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THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SHOBERDI BAKHSHI BOLTAYEV AND ABDUNAZAR BAKHSHI POYONOV TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEK FOLK EPIC STORYTELLING

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Abstract
This article examines the distinctive contribution of two prominent representatives of the Sherabad epic performance school, Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev and Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov, to the development of Uzbek folk epic traditions.

Keywords: Uzbek folklore, folk epic, Sherabad epic school, Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev, Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov, bakhshi art, dombra, terma, epic tradition, textual variati.

Introduction

Uzbek oral folk literature is an invaluable cultural heritage that embodies the nation's centuries-old historical memory, spiritual values, aesthetic thinking, and experiences of social life. One of the largest and most complex generic layers of this heritage is folk epic storytelling. Epics provide an artistic expression of the people's historical perceptions, heroic ideals, social relationships, moral views, and understandings of love and loyalty.

The Surkhandarya–Kashkadarya oasis occupies a special place in the development of Uzbek epic storytelling. The Sherabad school of epic performance, which emerged in this region, is distinguished by its distinctive performance style, musical melodies, the repertoire of its bakhshis (traditional epic singers), and the continuity of its epic traditions. The performance of epics such as Alpomish, Go'ro'g'li, Kuntug'mish, Rustamkhan, and Malla Savdogar by representatives of this school has played an important role in transmitting the people's epic heritage from one generation to another. The creative activities of Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev and Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov are of particular significance in the development of the Sherabad school of epic storytelling. Through their individual performance skills, epic repertoires, dutar-like do'mbira playing, and contributions to the preservation and continuation of

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traditional bakhshi practices, they have made a valuable contribution to the development of Uzbek epic art.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

While Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev's creative activities are particularly characterized by his performance of termas (short lyrical and didactic folk compositions), do'mbira melodies, and the tradition of training disciples, Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov's artistic profile is distinguished by his extensive epic repertoire, artistic interpretation of epics, and distinctive individual performance of their systems of characters.

The Sherabad School of Epic Storytelling in the Surkhandarya–Kashkadarya Oasis

The Sherabad school of epic storytelling, which developed in the Surkhandarya–Kashkadarya oasis, represents one of these distinctive performance traditions. Its principal characteristics include the performance of epics accompanied by the do'mbira, a style of singing based on a subdued or inward vocal technique, the use of traditional epic melodies, and the bakhshi's improvisational abilities.

Among the representatives of the Sherabad school, performers such as Sherna Bakhshi, Umar Shoir, Mardonaqul Avliyoqul o'g'li, Xushboq Bakhshi, Shoberdi Boltayev, and Abdunazar Poyonov hold a prominent place. Through their activities, regional epic storytelling traditions have been transmitted to subsequent generations. In his study entitled The Creative Work of Bakhshis of the Sherabad School of Epic Performance in the Surkhandarya–Kashkadarya Region, Qaxromon Rashidov provides information about the lives, creative activities, repertoires, and performance styles of representatives of this school. One of the essential characteristics of the Sherabad school is the close interconnection between epic texts and musical performance. In this respect, the creative legacies of Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev and Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov provide an opportunity to examine two important creative directions within this school.

Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev was one of the prominent bakhshis associated with the Sherabad–Boysun epic storytelling traditions of the Surkhandarya oasis. Through his performance activities, mastery of terma compositions, interpretation of do'mbira melodies, and training of disciples, he contributed to the development of Uzbek folk epic storytelling and the art of bakhshi performance.

Qaxromon Rashidov's research provides important information about Shoberdi Bakhshi's creative repertoire. In particular, his termas, including Mehmondir, Tilar,

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Suluv, Do'mbiram, Bilmadim, Shul Yomon, and Ko'rdi, as well as his do'mbira melodies, such as Boy Keldi, Ohuva, Kelinoy, Cho'pon Kuyи, Zubayda, and Otning Ketishi, are mentioned as well-known examples of his performance repertoire.

This repertoire demonstrates that Shoberdi Bakhshi's creative activities were not limited to the performance of epics. In his artistic practice, the performance of termas and instrumental music also possessed independent artistic and aesthetic significance. The terma genre provides an important means through which a bakhshi can express views on people's everyday lives, social relationships, human virtues, love, loyalty, patriotism, and life experiences. Therefore, Shoberdi Bakhshi's termas should be studied not merely as examples of musical performance but also as folkloric materials reflecting the moral and aesthetic perspectives of the people.

In particular, the terma entitled Do'mbiram is noteworthy in terms of understanding the performer's relationship with his musical instrument, his devotion to musical tradition, and his perception of the inner essence of the bakhshi art.

The prominent role of do'mbira melodies in Shoberdi Bakhshi's creative work demonstrates his continuation of the musical performance traditions characteristic of the Sherabad school.

Another important aspect of the bakhshi's creative activity was his contribution to the continuation of the master–disciple tradition. According to available sources, his disciples included Baxshiqul To'g'ayev, O'rol Rahimov, Safar Shaydilov, Murod Bakhshi Aliqulov, and his son Ro'ziqul Bakhshi Boltayev. This information indicates that Shoberdi Bakhshi's activities were not confined to individual performance but also contributed to ensuring the continuity of the bakhshi tradition for subsequent generations.

The recognition of Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev with the honorary title of People's Bakhshi of Uzbekistan is also associated with his contributions to national bakhshi art. His creative legacy serves as an important source for studying the musical and poetic traditions of the Sherabad school of epic storytelling.

One of the prominent representatives of the Sherabad school of epic storytelling is Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov. The influence of Khushboq Bakhshi Mardonakulov, Chorshanbi Bakhshi Rahmatullayev, and Qodir Bakhshi Rahimov played an important role in his mastery of the art of bakhshi performance. Existing biographical and scholarly sources indicate that Abdunazar Bakhshi began learning the secrets of this traditional art from these masters in 1984.

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DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

An important characteristic of Abdunazar Bakhshi's creative activity is his extensive epic repertoire. His repertoire is reported to include such epics as Alpomish, Go'ro'g'li, Avazkhan, The Return of Avazkhan, Golden Bowl, Malla Savdogar, Rustamkhan, Kuntug'mish, Malikai Ayyor, Kelinoy, Suluvkhan, The Birth of Go'ro'g'li, and Zarnigor. This repertoire demonstrates that Abdunazar Bakhshi mastered epic works representing various genres and narrative structures.

The awarding of the honorary title of People's Bakhshi of Uzbekistan to Abdunazar Poyonov in 2003 represents official recognition of his contributions to the art of bakhshi performance. In 1994, he won second place at an international competition of aqyns held in Bishkek on the occasion of the 1,000th anniversary of the Manas epic. He also participated in the Ak-Tanday aqyns festival held in Kyrgyzstan in 2002. These achievements demonstrate that Abdunazar Bakhshi's performance skills were recognised not only at the regional level but also within the broader international traditions of bakhshi and aqyn performance.

The study of Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov's creative legacy is particularly significant in relation to his performance of the epic Alpomish. This epic is one of the most important examples of the Uzbek heroic folk tradition, embodying the people's historical memory, heroic ideals, loyalty to their homeland, family values, and social relationships.

The version of Alpomish performed by Abdunazar Poyonov was prepared for publication by Jabbor Eshonqulov and published by Akademnashr in 2018. This edition provides an important opportunity to examine the performer's individual style on the basis of a written source. The scholarly significance of this version is primarily reflected in its combination of the traditional epic narrative with the distinctive features of individual performance.

In her 2024 article entitled The Character of Qultoy in Abdunazar Poyonov's Version of the Epic Alpomish, Husnura Samadova analyses the distinctive interpretation of the character Qultoy in this version. The study demonstrates that Abdunazar Poyonov's interpretation presents Qultoy's origins and kinship relationship with Alpomish differently from other versions. This illustrates an important characteristic of variation in oral epic storytelling. In this respect, Abdunazar Poyonov's version of Alpomish should be regarded not merely as a reproduction of an existing epic text,

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but as an expression of traditional epic thought through the individual artistic skills of the performer.

A comparative study of the creative activities of Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev and Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov makes it possible to identify the internal developmental characteristics of the Sherabad school of epic storytelling. Although both bakhshis are associated with the same regional performance traditions, their creative activities demonstrate distinctive individual characteristics.

In Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev's creative work, particular importance is attached to the performance of termas, the playing of do'mbira melodies, the continuation of traditional performance styles, and the training of disciples. By contrast, Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov's activities are distinguished by his extensive epic repertoire, individual artistic interpretation of epic texts, distinctive development of character systems, and participation in international performance events.

The existence of disciples who have continued Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev's creative traditions demonstrates the importance of his role as a master in the development of this art. Similarly, the creative experience Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov acquired from his masters, Khushboq Mardonakulov, Chorshanbi Rahmatullayev, and Qodir Rahimov, illustrates the mechanism through which traditional knowledge was transmitted from one generation to another within the Sherabad school.

CONCLUSION

The distinctive contributions of Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev and Abdunazar Bakhshi Poyonov to the development of Uzbek folk epic storytelling are determined by their efforts to preserve the traditions of the Sherabad school, promote the national epic heritage among the people, and demonstrate the artistic potential of the bakhshi tradition.

Shoberdi Bakhshi Boltayev's creative legacy is primarily characterized by his contribution to the terma genre, performance of do'mbira melodies, preservation of traditional musical styles, and training of disciples. His termas, including Mehmondir, Do'mbiram, Suluv, and Bilmadim, together with various do'mbira melodies, constitute important sources for studying the musical and poetic characteristics of the Sherabad performance school.

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