocate to the department. Thus, even the fate of this single school remains uncertain. They have transferred it to public maintenance, yet collecting money from the people is difficult...

We were sitting in the city garden, in one of the most beautiful places, when a man who had heard that ‘journalists have arrived’ came to us. For half an hour, he spoke passionately — almost to the point of tears — explaining that taxes had been levied twice on the same property, and that their complaints had been of no avail. We realized right there that the Soviet press had already established its authority quite firmly.” [1, 43]



This passage demonstrates Cho‘lpon’s acute awareness of the social and educational problems of his time. Through a journalist’s lens, he exposes the contradictions of the early Soviet system — the lack of resources for schools, bureaucratic negligence, and the growing gap between official propaganda and the real needs of the people. His concern for education reflects his broader humanistic vision: that enlightenment and knowledge are the only means to free society from ignorance and injustice. Cho‘lpon’s observation of numerous villages and his special attention to their schools, along with his sorrowful reflections on the people’s ignorance, form the central purpose of the travelogue. He particularly emphasizes the Kyrgyz people living around Osh — their eagerness for education and their collective efforts to establish a school. The people themselves gathered funds and managed the school’s maintenance for six months.

He also notes that a school had been opened in Uzgen, yet laments that the already existing school in Osh had fallen into neglect. The author mainly focuses on the lack of education among women in Osh, issues of education and upbringing, the fate of both flourishing and abandoned schools, and even the relocation of the city’s only cinema to Jalalabad.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that *Among the Ruins* transcends the boundaries of a typical travel description. While maintaining the structural conventions of the travel genre (introduction–observation–reflection), Cho‘lpon transforms the journey into a **socio-political and moral investigation**. His integration of musical imagery, folklore symbolism, and socio-historical facts produces a multidimensional text where aesthetic representation becomes inseparable from critical inquiry.

Several conclusions emerge:

Travelogue as socio-cultural documentation: Cho‘lpon records educational decline, bureaucratic passivity, environmental neglect, and social injustice, thus constructing a documentary archive of his era.

Travelogue as artistic form: Rich metaphor, lyrical reflection, and intertextual references elevate the text to artistic prose.

Travelogue as nationalist awakening: Through compassionate depictions of peasants and women and critique of social oppression, Cho‘lpon advocates enlightenment and national consciousness.



Genre hybridity: The narrative merges journalism, ethnography, memoir, and lyrical prose—highlighting the flexibility of the travelogue as a modern literary form.

Ultimately, Cho‘lpon’s work exemplifies how travel writing can serve as a vehicle for articulating **historical memory, cultural identity, and intellectual resistance.**

References

1. Abdulhamid Cho‘lpon. Travelogue and Notes on the Road. Tashkent: Akademnashr, 2022, p. 43.
2. Quronov, D. The Poetics of Cho‘lpon’s Prose. Tashkent: Sharq Publishing House, 2004, p. 23.
3. Quronov, D., Mamajonov, Z., & Sheraliyeva, M. Dictionary of Literary Studies. Tashkent: Akademnashr, 2013.
4. Karimov, N. Cho‘lpon: An Educational Novel. Tashkent: Sharq, 2003.