



FOLKLORE – THE ART OF WORDS: ON FOLK EPISTLES AND STUDY OF BAKHSHI

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ABSTRACT

This article is about folk epics, one of the genres of folklore related to the art of speech. It mainly discusses the art of Bakhshi, the traditions of the master-student relationship in Bakhshi, the uniqueness of folk epics, and the categories using the examples of the epics “Alpomish” and “Ravshan”.

In the epic, which is considered a major genre of folk oral art, one can feel the power, strength, and magic of the word. In particular, folk epics performed by bakhshis not only provide the listener with such pleasure and enthusiasm, but also provide spiritual nourishment and spiritual strength. The singing of epics by bakhshis, bakhshi schools, their master-student traditions, and bakhshi art in general are considered a separate type of art. Speaking of folk epics, it is appropriate to dwell on the subtle nuances of meaning in them, the unique ideological and artistic features of the epics that have been polished and enriched over the centuries and have reached our days. “Folk epics express the fate of the people, their history, and historical reality in generalized images based on the simple observations of the people. Epic generalization dominates in epics. Epicness and monumentality are characteristic of epics, encompassing complex events in terms of plot and compositional structure. Such events and phenomena are united in the context of the ideal of the people, which is endowed with extraordinary power and strength. The dreams and thoughts of the people about a free and independent country and a perfect person determine the idea of the epic.” Uzbek folk epics are extremely numerous in number and are diverse in terms of subject and meaning. In epics that have survived the centuries, events such as heroism, love, loyalty, separation, exile, adventure, and battle are interpreted. Based on these interpretations, folklorists have mainly focused on their thematic content when classifying epics in different ways. “According to the observations of famous scholars V.M.Zhermunisky, H.T.Zaripov, M.Saidov, T.Mirzayev, B.Sarimsakov, when dividing folk epics into types, it is more appropriate to pay attention to their content and the character of the heroes. However, despite the fact that the classifications made by each of the mentioned scholars differ to some extent, they can be named as follows:

1. Heroic epics (Alpomish).
2. Love-romantic epics (“Ravshan”, “Kuntug’mish”).
3. Battle epics (“Yakka Ahmad”).
4. Book epics (“Sayyod va Hamro”, “Oshik Gharib va shohsanam”).



5. Historical epics ("Oysuluv").

There is not much difference in the classifications of folklorists, of course. Despite some differences in some aspects, they are mainly grouped as above. Each folklorist who classifies folk epics gives his or her own substantiated reasons for the classification. The interpretations of events in the epics are similar in some aspects, for example, in the epic "Alpomish" Alpomish covers a six-month journey in a few days, or in the epic "Ravshan" the hero covers a long distance in a few days with extraordinary speed, despite many common aspects in these and other places, they are divided into different groups. The main reason for this is related to the main idea in the epics. Although the plot of the epic "Alpomish" takes place against the backdrop of events related to the love, separation, emigration, and reunion of Alpomish and Barchin, it cannot be classified as a romantic epic. It deals with issues such as uniting a divided nation, reconciling a brother with a brother, uniting a sister with a sister, and bringing the nation together. Moreover, since Alpomish manages to accomplish these tasks, it is appropriate to classify it as a heroic epic.

Regardless of how the epics are classified, issues such as bringing them to the attention of the people and correctly conveying the essence of the meaning were seriously considered. The epics were mainly sung by the bakhshis from memory, with the help of a musical instrument. In this respect, the epics can be an example of a mixed art form. To make this statement more precise, the bakhshi is a one-man theater. In this theater, the bakhshi himself is the director, actor, singer, musician, observer, and performer. The entire essence of the epic reaches the listeners through the skill, talent, voice, insight, knowledge, and wit of the bakhshi. If the bakhshi cannot enter the psyche of the heroes of the epic, if he does not feel himself in the environment where the events of the epic are taking place, if he does not consider himself a full participant in the events, the spirit of the epic will not be fully transmitted to the listener. "During the Khorezm expedition, folklorists observed that Ahmad Bakhshi, who sang a dostan in a circle of more than 300 people, stood up from his seat during the performance, and that other performers also stood up from their seats, listening intently to the dostan. Similar situations have been observed many times in Bakhshi performances." In the performance of dostons, depending on the region, aspects such as the performance style, the use of musical instruments, and the performance of the dostan individually or in a group are distinguished. For example, in the Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions, Bakhshis perform *dostans* with a muffled voice using a *dombira*, while in the Khorezm oasis they perform them with an open voice using several musical instruments, such as a string, a *doira*, a *buloman*, a harmonium, and a *qayroq tosh*. Since ancient times, performing dostans, like fairy tales, has had its own traditions. Initially, dostos were sung at night, starting from late autumn nights until the first days of spring, after the end of agricultural work. In addition, at various ceremonies, weddings and celebrations, bakhshis would first sing the terms, then excerpts from the dostos, and then, depending on the situation, the dostos in whole or in part. The bakhshis also had their own tricks in singing dostos and keeping the listeners' attention. Skilled bakhshis would stop when they reached the most interesting part of the dostos, announce a break, or announce that they would continue the rest of the dostos the next day. Or when the events of the epic come to a tense point, "the bakhshi leaves his cloak, belt, and drum in tatters and goes out into the field. At this time, one of the people in the circle spreads



his belt in the middle. This custom is called "ro'mol yozmoq". Everyone throws money or something into it according to their ability. Until the bakhshi returns to the room, the collected money and things are stuffed into the belt. Then the rest of the epic is continued to be sung." This is considered to be an encouragement to the bakhshi's work by the listeners, that is, the people, as much as possible.

Before the epics were written down, the main factor that caused them to spread among the people, pass them down from generation to generation, and ensure their longevity was the tradition of the master-disciple in Bakhshi. This tradition dates back to the early days of Bakhshi. After all, until the emergence of written literature, the survival of epics was possible only in this way. A wise and capable disciple who had been with his teacher for a long time could learn more by observing and seeing than by teaching. Memorizing epics from a teacher, reciting them in appropriate circles, and winning the love of his listeners is also a process that requires a special talent. "In the later stages of training, the master takes his student with him to dostonik gatherings and weddings. At such times, the student sings excerpts from termars and dostoniks in front of many people. When the student is more "mature", the master tells him the continuation of the dostonik he is singing, or the master and student sing one dostonik alternately. In such cases, the master, taking into account the reaction of the audience, teaches it to his student. In this way, the work of teaching and learning lasts for several years. Knowing that his student has matured, the master gives him a blessing among the people, and the student has the right to sing independently as a bakhshi." In recent history, work has been carried out to record folk dostoniks. This has created opportunities not only for listeners to hear dostoniks in the language of the bakhshi, but also for readers to read them. It is known that folk epics are a mixture of prose and verse, and they also have their own secrets that are not entirely in verse or prose. For example, if we consider the speed with which the meaning conveyed in the text reaches the human heart, this advantage is felt in verse compared to prose.

In this sense, we witness that the main parts of the events that take place in quick pictures in the epics are presented in poetic form. In addition, it can be observed that the tension in the events, the number of syllables in the lines in the culminating places of the epic are also reduced compared to the syllables in the lines given in other places of the epic, and the rhymes are absolutely consistent with each other.

The uniqueness and remarkable aspect of folk oral creativity is that there are series in the epic genre. The feature of series epics, one of their attractive aspects is that the people sincerely wanted the continuation of the events in them. Despite the happy ending of the lives of the heroes of the epic, their subsequent fates and life paths were also very interesting for the people, which is why the epics continued to be connected to each other as a logical continuation of the events. "In the Uzbek folk epic, a special place is occupied by the complex of epics that tell the story of the life of Goroglu and his adopted sons and comrades. The epics belonging to the "Goroglu" series reflect the events from Goroglu's birth, childhood, marriage, adoption of Avazkhan and Hasankhan, the lives of Avazkhan, Hasankhan, their sons - Ravshan, Nurali, Sherali, the next generation - Jahongir, to the main character's disappearance into a cave at the age of one hundred and twenty. Each epic belonging to the "Goroglu" series has been sung separately." For example, the epic "Ravshan" is also among the epics of the



"Goroglu" series. He is embodied in the epic as a supporting character of the Goroglu Sultan, and appears only in a few places along the plot of the epic. For these and a number of similar reasons, we can include the epic "Ravshan" in the series of Goroglu epics.

Ravshan is considered the grandson of Goroglu. The above excerpt from the epic quotes Goroglu, which reveals that he was there to bewitch his two adopted sons. Mysterious, magical objects influence the development of events in the epic. This epic, when compared with other epics, has many similarities in its events, but it is also unique in its diversity of characters and other aspects.

In addition to the genre, folk epics also have different variants and versions of the same epic, which also arose from the dreams and desires of the people and have survived in this form to this day. "The opinions of Uzbek scholars about the period of creation of folk epics, including the "Gorughli" series of epics, are mainly based on the views of Hodi Zarif. Even in the views of the master scholar, there are differences and even contradictions. For example, in the preface to the article "About the Ravshan epic", the scholar wrote: "These works were not created by one or two people at one time. Some of them appeared in the distant past, in the periods before the spread of Islam in Central Asia. Some were created three or four centuries ago and have been repeatedly worked on by many folk poets until our time, each according to the requirements of his time, and have reached us in many versions." The number of variants and versions in folk epics shows the great need of the people for epics. In addition, variants and versions are If we study and examine the genesis of the epics, it is natural that they will help to form a certain idea about the era in which they were created and the social, economic, political, and cultural life of that time. In this regard, mainly the epics of the series and other types of epics, especially the different variants of one epic, should be carefully compared and studied. Only then, as mentioned above, will it be possible to form an idea about the era in which the epic itself, as well as its versions and variants, was created.

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