A recent annotated bibliography on oral-formulaic theory and research by J. M. Foley lists “more than 1800 books and articles from more than ninety language areas” (1985:4). Most of these are studies conducted within the framework of the theory developed by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord. The numerous applications of Parry and Lord’s theory to the Homeric poems and to medieval poetry testify to the importance of the study of oral poetry for a better understanding of some of the greatest epics of world literature. On the basis of South Slavic epic poetry as studied by Parry and Lord, formulaic diction has been taken as the most salient characteristic of the oral epic, as the very sign of a poem’s oral nature. It has therefore been argued, when applying the oral-formulaic theory to medieval texts, that a certain amount of “formulaic density” in a particular text implies its origins as an oral poem. Typical examples of this line of argumentation are the studies on Beowulf by F. P. Magoun, Jr. (1953), on the Chanson de Roland by J. J. Duggan (1973) and on the Nibelungenlied by F. H. Bäuml and D. J. Ward (1967; cp. Bäuml 1986). In these studies the Serbo-Croatian epic tradition has been taken as the paradigm of oral epic poetry. Rigorous analyses of the formulaic nature of other oral traditions are rare, a fact which explains, at least in part, why medievalists and classicists are in general little aware of epic traditions other than that of the South Slavs.

This paper is an attempt to extend formulaic analysis to the Turkic epics of Central Asia.footnote{This paper was originally presented at the Second European Seminar on Central Asian Studies, held at the University of London (SOAS), 7-10 April 1987.} Owing to social and cultural conservatism, the traditional art of oral poetry is still cultivated by a number of Turkic peoples in the present time, in particular by those Turkic tribes who have preserved their nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life until now or at least until recently. Turkic oral narrative poetry is as manifold and diverse as the peoples composing the Turkic world, ranging from the Yakuts of Northern Siberia, via the shamanistic Turks of the Altay and the Lamaistic Tuvinians of the Tannu mountain ridge the nomadic or originally nomadic
Turks who live in the vast area from the Tianshan and Pamir mountains to the Caspian Sea (Kirghiz, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Turcoman), the sedentary Turks of Transoxania and the Tarim Basin (Uzbek, Uyghurs), the Turks of the South-Russian steppes and the Caucasus (Tatar, Bashkir, Nogay, Karatchay, and Balkar), to the Turks of Transcaucasia, Anatolia, and the Balkans (Azerbaijanians, Turks of Turkey). Despite some basic similarities among these traditions, resulting from their common linguistic background and cultural heritage, each people has developed its own mode of epic poetry. In the present paper the emphasis is on Kazakh narrative poetry, an oral tradition which recommends itself both by its wealth and its vigor.

The richness and variety of Turkic oral poetry was first revealed to the European reader by Wilhelm Radloff’s monumental Proben der Volksliteratur der türkischen Stämme Süd-Sibiriens, of which the first volume appeared in 1866. In his introduction to the volume on Kirghiz epic poetry, the great Russian Turcologist stressed the importance of Turkic epic poetry for comparative purposes, in particular for a solution of the “Homeric problem” (Radloff 1866-1904:V, xx-xxii). Although Radloff’s material was used in H. M. and N. K. Chadwick’s Growth of Literature (1932-40; cf. Chadwick and Zhirmunsky 1969) as well as in M. Bowra’s study of the heroic epic (1952) and although there are occasional references to his texts in Western scholarship—as when Andreas Heusler emphatically denies the possibility of equating the art of the Old Germanic singer with that of the Kirghiz bard (Heusler 1943:174), firsthand knowledge of Turkic epic poetry has until fairly recently been limited among comparatists to those working in the Soviet Union.

The towering figure among the latter is V. M. Zhirmunsky, a Germanist who became familiar with Turkic oral poetry while living in Uzbekistan during the Second World War. Zhirmunsky was a prolific writer; unfortunately only a small portion of his work is available in translation. In the West, the study of Turkic oral poetry has on the whole been restricted to Turcological circles, with the notable exception of the important work on Kirghiz and Yakut epic poetry by A. T. Hatto (see in particular his edition and translation of one branch of the Manas-cycle, 1977, and, inter alia, Hatto 1980; 1985). When Parry decided to tackle the Homeric problem through the study of a living oral tradition, fieldwork in Central Asia was ruled out for political reasons. A. B. Lord, who has like Parry always been interested in Turkic oral poetry, has, however, recently compared the Central Asian to the South Slavic tradition (1987).

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Oral poetry in general is still flourishing among the Kazakhs, both of the Soviet Union and of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in China. The Kazakhs are particularly fond of the ayı́s, poetical contests somewhat in the manner of the medieval tenzone (see Smirnova 1968:324ff.). As to the cultivation of epic poetry, it is still singularly powerful in China, where the collection and publication of epic texts has only recently begun. The Kazakh oral singer is called either aqın, the general term in Kazakh for a poet (derived from Persian ăxān, “preacher; orator; tutor”) or žırši or žırraw, words derived from žır (Old Turkic ıır, “song, epic song”). The term žır is also used for the seven-syllable line typical of the Kazakh heroic epic. This verse-line goes back to the eleventh century at least; it is found in the specimens of oral epic poetry recorded by Mahmud of Kashgar (see Brockelmann 1923-24) and is part of the common Turkic heritage of Kazakh oral poetry. The singer performs the epic by singing the verses, usually to the accompaniment of the dombḯra, a two-stringed lute-type instrument, sometimes also to the accompaniment of the qobḯz, a horsehair-stringed fiddle related to the Mongolian xūr and, distantly, to the South Slavic gusle.

The verse-lines are linked by rhyme or assonance, forming mono-rhyme groups of irregular length in the manner of the Old French laisse. Instead of seven syllables, there might be eight syllables to a line. In either case the line divides musically into two halves of equal length (time), irrespective of the number of syllables in each half. Thus the beginning of Qız Žibek, for instance, as performed by Raxmet Mazxodžaev shows the following metric-rhythmic patterns for seven-syllable and eight-syllable verse-lines (Auezov and Smirnova 1963:331-32):
Apart from the žir, an 11-syllable line also occurs, often grouped into four-line stanzas with the predominant rhyme-scheme a-a-b-a (olen). The musical style of these two verse-forms differs: the melody of the shorter verse is simpler, every line built basically on the same melodic formula, while the melody of the longer verse is more elaborate, with a tendency to form larger melodic patterns.\(^3\) The verse is sometimes interrupted by prose-portions, which are then declaimed in a recitative style. This chante-fable-like form of narrative is widespread among the Turkic peoples and certainly goes back to medieval times; the chronological relationship between pure verse epics and “prosimetric” epics is a moot point (Reichl 1985b:32-37).

Seven-syllable verse-lines and laisse-type stanzas are characteristic of the heroic epic (batırlıq žirî), while 11-syllable lines and four-line stanzas are typical of the love epic, lyrical narratives such as Qız Žibek or Qozi Körpeş and Bayan Suluw. Although the division into heroic and love epics can be defended on grounds of style and content, there is no hard and fast dividing line between these two types. Eleven-syllable lines, for instance, are quite common in the heroic epic, and the seven-syllable line is also found in the love epic, as is shown by the illustration from Qız Žibek above. In Xinjiang the term for epic poems with an Oriental setting is qıssa, from Arabic qīṣa, “story, tale.” This word is also used for the chapbook-like editions of Kazakh epic poems which came out in Kazan at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. These popular editions, usually based on oral performances, sometimes also on manuscripts, exerted an enormous influence on the transmission and cultivation of epic poetry. For many singers performing in this century the situation was and is similar to that of Raxmet Mazxodžaev (born in 1881), who learned some of the epics of his repertoire orally from other

\(^3\) On the musical aspect of Kazakh epic poetry see Beliaev 1975:78-83; see also the transcriptions in Erzaković et al. 1982:123-52. On the performance of epic poetry among the closely related Karakalpaks see Reichl 1985a.
singers, but some poems also from manuscripts and Kazan editions (Auezov and Smirnova 1959:393). This is not the place to go into the details of textual transmission, but it should be emphasized that this contamination of a purely oral tradition by a written tradition has neither stifled the oral transmission of poetry nor has it necessarily resulted in fixed, memorized texts. Although memorization is involved in this kind of tradition and although there are recorded versions of epics which are clearly memorized and differ only marginally from their source, there are also other versions which reveal a far greater freedom of the singer from his ultimate textual basis and a stronger reliance on the art of oral composition.

The following analysis focuses on three Kazakh heroic epics, *Qambar Batïr* (“The Hero Qambar”), *Qoblandï Batïr* (“The Hero Qoblandï”) and *Alpamïs Batïr* (“The Hero Alpamïs”). The basic story-pattern of these epics consists of the winning of a bride and the heroic fight against the enemy, combined, in the case of *Qoblandï* and *Alpamïs*, with a return story. In *Qambar* it is narrated that the Nogay bay Äzimbay has a beautiful daughter, called Nazïm. She falls in love with Qambar, who, because of his poverty, has not been invited to woo her. When, however, the khan of the Kalmucks, Qaraman, forces Äzimbay to give him his daughter, Qambar is persuaded to come to Nazïm’s rescue. He fights against the Kalmucks, kills their khan and marries Nazïm. These are in outline the contents of the version of *Qambar* edited by A. A. Divaev in 1922, a version he took down from an unnamed singer, possibly Mayköt Sandïbaev (see Auezov and Smimova 1959:256), probably around 1920. His text has been edited several times; the authoritative edition, comprising 1851 lines (mostly of seven syllables), is that by M. O. Auezov and N. S. Smirnova (1959).

Based on this version, three further texts (one fragmentary) have been recorded from Kazakh singers; they are preserved in the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in Alma-Ata (see Auezov and Smimova 1959:370). Very similar in content, but clearly a version on its own, is a *qïssa* edited in Kazan. There are various differences between Divaev’s version and the *qïssa* version, concerning the name-form of the protagonists (Qaraman is called Maxtïmxan, for instance), the order of events (Kelmembet, the Kalmuck envoy, is sent twice instead of once to ask for Nazïm’s hand), and the elaboration of individual scenes. The Kazan *qïssa* is extant in various redactions, an edition of 1888 and one of 1903, as well as in manuscript form (see Auezov and Smirnova 1959:345-46). Two further texts are ultimately based on the 1903 edition, one recorded in the twenties from the singer Barmaq Muqambaev and the other recorded in 1958 from the singer

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4 On Kazakh epic poetry see Orlov 1945; Winner 1958:54-85; Smirnova 1968:236-96; Ğabdullin and Sïdïqov 1972. On Turkic epic poetry in general see also Boratav 1965; Başgöz 1978.
Raxmet Mazxodžaev.

In order to illustrate the types of variation encountered in these poems, I shall quote Nazïm’s invitation to Qambar to rest in her yurt (“felt-tent”) when they meet for the first time. These are her words in the 1903 qïssa (Auezov and Smirnova 1959:15):

“Qara qasqa attï Qambar-ay,
qara atïnda žal bar-ay,
250 Bizdiŋ üyge tüse ket,
šay-samawïr iše ket.
Qanša meyman rüsse de,
kütkendey bizdiŋ ėl bar-ay.”

“Qambar on the black horse with the white mark,
your black horse has a [mighty] mane.
250 Come and sit down in our yurt,
come and drink tea from the samovar!
However many guests sit down,
we have the means to serve them.”

Mazxodžaev’s text is identical with the text quoted above, apart from one minor change: instead of šay-samawïr (“tea from the samovar”) in line 251 he has šay-šekerdi (“tea with sugar”; Auezov and Smirnova 1959:408). His text is not always as close to the 1903 qïssa as in the extract given here, but it follows the qïssa fairly faithfully, as is also shown by the length of his text, 1085 lines, corresponding relatively closely to the length of the qïssa (1030 lines, with some additional short prose passages).

Muqambaev’s text, which comprises 2000 lines (with some additional short prose passages), is much freer. Here are Nazïm’s words in his poem (Auezov and Smirnova 1959:88):

“Qara qasqa attï Qambar-ay,
qara atïnda žal bar-ay,
bizdiŋ üyge tüse ket,
köbikiš sawmal iše ket,
410 qañap turğan šay bar-ay!
Batïr sağan saqtäğan
žarïlmagan may bar-ay!
Qambar batïr kele ket,
kelip meni köre ket,
415 aq tösimnï üzünde
bir kisilik žay bar-ay!
Zamandas Qambar batïsï,
qay žaqqa bara žatïrïn?
Könlim qošï, šatïmsï!”

“Qambar on the black horse with the white mark,
your black horse has a [mighty] mane.
Come and sit down in our yurt,
come and drink foamy fresh kumiss (fermented mare’s milk).
there is [also] boiling tea!
Hero, for you we have kept in store
butter which has not yet been cut!
Qambar-batïr, come,
come and see me,
there is on my white breast
place for [only] one man!
We are of the same age, Qambar-batïr.
Where are you riding?
My heart’s delight, you are my joy!"

Apart from the first three lines, this passage is a free elaboration of the qëssa-
version. It is to be noted, however, that one line of Muqambaev’s text is also found
in Divaev’s text (415), a fact which suggests that Muqambaev’s elaboration is not
completely free, but at least in part traditional.

Here is Divaev’s text (Auezov and Smirnova 1959:48):

“Qayrilmay qayda barasïŋ,
xan süyekti Qambar-aw!?
Qabaği qaṭip šarşaptï,
qara atïŋï moynïnda
ökpe-bawïr żal bar-aw.
Arïzïma menïŋ qulaq sal,
aqïlï bolsa, aŋgar-aw.
Aq tösimniŋ üstinde
qol tiymegen mal bar-aw.
Söldesêŋ suwsïŋ išseyşi,
bizïŋ üyge tüsseyşi,
žatïp, tuṟïp ketuwge,
kïtkendey bizde żay bar-aw!
Moynïŋdi beri bursayşi
quşaqaṭasïp ekewnïz
korişelik tursayşi
artïŋda ţiŋiŋ żar bar-aw!”

“Where are you riding without turning aside,
Qambar of noble birth?
With heavy eyelids he has become tired;
your black horse has courage,
a [mighty] mane on his neck. Listen to my wish,
if you are wise, understand me!
There is on my white breast
a [precious] good, touched by no hand.
If you are thirsty, drink water,
come and sit down in our yurt!
We have the means to serve him
who comes to lie down and sit down!
Turn your head this way,
let us embrace
and greet one another!
Behind you there is a deep gorge!”
There are no major variants of this version. A text recorded from the singer Abulxayïr Danekerov in 1954 leaves out lines 534 and 537 to 544; line 542 is, however, added to line 545, which has a slightly altered form (Moynïñdï beri bura ket, / bizdïñ ÿyge tüse ket; see Auezov and Smirnova 1959:377). On a recently issued record of Qambar Batïr (Melodija S3013449-52) by the singer Žumabay Medetbaev this passage is identical to Divaev’s text. This singer has apparently memorized the printed edition, from which he hardly ever deviates. When comparing Divaev’s text with the qïssa version, it is clear that despite obvious differences (the scene itself is constructed differently), there are also close verbal resemblances, such as in lines 535-36 (Qara atïññï . . . žal bar-aw), 542 (bizdïñ ÿyge tüsseyši), and 544 (kütkendey bizde žay bar-aw). From this it follows—and a more careful analysis of the recorded texts would, I believe, bear this out—that both Divaev’s version and the qïssa version derive ultimately from a common source, which has, however, in the course of oral transmission undergone considerable changes.

The date of this “Ur-Qambar” is uncertain. It must have been composed before the middle of the nineteenth century, because at that time Qambar was already a well-known figure. The fundamental antagonism in Qambar, as in the Kazakh heroic epics in general, is that between the Kazakhs and the Kalmucks. This enmity has its historical basis in the wars between the Kazakhs and various West Mongolian tribes (Kalmuck, Oirat) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Hambly 1966:155-59). A date before the eighteenth or even seventeenth century seems unlikely, although N. S. Smirnova suggests that the characterization of the Nogay as the Uzbek of the twelve tribes in Qambar points back to the time of the Nogay horde and the Uzbek khanate of the fifteenth century (Auezov and Smirnova 1959:257). More research is needed before the problem of dates can be solved.5

By comparison the epic Qoblandï Batïr is plot-wise more involved and textually more diverse. According to N. V. Kidajš-Pokrovskaja and O. A. Nurmagambetova, 26 transcriptions of the epic have been preserved, of which they discuss 18 in extenso under the heading of two basic versions (1975:9-16, 385-416). It emerges from their discussion that the transmission of Qoblandï has in most cases been predominantly, if not purely, oral. The fullest recorded text of Qoblandï comes from Šapay Kalmaganbetov (born in 1890), who wrote the poem down himself and presented his transcription to the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in 1939. His text comprises 6490 lines (of seven syllables), with some short prose

The first part of the epic (in Kalmaganbetov’s version) tells of the Qipşaq (Qaraqïpшаq) hero Qoblandï (or Qoblan) and his winning of a bride, the beautiful Qurtqa, daughter of the Qïzïlbas khan Köktim-Aymaq. The main part of the epic is taken up by Qoblandï’s fights against the Qïzïlbas and the Kalmucks. After having defeated the Qïzïlbas under Qazan, Qoblandï and his friend Qaraman decide to march against Khan Köbiktì and to steal his horses. The khan, however, is warned by his favorite horse and succeeds in overcoming the Qipşaqs during the time Qoblandï is asleep. Qoblandï and Qaraman are put into prison, but Köbikt’s daughter Qarlïga falls in love with Qoblandï and frees the prisoners. On their way back Qoblandï has a dream-vision, informing him that the Kalmuck Alšağır has in his absence subjugated his people and that his parents and his sister consequently live in great distress. When Qoblandï and Qaraman arrive at the captured city, Qurtqa hears Qoblandï’s horse neigh and comes out to meet her husband. In the ensuing battle the Qipşaqs defeat the Kalmucks and Alšağır is killed by Qoblandï in a fierce single combat. The valiant Qarlïga, who had followed Qoblandï, kills her own brother Biršimbay because he had been in league with Alšağır. Qoblandï is happily reunited with his family, while Qarlïga lives in seclusion, longing for Qoblandï, who even refuses her hospitality when he passes by her yurt on the way to Qaraman’s wedding with Alšağır’s two sisters. The last part of the epic brings the dénouement of Qarlïga’s love story. After a new attack on the Qipşaqs, this time by Šošay, Köbikt’s nephew, the old heroes with Qoblandï at their head are once again united in war, their number now increased by Qoblandï’s six-year-old son Bökenbay. Qarlïga joins the fighting and wounds Qoblandï severely, thus taking revenge for his slighting her. Bökenbay forces Qarlïga to come to his father’s sickbed, where a reconciliation is brought about, not least through the mediation of Qoblandï’s wife Qurtqa. The epic ends with Qoblandï’s marriage to Qarlïga.

In order to carry out the following formulaic analyses, Kalmaganbetov’s text has been concorded, together with the text of Qambar in Divaev’s version. For comparative purposes a short passage from a third major Kazakh heroic epic, Alpamış, has been included. The various versions of the Alpamış/Alpamış story have been extensively studied by Zhirmunsky (1974: 117 -348). The Kazakh poems belong together with the Uzbek and Karakalpak dastans (epic poems) to the so-called Qonғūrat version of the Alpamış story. As in the Uzbek Alpâmış, there are two brothers, Bayböri and Sarîbay, who have a quarrel, leading to Sarîbay’s migration to the land of the Kalmucks. Here his daughter Gülbaršin is sought after by the khan. Alpamış, Bayböri’s son, comes to
her rescue, fights against the Kalmucks, and wins her hand. In the second part of the epic, Alpamís becomes, through the machinations of a witch, a captive of the Kalmuck khan Tayšïq. With the help of Qaraköz, the khan’s daughter, Alpamís regains his freedom and defeats the Kalmucks. He returns home, just in time before Gülbaršïn is married to Ultan. As in the Uzbek versions, Alpamís takes part in the wedding festivities in disguise, but is recognized by his mother and his wife and reveals his identity at the bow-shooting contest. Zhirmunsky mentions ten Kazakh poems; the passage analyzed below is taken from Mayköt Sandïbaev’s and Sultanqul Aqqožaev’s Alpamís, which comprises 4310 lines (Auezov and Smirnova 1961:7-105).

Kazakh epic poems are interspersed with short passages from one to several lines which contain a nature image or express in proverb-like fashion some general truth. An instance of this feature is found in the following extract from Qoblandï, which describes the approach of the Qızïlbas khan with his warriors to fight with Qoblandï and his men (Kidajš-Pokrovskaja, Nurmagambetova 1975:115):

Köp äskerdi körgesin,  
žaw ekenin bilgesin,  
šähär žurtï žïynalïp,  
Qazan xanï bas bolïp,  
2085  urïsuwga sayalnïp,  
žatïr eken žïynalïp,  
Arqada bar böriköz,  
žaqsïda ğoy täwir söz,  
nege umïtsïn körgen köz?  
2090  Arïstan tuwŋan Qoblandï  
köp äskerge keldi kez.  
Arïstan tuwŋan Qoblandï  
köp äskerge kelgende  
qïrïq miŋ attï qızïlbas  
2095  qolïna žasïl tuw alïp,  
arïstan tuwŋan Qoblandï  
aq bilegin sibanïp,  
köñili taşïp keledi  
žawdï körip quwanïp.

Seeing the great host
and knowing that they were enemies,
the town-people gathered,
with Qazan-khan at their head
2085  they got ready for the fighting,
they gathered together.
In the steppe the böriköz (“wolf’s eye,” a medicinal herb) grows,
in a good man speech is found;
why should the eye which has seen forget?
2090  Qoblandï, born as a lion,
went to meet the great host.
When Qoblandï, born as a lion,
went to meet the great host,
the forty thousand Qızılbıas on their horses
had the green flag in their hands,
Qoblandı, born as a lion,
bared his white forearms,
his heart overflowed,
he was overjoyed when he saw the enemy.

The lines in question are 2087-89 (Arqada . . . köz?); the three lines are found again as 5697-99, the first and the second line as 2154-55, and the first and the third line as 5317-18. Furthermore, a four-line passage ending with “the böriköz of the steppe” (arqanıñ böriközine) is found seven times in Qoblandı. There are similar gnomic or “imagistic” lines in the epic punctuating the text at irregular intervals (see Kidajš-Pokrovskaja and Nurmagambetova 1975:52ff.).

Another characteristic of the poetic diction of Kazakh epic poetry, and indeed of Turkic epic poetry in general, is the comparison of the hero to a wild animal, most typically the lion, the tiger, the wolf, or the falcon. Lines 2090, 2092, and 2096 (“Qoblandı, born as a lion”) are a case in point. These lines are also formulaic. A formula has been defined by Parry as “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (1971:272). As the verse-lines of Kazakh epic poetry (and Turkic epic poetry in general) form comparatively tightly knit syntactical units, it seems reasonable to stipulate that, at least in the case of the shorter verse-line, a formula should be metrically defined as a whole verse-line. If parts of a formula vary beyond the limits of inflectional change or other forms of minor variation, it is customary to group these formulas together into a formulaic system. According to Parry a formulaic system is “a group of phrases which have the same metrical value and which are enough alike in thought and words to leave no doubt that the poet who used them knew them not only as single formulas, but also as formulas of a certain type” (275).

In our example the line Aristan tuwğan Qoblandı is a formula, in which Qoblandı can be substituted by other names or expressions referring to the hero, thus forming the following formulaic system:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Aristan tuwğan} & \quad \text{Qoblandı} \\
& \quad \text{Qoblan} \\
& \quad \text{Bökenbuy} \\
& \quad \text{Qambar bek} \\
& \quad \text{batırdı} \\
& \quad \text{batırıŋa} \\
& \quad \text{qurdas žan}
\end{align*}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Numbers</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2090, 2092, 2096, 2311</td>
<td>2090, 2092, 2096, 2311, 3403, 4782, 5603,</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>5772</td>
<td>5772</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qamb. 1744</td>
<td>Qamb. 1744</td>
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<tr>
<td>4178 (“hero”)</td>
<td>4178 (“hero”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5556</td>
<td>5556</td>
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<tr>
<td>836 (“dear companion”)</td>
<td>836 (“dear companion”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outside the system, but related to the concept of the hero as a lion and its formulaic expression, are the lines:
A similar formula, comparing the hero to the wolf, is:

Qoblandïday börüni qoblandï 907, 942 ("the wolf Qoblandi"")

Compare also:

Qoblandïday żolbarïsïn 6266 ("the tiger Qoblandi")

Another formula in the extract given above is line 2094, qïrïq mï attï qïzïlbas (lit. "the forty-thousand horse-having Qïzïlbas"), occurring six times in Qoblandï (2094, 2291, 2296, 2313, 2409, 2443). As a formulaic system its structure is: qualifying expression + attï ("horse-having") + name of the rider(s). Compare:

Tarlan attï Köbikti 2640 ("Köbikti on his horse Tarlan")
Taybuwrïl attï Qoblandï 3729 ("Qoblandï on his horse Taybuwrïl")
Qara qasqa attï Qambar bek Qamb. 146 ("Qambar on his black horse with the mark")
žalgïz attï [kedeyge keydeydi] Qamb. 624, 705, 1523 ("a poor man, having only one horse")

The following line, qolïna żasïl tuw alïp (2095), is also formulaic. Here the pattern is: qolïna ("in the hand") + "battle object" + alïp (or another form of the verb al-, "take"). Compare:

qolïna { żasïl tuw } alïp 2095 ("green flag")
{ bir-bir oqtï } 2305 ("arrow")
{ bir-bir oq } 5601
{ nayza } 5478 ("spear")
{ ötkir kezdiz } Qamb. 813 ("sharp knife")

qïlïšïn alïp qolïna Qamb. 516 ("his sword")

In 2098 we have an idiomatic phrase which generates formulaic lines (kœñili tas-):

kœñili tasïp keledi 2098 ("his heart overflowed with joy")
kœñili tasïp šat bolïp 4496, 5122
kœñili bir tasïp öspiïti 6190

Compare in Qambar (in passages with verse-lines of 11/12 syllables):

Qaraman qayrattandï köñili tasïp 1252 ("Qaraman gathered strength, his heart overflowing")
Such phrases and idioms are also found in other lines. In 2097 *bilek* or *qol siban-* ("to roll up one’s sleeves") is idiomatic, while *aq* ("white") is a standing epithet of *bilek* ("forearm"): 

Eki qol qibanip 5791 ("bare his two arms")
Aq bilegi qan bolip 2435 ("his white hands becoming bloody")

The second line of the passage quoted from *Qoblandi* is also clearly a formula:

\[ \text{žaw ekenin bilgesin,} \]

Looking at other variants of this formula, one can specify the following structure: \(x x x -i-n + \text{bilgesin}\) where \(-i-n\) is the possessive + accusative suffix of a verbal form ("his/their being," normally translated as "that he is/they are"), \(x x x\) symbolizes the number of syllables required to fill the line, and *bilgesin* is the governing verbal form ("knowing"). Compare:

| žaw kelgenin | bilgesin | 5619 ("knowing the enemy’s having come" = "that the enemy has come") |
| bala ekenin | bilgesin | 5885 ("...that he was a child") |
| žay emesin | bilgesin | 633 ("...that they were not common") |
| žalızidgin | bilgesin | 2314, 2318 ("...that he was alone") |
| žigılmasisin | bilgesin | 6021 ("...that he didn’t fall") |
| ayamasin | bilgesin | 6115 ("...that she had no pity") |

These examples show the close connection between formulaic diction and syntax in Kazakh. One might argue here that any line with *bilgesin* is bound to fit the structure above on purely syntactic and metrical grounds and that it might therefore be sensible to restrict the notion of a formulaic system to semantically related lines. It is, however, difficult to apply such a semantic criterion. The line *žay emesin bilgesin* ("knowing their not being common") does not seem particularly close in meaning to *žaw ekenin bilgesin* ("knowing their being the enemy"), yet it is precisely the line which occurs in the same context as the formulaic line *žaw ekenin bilgesin* above:

Köp aşkerdi körgesin, 632-33 ("Seeing the large host, knowing that they were not of a common sort..."

žay emesin bilgesin

It must therefore be recognized that syntax and meter are a strong binding force for the formulaic diction of Kazakh epics and that the dividing line between formula or formulaic system and syntactic parallelism (with partly
overlapping lexical material) cannot always be drawn easily.

Similar arguments apply to other lines of the quoted passage. *Keldi kez* (“he/they encountered/came to”) in 2091 (and similarly *kelgende* in 2093) is constructed with the dative, giving the pattern x x x -ge *keldi kez* (*kelgende*), a pattern to which other lines conform as well:

| Qoblandï-ğa | keldi kez | 2158 (“he came to Qoblandï”) |
| Šanšisuw-ğa | keldi kez | 5702 (“they came to the fighting”) |

*šatūrîm-a* 5322 (“they came to the fighting”) (nominative!)

The dative is also required by *saylan-* (“to prepare oneself for something”) in 2085. Compare:

| Arttûruw-ğa | saylanî | 257 (“he prepared for the loading”) |
| Oyatpaqqa | saylanî | 2698 (“. . . to wake up”) |

The phrase *bas bolîp* in 2084 is also dependent on syntax, at least to a certain degree, as it implies a subject and an object (“someone being [at] the head of somebody”):

| Qazan xanî | bas bolîp | 2084, 2152 (“Qazan khan being at the head”) |
| Toqtar | bas bop kîp qîpsaq | 5146 (“Toqtar being at the head of the many Qîpsaq”) |
| Qîrûq žighetke | bas bolîp | *Qamb.* 1040 (“being at the head of forty warriors”) |

The remaining lines of the illustrative passage are not formulaic, although similar lines can be found in the texts and a larger reference corpus might reveal closer parallels. For lines 2083 and 2086 compare:

| Birte-birte | Žîynaldî | 2309 (“they gathered one by one”) |
| Adamнîn bārin | Žîynaldî | *Qamb*, 676 (“he gathered all the men”) |

For line 2099 compare:
Marking the passage along the lines of oral-formulaic analysis (with double lines for cliches, single lines for clearly established formulas, and dotted lines for syntactically or metrically conditioned formulas), we get the following picture:

This means that out of 19 lines 16, or 84%, are formulaic.

Although the chosen passage is typical of the heroic epic in that it describes the beginning of a battle, it is not a type-scene in the narrow sense of the term, that is, a scene with a definite succession of motifs and formulaic expressions (see Lord 1960:68-98). In Kazakh, as well as in other Turkic traditions, such scenes or themes are for instance the description of the hero and his horse (ta‘řîf), the hero’s (or a messenger’s) journey on horseback through the desert, or the hero’s ride to meet the enemy. For the latter I will give an example from Qambar, describing the approach of the hero on his horse to fight with the Kalmuck khan (from Divaev’s text, Auezov and Smirnova 1959:71):

1565  Bastîrïp qattî qadamîn qara qaşqa tulpardî qaharlanîp uradî; qustay uşîp aşuwmen tezde žetip baradî.
1570  Āzîmbayga qayrîlmay, şatîrîna paştâniq atîniq moynîn buradî.
Üzengisin širenip,
aq nayzasín süyenip,

1575 tumsşín ñïgïșp tulparïñ esiginde turadi.

1565 Making his horse step out,
he beat the black tulpar (winged horse) with the mark,
filled with wrath;
flying in his wrath like a bird,
he quickly reached his goal.

1570 Without turning to Äzimbay,
he directed his horse
to the padishah’s tent.
Standing on his stirrups,
leaning on his white spear,

1575 pressing his tulpar’s head forward,
he came to a halt at his entrance.

In this passage we find three types of formulaic lines. Lines 1566 and 1572 are formulas belonging to formulaic systems independent of particular typescenes. The evidence for these lines from Qambar and Qoblandi is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qara qasqa</th>
<th>tulpar</th>
<th>-dï</th>
<th>Qamb, 380, 420, 503, 527, 1394,1566, 1609,  Qobl. 2217, 4822</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-i</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-dïñ</td>
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<td>-ga</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-da</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qara qasqa</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>-tï</td>
<td>Qamb, 146, 196, 238 (“the black horse with the mark”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-qa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atïnï moynïñ</td>
<td>bur</td>
<td>-adï</td>
<td>Qamb, 913, 1572 (“he turned the neck of his horse”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-ïstï</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atïnï bašïn burmañïñ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qobl. 5059 (“you didn’t turn the head of your horse”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Line 1569 can be classified as a metrically/syntactically conditioned formula, conforming to the pattern:

x x (x) žetip       | baradï   | keledi     | (“he/they went/came reaching...”) |

Compare:

tezde žetip baradï Qamb. 1569 (“got there quickly”)
şähärge žetip baradï Qobl. 3773, 5069, 5669 (“reached the town etc.”)
Bayğa žetip keledi Qobl. 374, 2018, 3770, 5797, 5807 (“reached the race etc.”)
There are finally four lines which are both formulaic and characteristic of the particular theme of the hero’s ride (1567-68, 1573-74). For lines 1567-68 compare *(Qamb. 230-31)*:

Ašuwmen ayamay
tulparğa qamši uradî

Angrily, without pity,
he beat the tulpar with the whip.

Swinging the whip is a common motif of the hero’s ride in Uzbek epic poetry as well; thus we find for instance in Fāzīl Yoldaş-oğlî’s version of *Alpāmîş* the following lines (Ālimdžân et al. 1971:63, 83):

bedâw âťga qamči čatdî (“he gave the courser the whip”)
čuţ-ha, dedî, qamči târtî (“he said: ‘Hoy!’ and swung the whip”)
ču-ha, dedî, qamči čâtdî (“he said: ‘Hoy!’ and swung the whip”)

or in Ergaş Džumanbulbul-oğlî’s version of *Rawšan* (Zarif 1971:77, 78; Reichl 1985b:71):

šip-šip qamči târtî (“he swung the whip whistling”)
qamči berî ču dedi (“he gave the whip and said: ‘Hoy!’”)

For lines 1573-74 compare:

at üstinen širenip *(Qobl. 174* (“on his horse with stretched-out legs”)
Nayzasîna sîyenip *(Qobl. 6239* (“leaning on his spear”)

In this connection the variant *Aq nayzasî sartîldap* *(Qamb. 1007, “his white spear clattering”) is interesting, since the clanging of the hero’s weapons and armor and of his horse’s headgear, stirrups, and trappings is again a common motif of Uzbek epic poetry. This motif is, however, also found in *Qambar* (205-8), with wording practically identical to that of the Uzbek dâstâns (e.g. in *Alpāmîş*; Ālimdžân et al. 1971:82-83):

Quyînday şaňî burqîrap,
atqan oqtay zîrqîrap,
qîladi žaqîn aîstî.

Like a storm raising the dust,
racing along like a flying arrow,
he shortened the long distance.

As a last example I would like to quote a short passage from one of the Kazakh epics on Alpamîs/Alpâmîş (Auezov and Smirnova 1961:23):

725 Saymandarîn saylanîp,
altïnnan kemer baylanïp,
abžiïlanday tolïnanïp,
quïl nayza qolga alïp
Šubargï qarqïp minedi,
730 Qudaydan medet tiledi
qarqïp minorïtïša bala
ašuï kernep Žônedi,
Läïker tarïtïp keledi,
awïziqpen aïsïp,
735 uşqan quşpen Žarišïp,
key žerde bala Žoqïşïp,
key žerde basïn tögedi,
Bir kïn şapsa Šubar at
ayliğ žer alïp beredi.

725 He prepared his gear,
bound his belt round his waist,
turned about like a water-snake,
took his red spear into his hand,
jumped onto Šubar,
730 asked God for his help,
the young man jumped up,
rode along, filled with wrath.
He went to war,
pulling his reins tight,
735 racing with the flying birds,
where the young man was galloping,
where he was heading for.
When the horse Šubar had galloped for one day,
he had covered the distance of a monthly journey.

There is no space here to go into a detailed discussion of every line of this passage. Briefly, we can note various motifs and their formulaic expression which have already been touched upon: the preparation of the hero (saylanïp-formula, 725), his taking a spear (728—here a red one rather than a white one), his riding along filled with wrath (732), and the comparison of his ride to the flight of a bird (735). With reference to Qambar and Qoblandï, lines 725, 728, 730, 733, and 735 can be shown to be formulaic. Furthermore, there is in Qoblandï a formula with the two variants Endï atïna minedi and Endï minorïtïschïna (“now he gets on his horse”), with which lines 729 and 731 might be compared. Lines lexically and semantically similar or identical to lines 732, 736, and 737 can also be found in Qambar and Qoblandï, and the putting on of a golden belt (726) or the swift progress of the horse (738-39) are common enough motifs also in Uzbek epic poetry (see Zhirmunsky and Zarïfov 1947:366ff.). Finally, as the editors of Alpamïs point out (Auezov and Smïnova 1961:491), the last four lines of the passage quoted are a cliché in Kazakh epic poetry.

Summarizing the results of the foregoing analysis, it can be stated
that Kazakh epic poetry is indeed highly formulaic. This formulaic character of the Kazakh epic is, however, by no means uniform. Various types of formulaic lines can be distinguished: cliché-like “imaginistic” or gnomic lines, epithet-centered formulas or formulaic systems (“the hero, born as a lion”), formulaic lines which are part of a type-scene (e.g. the clanging of weapons), or formulas that are generated by the syntactic structure of the Turkic languages. By the same token, the diction of Kazakh epic poetry, in all its traditionality, is by no means stereotyped or merely repetitive. The singer, in particular the good singer, is no manipulator of clichés and formulas, but a creative artist, a master and not a slave of his technique.

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