

Two Performances of the “Return of Alpamiş”: Current Performance-Practice in the Uzbek Oral Epic of the Sherabad School

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The present study attempts to clarify the issues of text composition and poetic style within the Uzbek oral poetic genre known as the *doston* (*dastan*). It focuses on four short oral poetic texts: two recordings of two identical sections of the Alpamiş *doston* sung by a single bard (*bäxşi*) in 1990 and in 1991. Due to the fact that researchers within Uzbekistan and other former Soviet republics of Central Asia have paid little attention to issues of “improvisation” and “memorization,” even such a modest attempt at multiple recording can help to state the relevant questions more clearly. A close analysis of the four texts demonstrates how the techniques of oral composition intersect with poetic style. This analysis is aided at times by interviews with and explanations from the bard. In addition, these interviews and observations of the bard and his immediate environment reveal aspects of the *bäxşi* profession that he viewed as having significance.

Schools of *Doston* Singing in Southeastern Uzbekistan

Since the nineteenth century the entire mountainous area in the northeast of the Qashqadarya and the northwest of the Surkhandarya oblasts,¹ as well as the plains to the south and southeast of these mountains, have been united in one epic tradition, today referred to as the “school” (*maktab*) of Sherabad. The earliest named figure in this school is Şernä Băxşi Beknăzărögli (1855-1915), who lived near Sherabad. The professional lineages of the bards of Sherabad, Baysun, Denau, Shorchi, and Dehkanabad (formerly Teng-i Haram) are all interrelated (Qahharov 1985:20). The area beginning with Kitab and Shahrizabz, and continuing

¹ Situated in the southeast of the country, with Tajikistan to the east, Turkmenistan to the southwest, and Afghanistan to the south.

westward to the plains of Qamashi and Qarshi, is considered to be another “school.”

The material presented here was collected during two short field trips to the Qashqadarya and Surkhandarya in May of 1990 and June of 1991. Prior to that I had worked with Tora Mirzaev in the Folklore Division of the Institute for Literature in Tashkent in the summers of 1988 and 1989; through him I had recorded Çari Şair, a representative of the Qarshi-Shahrisabz tradition of epic, who had acted as an informant for Karl Reichl in 1981.² I was able to record and interview my principal informant from the Qashqadarya, Qahhar Răximov, again in October 1991 when he was invited to the United States by the Asia Society as part of a tour of Uzbek musicians.³

In this research I am indebted principally to two individuals—Qahhar Răximov and Abdumumin Qahharov. Qahhar Băxşi (b. 1958) is the eldest son of the late Qadir Răximov (1931-86), one of the greatest oral bards of twentieth-century Uzbekistan and the leading bard of the mountainous section of the eastern Qashqadarya region. The bards of this area consider themselves to be representatives of the bardic lineage of Sherabad, started by Şernă Băxşi and continued today by Şernă’s grandson Xuşvăqt Mărdănaqulov.

The Răximovs are members of the Tillowmăt lineage (*urugh/uruuw*) of the Qungrad tribe (*el*). At present the meaning of “tribe” in the Uzbek modern context is far from established.⁴ The Qungrads are the principal tribal group of the Qashqadarya and Surkhandarya regions, but their relationship to “Qungrads” elsewhere (e.g. in Khwarezm) and the period of their entry into southern Uzbekistan is unclear (Karmysheva 1976:211-22). By now they have accepted the macro-ethnicity of “Uzbek,” like all other Turkic-speakers in Uzbekistan who are not members of national minorities

² See Reichl 1992:99, 110, 173.

³ Unfortunately my field trips could not be extended at that time because of the extreme sensitivity of the Qashqadarya and Surkhandarya regions, which are relatively close to both Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Termez, the southernmost town in the Surkhandarya region, is closed to foreigners. The continued instability in Afghanistan and the civil war in Tajikistan renders the conditions for extensive fieldwork in the near future rather questionable. I regard the material collected so far as sufficient only to answer certain questions; other broader topics, such as the professional life of the *băxşis* and current performance practices in different performance situations, must be left to future research in more stable times.

⁴ For recent anthropological perspectives on the topic of tribes in the Middle East, see Khoury and Kostiner 1990.

with official status in the Soviet system, such as Turkmens, Karakalpaks, Kirghiz, Kazakhs (cf. Roy 1991). The Qungrads have adopted a fully settled life, mixing stockbreeding with dry agriculture at least since the early nineteenth century. The Rāximovs live in the Chalga village in the Khoja Makhmud settlement area, situated in the mountains above Teng-i Haram and now called Dehkanabad. Qahhar works as a school-teacher and farmer. Qahhar's younger brothers perform some of the *bāxşi* repertoire, and he is actively instructing new students as well as several older students of his late father.

Abdumumin Qahharov (Qahhoröv) is a teacher in the Pedagogical Institute of Qarshi, specializing in Uzbek literature and folklore. While he has published little, he is the leading authority on the epic tradition of Sherabad, which is by far the most active tradition in Uzbekistan today. He had worked with Qadir Şair since the 1960s and published one of his *doston* texts (Zarif 1984).

The Motif-Line and Text Generation

One of the most important techniques of the Uzbek oral *doston* is a species of refrain for each poetic speech that is continually transformed in the course of the oral performance. The Uzbeks themselves have no term for this phenomenon, which I had termed the “motif-line” (1983), and which was later termed the “key line” by Reichl (1992:202): “The repeated lines function as the semantic focus of the passage: A ‘Give advice!,’ B (and C) ‘We have to pay tax, should we give it?’ Often these key-lines are taken up in the following speech. . . .” In my earlier work I described the phenomenon in these terms (1980:126): “Because it was repeated frequently, the motif-line was subject to transformation, both by rephrasing in a different linguistic form, and by decomposition into component phrases. The decomposed phrase could then be combined with other phrases.” Furthermore, “the reformation of the motif-lines and the creation of totally new ones naturally influenced the other lines in the speech, which were obliged to conform to the rhetorical development of these lines. . . . The bard could transform the entire surface appearance of a line, leaving only a word, [or] a verbal form . . . to convey a meaning similar or complementary to other versions of the motif-line. It would be futile to isolate one variant as the primary motif-line” (1983:15).

My own survey of the published texts and my fieldwork from 1988 to 1991 lead me to the conclusion that the Uzbek oral *doston* shows little sign of the kind of textual “conservatism,” either in the form of “text-

orientation” or even the looser “memorization,” that is so evident in the Karakalpak and Kazakh traditions (Reichl 1992:267). The following analysis of two performances of the same episode by the same bard separated by a gap of over one year will illustrate the use of the motif-line technique within the form of text generation that seems to be typical of the Uzbek bards of the Sherabad School, and probably of other regional schools as well.

The Macrolevel of Flexibility in Performance: the Tale

All my informants in the Qashqadarya region defined the *bäxşi* profession as comprising three areas of competence—tale, verse, and music. To the *bäxşis* of Khoja Makhmud what distinguishes their verbal art is first of all its flexibility. Without it they feel the tradition would die. Ismail Bäxşi Răcăbov, the son of Qadir Şair’s teacher Răcăb Şair, stressed this point in his first meeting with me (7/4/91). Ismail Bäxşi described to me a conversation with one of the leading Tashkent folklorists, who had been insisting that the Uzbek *doston* had disappeared with the death of Fazil Şair Yoldaşoghli (Coldaşuwlı) of Bulunghur in 1955 and the others of his generation, and that in any case it could not survive in the social conditions of modern socialist Uzbekistan. I myself had heard both of these opinions from the same individual. First of all, Ismail had replied, Qadir Şair was as talented as any *bäxşi* who had lived in Uzbekistan in any era of which we have any knowledge. Second, he had said, “You think that the *doston* is a stone that sinks after being thrown in the water; it is not—it is a reed that floats to the surface.” According to him, the folklorists in Tashkent had done very little research in this southern mountain region, even though it was only here that the Uzbek *doston* was alive after the 1950s. As a result, they persist in describing the Uzbek oral epic as dead or dying. In fact, the 1960s were a richly creative period in southern Uzbekistan, during which many new *dostons* and *termäs* (topical poems) were performed.

In the Uzbek *doston*, mutable and immutable features exist both on the macrolevel of the narrative and on the microlevel of line construction. The macrolevel of this flexibility is the variability of the narrative. A *bäxşi* could expand or contract his tale according to the demands of his audience. This type of variability seems broadly similar to what Lord and Parry had found in the western Balkans.⁵ Qahhar Bäxşi and his student Cawlı had emphasized this point to me in an amusing way. On the floor of the guest

⁵ For background on their research, see Lord 1960, Foley 1988.

room they arranged four tea cups. They said, “These are the major parts of a *doston*. You can tell it like this,” and they pointed their fingers from the cup on the right to the one on the left, “or like this,” and they made the most elaborate and devious routes from the tea cup on the right, circling and recircling all of the tea cups before finally reaching the tea cup on the left. I asked them who liked to hear the *dostons* in the latter fashion. They replied that the best weddings were now among Uzbeks in Tajikistan. There, they said, they could never get away in less than ten to twelve hours for a single *doston*. The biggest problem, they said, was that nowadays weddings were never more than one day. A *doston* could no longer be stretched out over several days, as in the past. Most often in fact, they did not perform whole *dostons*, but only selections. Nevertheless, as they repeated on several occasions, a true *bäxşi* had to know the stories of many *dostons* in all their details. They criticized certain performers as not being true *bäxşis* because they did not know a single complete *doston*. In addition, a bard will often know more than one variant for each episode in a *doston*, especially if it is a widely known epic. The remainder of this article will focus on the treatment of two episodes of the Alpamiş epic.

“Alpamiş” is one of the most ancient of Turkic oral epics and is still widely known in Uzbekistan. I interviewed Qahhar to determine the stable features of the Alpamiş epic, which is known throughout Uzbekistan in the Qungrad version.⁶ Qahhar stressed that everyone in these parts, most of whom are Qungrads, knows the story of Alpamiş. For a Qungrad not to be familiar with “Alpamiş” is considered a disgrace. However, he said, in the present day it is usually impossible to perform the entire *doston*. If he were to begin it at the beginning, he would never reach the end by the end of the wedding or other celebration (*toy*). Therefore, he and other *bäxşis* begin in the middle, with the return of Alpamiş from the Qalmyqs.

For almost two hours he told me the main features of the story, those that every *bäxşi* had to mention in his performance. However, in performance, a *bäxşi* might not have the time to perform each section with its own melody and new poetic text. In that case he could tell a section briefly in prose, and then go on to sing the next section. Although the bard could not rearrange the order of the sections, he could substitute one abridged variant of a section for a more elaborate one. When time is very short, a *bäxşi* will present only selected scenes from the epic. On a later occasion Qahhar explained that at present a full performance of “Alpamiş” might take three nights; a short performance might run five to six hours (oral communication 10/91).

⁶ Cf. Zhirmunsky 1960, 1966; Mirzaev 1968; Feldman 1980; Reichl 1992:160-70.

In “Alpamiş,” the hero returns from his captivity in the Qalmyq land. As he approaches his home, he meets several members of his household who have all been put to service by the slave Ultan. He encounters these people, such as his servant Qultay, his father Bayborı, and his sister Qaldırğaç, in the desert. The hero reveals his identity only to the servant Qultay. In addition, several animals discover him—his dog, the mother of his horse Bayçıbar, and the she-camel who had been raised with him. All of these animals die at the recognition. In order to avoid the same fate befalling his human kin, he disguises himself from both father and sister. However, both almost recognize him, and the interplay between them and Alpamiş creates highly pathetic scenes that are much appreciated in southern Uzbekistan today.⁷

Immediately following these scenes Alpamiş comes upon the “wedding” celebration where his bride Barçın is about to be married off to the slave Ultan, while his son Cadigar (Literary Uzbek Yodigor) is made to serve the guests at the wedding. This is another pathetic scene, which Qahhar frequently performs. The previous May, at a birthday celebration in the town of Dehkanabad, Qahhar had sung a version of Alpamiş’s meeting with his son Cadigar. Later that day, Qahhar sang parts of “Alpamiş” for me and his friends in his own house. Here the meeting with Cadigar was told according to a different and somewhat more elaborate version, which will be described below. While the version sung may vary, somehow Alpamiş must meet his son Cadigar—the return of Alpamiş would not be complete without this scene.

The following day I asked Qahhar to sing for me the same sections that he had sung for me last year. We decided he would do all of the return portion from the meeting with Qultay and the shepherds to the meeting with Cadigar. Qahhar’s student Cawlı heard this recipe and went out for a stroll. An hour and a half later he returned and asked, “Did you kill off the mare or the she-camel?” We replied, “The mare.” This was the *bäxşi* code to indicate the encounters with the old mare and with Qaldırğaç (who is minding the she-camel), respectively. Much to my surprise, however, the episode with Qaldırğaç was told very quickly in prose. The previous year I had heard Çarı Şair base a forty-minute performance entirely on Alpamiş’s sister recognizing the horse-blanket that she had woven for Bayçıbar. In this episode she repeatedly asks the unknown traveler to turn his horse’s head so that she can better view the blanket. All this was now told by Qahhar in a few quick prose sentences. Evidently in the Sherabad tradition

⁷ Both Qahhar and Çarı Şair (of the Kitab-Qarshi tradition) use these scenes as separate mini-performances.

this episode was not considered to be one of the essential ones within the *Alpamiş doston*.

The Microlevel of Flexibility in Performance: the Line

The microlevel of flexibility relates to the creation of poetic lines. Qahhar Bāxşi articulated the issue as follows (6/5/90):

Q.R.: Another aspect of it [i.e., the *bāxşi* profession] is that we don't perform from memory, rather we create it (*toqu aytämiz*). . . . Our tradition (*än'änä*) is like this. We don't memorize. For example, one cannot just take a book and memorize from start to finish. One can read it five or six times, learn it, memorize the names of the heroes, fix it in the memory, and then one creates it (*toqilädi*).

W.F.: Do you create the rhymes first and then the lines?

Q.R.: No, at the same time. For example I sing one couplet and then I think about the next, and so on.

Qahhar's mention of the "book" points up the fact that today the use of a book as a source for a tale is not considered contrary to the tradition. For example, Qahhar himself has created a *doston* out of the printed version of *Aysulu* as told in prose by Ergaş Şair to Hodi Zarifov (*Özbek Xalq İcodi* 1984). Uzbek folklorists have documented the use of books as sources for epic tales in previous generations as well, although in most cases the *bāxşi* had to get access to the book through a professional reader, a *qissāxân* (Mirzaev 1979:13-17). Unlike the situation described earlier for the text-oriented bards of Iran or Azerbaijan, neither today nor in the past did the "book" serve as a source of legitimacy. Rather, legitimacy was a function of the chain (*silsilä*) of epic teachers within a school. In the case of *Aysulu*, an old part of the epic repertoire was reentering the oral tradition via a published version.

The Two Performances

I visited the town of Dehkanabad and Chalga village in May of 1990. On May 4 I attended a birthday *toy* held to celebrate the sixty-third year of a prominent member of the Dehkanabad community. There I heard Qahhar Raximov perform selections from the second half of the *Alpamiş doston*, which I call the "Return of *Alpamiş*," including the meetings between

Alpamiş and his father Bayborı, his sister Qaldırğaç and his son Cadigar (Yodigor). Later that evening I drove with Otanazar Matyaqubov, head of Oriental Music at the Tashkent State Conservatory, and Qahhar up to his village of Chalga in the Khoja Makhmud district, seventeen kilometers from the town. He invited several friends to his home. There he performed a more continuous version of this episode of “Alpamiş,” including a much elongated version of the meeting with Cadigar.

In July of 1991 I spent a week in Chalga village. One of my goals was to observe how Qahhar would sing the same versions of the episodes of the epic that he had sung the previous year. I wanted to observe the relationship of both the poetic texts and the musical settings in these two performances. I asked Qahhar Băxşi to sing for me a continuous section of the “Return of Alpamiş” that would include all of the episodes he had sung last year, using the versions that he had used then. On July 3 he sang the “Return of Alpamiş” in two sections of two hours and one hour, respectively. The following day we transcribed the texts and he furnished a detailed commentary on all the expressions that he had employed. We were able to compare two performances of the same version of the meetings with Bayborı and with Cadigar. We could not compare the meeting with Qaldırğaç because he went through this episode only in prose in the 1991 performance. We also had to leave out the earlier performance of the meeting with Cadigar from the afternoon of May 11, 1990, because it turned out he had employed an alternative version of that episode, a version that was not really comparable with the other two performances (of that same evening and of July 1991). Performance A of the Bayborı episode is 16 lines; B is 28 lines. Performance A of Cadigar is 19 lines; B is 25 lines. Performance B is thus somewhat longer than A.

Bayborı

When Alpamiş returns from his captivity among the Qalmyqs, he disguises himself in the clothing of his servant Qultay. However, he continues to ride his own horse, Bayçıbar. The disparity between his humble clothing and his magnificent and somehow familiar mount creates confusion in the minds of the members of his family whom he encounters on his way. In the desert Alpamiş meets his father, Bayborı, who is now blind. Bayborı recognizes the sound of Bayçıbar’s hoofbeats, but Alpamiş, who fears that his father’s heart may burst if he learns his true identity, denies his relationship to his father. At this Bayborı becomes angry and accuses Alpamiş of heartlessness and failure to perform his duty as a son.

[Motif-lines or repeated parts of motif-lines are given in bold-face, secondary motif-lines are underlined.]⁸

Performance A: May 11, 1990

1. *Xuday keçäsin da balam xatañdı*
Ara çöldä haydama da batañdı
Bir pasılğa qara deymän aydahar
Taylab ketäsän ma bu gun atañdı

My child, may God forgive your sin
 Don't drive the one who prays for you into the desert of Ara
I bid you [stop and] look for a moment, o mighty dragon
This day will you throw out your own father?

2. *Cigitliktä abad edi guzarım*
Qayğa barsam bustan edi bazarım
Öz atañdı taşladıñ mı aydahar
Egäsiz bop qalar boldı mı mazarım

In my youth my paths were well founded
 Wherever I went, my bazaar was a garden
Have you thrown away your own father, o mighty dragon
Will my tomb be utterly abandoned?

⁸ The Latin orthography of these texts is based on the Qipchak-Uzbek dialect spoken in the Qashqadarya and Surkhandarya regions. The principal difference from the Turkish-based Latinization adopted recently for Literary Uzbek lies in the vocalic system. Qipchak-Uzbek retains a form of Turkic vowel harmony, and the Turkic *a* has not been transformed into the Tajik *o* ("aw"). Therefore Qipchak has the front-back opposition *ä/a* where Literary Uzbek writes *a/o*. The Qipchak vowel *o* is much the same as the Turkish *o* (Lit. Uzbek *ö*). For the sake of consistency with my other writings, I retain the Literary Uzbek spelling *doston* for the Qipchak *dastan*. I retain the more common Anglicized orthography for place-names, e.g. Surkhandarya instead of Surxandaryo, Tashkent instead of Toşkent, and so forth. With personal names I have employed the Uzbek orthography for consonants, but have used the standard vocalic system only for Uzbek figures who were not native to the Qipchak-speaking regions; thus Hodi Zarif (the literary scholar) but Qahhar (not Qahhor) Raximov. Were these latter figures to appear in an Uzbek text, their names would appear in the standard form, since their local dialect has no official status in the Uzbek Republic.

3. *Şahlıgımda baländ edi subitim*
Qayza barsam nurli edi bu betim
Öz atañdı tanımadıñ aydahar
Egäsiz bop qalar mı tabutim

When I was king majestic was my appearance
 Wherever I went, full of light was this face of mine
You did not recognize your own father, o mighty dragon
Will my casket be utterly abandoned?

4. *Temirlärdän edi naylay tuyägim*
Pärzänd uçun bu yağım
Öz atañdı taşladıñ mı aydahar
Kimlärgä qalar ekän bu süyäkim

My nails had been of iron
 This wealth of mine was for my child's sake
Have you thrown out your own father, o mighty dragon
To whom will I leave these bones of mine?

Performance B: July 3, 1991

1. *Kozlärimdän ağadı da cala-ya*
Xudayım da cetim ekän nala-ya
Pärzänd bolsañ kelip başım silä-ya
Boyanıñdan äylänäyin aydahar-a
Öz atañdı tanımadıñ mı bala-ya

From my eyes tears flow
 To God I wail like an orphan
 If you are my child, come and stroke my head
How dear to me is your stature, o mighty dragon
O my child, did you not recognize your own father?

2. *Tawdan aşsañ Baysun degän qır deydi*
Astañdagi attı Bayçıbarday şir deydi
Mehnätimdi bilsäñ balam bir deydi
Öz atañdı tanımadıñ boyñana
Arqañdan cılažandır Bayborıdey cor deydi

If you ascend the mountain, you will reach the peak called Baysun, they say
 The horse under you is the lion called Baycibar, they say
 Were you to know my woes, you would have added yet another, they say
You did not recognize your own father, my handsome lad?
 Behind you weeps the wretch called Bayborı, they say.

3. *Märt cigitlär ğazada köñli xuşlay mı*
Küygän adam bilgin läbin tişläy mı
Oğurlar här elätti läşläy mı
Bu gün adam bop qaldıñ mı Alpamiş
Kättä bolğan pärzänd atasın taşlay mı

Isn't the heart of a brave warrior glad in battle?
 Doesn't the grief-laden man bite his lip?
 Don't bandits strip clean the miserable folk?
 Didn't you suddenly become a man today, Alpamiş?
Does a son who has come of age throw away his father?

4. *Amaldarlar bilgin ketti xana-ya*
Aştı mikän calğınçıda guna-ya
Cetti cılab colña zor tepä-ya
Boyanıñdan ayläyin colawçı-ya
Kärigändä keräk emäs mi ata minän ana-ya

The ministers have abandoned the khan
 Hasn't sin increased in this deceitful world?
 I have waited sadly for you for seven years
Traveler, how dear to me is your stature
When they grow old, isn't there a need for father and mother?

5. *Açılğanda tazä gullär sola mı*
Namärd adam oylağanı bola mı
Tawuşıñdan äylänäyin colawçı
Pärzänd degän balam sendäy bola mı

When they bloom, will fresh roses fade?
 Will the plans of the coward ever come to pass?
Traveler, how dear to me is your voice
Does a real son behave to his father as you have done?

6. *Cañulmagın balam cürgän colıñdan*

Miñ cılğaça quwwät ketmäsin belindän
Bir pasılğa toxta deymän colawçı
Aylänäyin Alpamiş degän tiliñdän

Stray not, my child, from the road you are traveling
 For a thousand years may strength not leave your loins
I bid you tarry a moment, o traveler
Alpamiş, how dear to me is your tongue!

Performance A then shifts into a narrative tirade in eight-syllable verse, beginning:

<i>ciirek bawrını bozulup</i>	his heart and liver broken
<i>barğan cayları qazılıp</i>	the path where goes all rutted
<i>qarañ Alpanıñ közidän</i>	look at Alpamiş, from his eyes
<i>cağlar baradı tizilip</i>	tears flow continuously.
<i>cüregi vayran boladı</i>	his heart is desolate
<i>atañ ketti da qazılıp</i>	woe! he left all broken up
<i>zarlıqqanani bildirip</i>	he made known his misery
<i>bedaw atını celdirip</i>	he trotted his bedouin steed
<i>ciirek qayğuğa toldırıp. . . .</i>	his heart filled with grief. . . .

Performance B also closes with eight-syllable narrative verse. However, in this instance the passage is arranged in four-line strophes:

<i>Hay nazidän nazidän</i>	Oh its style, its style
<i>Alpamiş degän sözidän</i>	The words Alpamiş had said
<i>Cetä almaydı da Bayborı</i>	Bayborı could not comprehend
<i>Cılablar qaldı izidän</i>	He remained behind him, weeping.
<i>Asman ayas hava kök</i>	The sky was clear the air blue
<i>Belgä baylap tırdan oq</i>	He tied the quiver to his waist
<i>Här bir adam elidä</i>	In each land of men
<i>Daim bolsun da [dostlar] bek</i>	There should always be a <i>beg</i> , my friends.

Analysis

The episode of the meeting of Alpamiş with his father Bayborı is one of the essential sections in the *doston*, and cannot under any circumstances be omitted. It appears in every recorded version of “Alpamiş” (Mirzaev 1968), and Qahhar Băxşı affirms that it is one of the necessary episodes of

the “Return of Alpamiş.” Furthermore, audiences frequently ask for it to be performed separately, even without the rest of the *doston*. To Qahhar Bāxşi, these two speeches by Bayborı are “the same” in that they occur in the same place in the story and fulfill the same function. They both present the words of the father to his son. Performance A (1990) is set in a four-line strophe, while performance B (1991) is in a five-line strophe. Both employ eleven-syllable lines, but this is a standard feature of virtually all speeches in the Uzbek *doston*. Furthermore, they were sung to different melodies. Performance A uses the standard epic melody (*namä*) termed *garipnamä* while B is sung to *turkmennamä*.

Both performance A and B use two motif-lines. This doubled motif-line in A divides the quatrain into two sections, which now have their own separate semantic organization (as indicated by the bold face versus normal font). In A we see virtually a “motif-couplet,” which always appears in the second half of the strophe. In the first line of this couplet the key words are *aydahar* (“dragon”) and the verbs *taşladıñ* (“you threw away”) or *tanımadıñ* (“you did not recognize”). This first motif-line may be paraphrased as “Did you abandon/fail to recognize your own father?” The first strophe is irregular in that *taylab* (literary *täşläb*, “throwing away”) appears in the second line of the couplet rather than the first. In strophes 2 and 4 this line would have appeared as line 3 rather than 4, preceding the word *aydahar*. In strophes 2, 3, and 4, the third line begins with the words *öz atañdı* (“your father”) and ends with *aydahar*.⁹ The verb may be *taşladıñ* or *tanımadıñ*.

The second motif-line may be paraphrased as “Will my bones/casket be abandoned?” In each strophe the fourth line presents the results of the heartless action of the son, Alpamiş—the tomb (*mazar*), the casket (*tabut*), or the bones (*süyük*) of the father will be abandoned. Syntactically these lines are closely parallel. In strophe 2 and 3 the second motif-line begins with *egäsiz bop* (“without owner”) and ends with the possessive suffix *-im*. Strophe 4 substitutes *kimlärgä* (“to whom”) for *egäsiz*.

The opening couplets of strophes 2, 3, and 4 have their own semantic structure. They are so closely related that they almost form a second series of “motif-lines.” In these lines Bayborı laments his lost youth and present

⁹ The use of the word *aydahar* (Persian *azhdaha*, “dragon”) requires a gloss. In other published *dostons*, *aydahar* appears in the usual Persian-Islamic context as a negative, monstrous figure. Yet when I questioned him, Qahhar insisted that in his tradition *aydahar* has positive value as a metaphor for a brave, valiant warrior. Hence the translation “mighty dragon.”

weakness. The major constant syntactic feature is the first-person possessive suffix at the end of each line—my path, my bazaar, my appearance, my face, my nails, my wealth. These are always preceded by the simple verb *edi*, “it was.” Thus the pattern goes as follows: “in my youth” my a, b, c, d was x, y, z. In line 2 (strophes 2 and 3) we see the repetition of the phrase *qayğa barsam* (“wherever I may go”).

[XXXX	XX	<i>edi</i>	XX- <i>im</i>]
<i>Cigitliktä</i>	<i>abad</i>	<i>edi</i>	<i>guzarım</i>
<i>Qayğa barsam</i>	<i>bustan</i>	<i>edi</i>	<i>bazarım</i>
<i>Şahlıgımda</i>	<i>baländ</i>	<i>edi</i>	<i>subitim</i>
<i>Qayğa barsam</i>	<i>nurli</i>	<i>edi</i>	<i>bu betim</i>

“In my youth my paths were well founded
Wherever I went, my bazaar was a garden”

“When I was king majestic was my appearance
Wherever I went, full of light was this face of mine”

In strophes 2, 3, and 4 no explicit connection is ever created to link the first and the second halves of the strophes. It is this juxtaposition of two distinct themes that creates the poignancy of these strophes. In the first theme Bayborı laments his helpless and humiliating old age, and in the second he castigates his son for adding a further insult to the injuries he is already suffering.

The opening strophe is structured rather differently from the succeeding three. The first half asks God to forgive his son’s transgression, with whom Bayborı then pleads directly. The fourth line is closely related to the third line of all the other strophes. The third line, however, is echoed nowhere in the entire speech, apart from the closing word *aydahar*, which is then taken up in each successive third line. However, if we jump ahead and look at the closing strophe of performance B of fourteen months later, we see a variant of this line in the third position within the final strophe (6):

A) *Bir pastlğa qara deymän aydahar*

“I bid you [stop and] look for a moment, o mighty dragon”

B) *Bir pastlğa toxta deymän colawçı*

“I bid you tarry a moment, o traveler”

There can be no question of the *bäxşi* remembering the performance of fourteen months earlier. Rather it would seem that the lines were created according to a formulaic pattern: *Bir pasılğa XX deymän XXX*.

In performance B Qahhar Bäkşi has created a very different text from performance A. Formally he is using a five-line strophe, constructed AAABA. In his musical performance the fourth, B-line is emphasized by a long melisma after the closing syllable. Nevertheless, this privileged position of the fourth or B-line does not always coincide with the motif-line, which is located in the fifth line in all but the second strophe. In this motif-line we can see something of the first motif-line of performance A, namely the formula *öz atañdı* (“your own father”) and the verb *tanimadıñ* (“you did not recognize”).

A, strophe 3:

Öz atañdı tanımadıñ aydahar

“You did not recognize your own father, o mighty dragon”

B, strophe 2:

Öz atañdı tanımadıñ boyñana

“You did not recognize your own father, my handsome lad”

Qahhar Bäkşi chose a different formal structure for strophes 5 and 6, which are quatrains. He maintained the *turkmennamä* melody, however, with the melismatic ending after the B-line, which now is line 3, rather than 4. In strophes nos. 3, 4, and 5 he changed the motif-line. Previously, the motif-line had been a variant of the motif-lines that he had used in performance A. Now he breaks this syntactic pattern and leaves out the key words, except for a single appearance of *taşla-* in strophe 3. His new motif-line is structurally looser. It conveys an idea (probably heard in homes throughout the world) that might be paraphrased as “now that you are grown up, do you think you can abandon your parents?” He has no single syntactic formula for this statement. In both strophes it appears with a new structure. However, the semantic relationship with the earlier motif-lines (“Didn’t you recognize/ Did you throw out your own father?”) is clear.

The remaining lines do not reflect the subject of the lament of Bayborı in performance A. The five-line strophes (1-4) are not structured like the quatrains of A, which were bifurcated into a couplet plus a doubled motif-line. Most of the lines in B seem paratactic, but they often reveal an indirect relationship with the motif-line. For example, in strophe 3, lines 1, 2, and 3 contrast the conquering hero with the wretched victim of bandits.

The implication may be that although Alpamiş seems to be a hero, his heroism is like that of a bandit—it is cruel and does not respect legitimate social relationships and boundaries. He has become a brave young warrior, but he announces this fact by abandoning his aged father. Likewise, in strophe 4 the ministers abandoning their khan refer once again to Alpamiş abandoning his father. True parataxis appears only in the quatrains that end the segment. In strophes 5 and 6 the opening couplets are formulas, as are the lines using the word *aylanayin* (lit. “let me circumambulate”), units that are formulaic for such good wishes.

The narrative verses that close the speech of Baybori contain no common features in performances A and B. In A this section is tiradic, in B strophic. A speaks only about Alpamiş; B begins by describing Baybori, turning to Alpamiş in the second strophe. The final two lines, “In every land of men/ there should always be a *beg*, my friends,” is an indirect reference to Alpamiş as the legitimate ruler of the Qungrads. Narrative verse does not employ the motif-line technique, so this is not a unifying factor. Furthermore, no single word or even any syntactic structure links the two performances.

We can conclude that these two performed texts are as a whole dissimilar except for the motif-line of B that is closely related to the first motif-line of A. The single word *aydahar*, so prominent in the motif-line of A, is echoed only in the first strophe of performance B. This early appearance of *aydahar* suggests that there must have been earlier performances in which this word also had played a part in the motif-line. Obviously, the relationships between these performance-generated oral texts are almost infinite. In this minimal sample of two texts, the density of correspondence is different in the motif-lines and in the remainder of the texts. It is possible to find very close relationships in the motif-lines, suggesting both words and syntactic patterns previously employed, whereas the other lines of these two texts are mainly dissimilar. The *bäxşi* also demonstrates difference by creating a text in a new strophic format, set to a melody that differs from the musical underpinning of the earlier text.

Cadigar

Alpamiş’s first meeting with his son Cadigar (Yodigar) is told variously in the Uzbek epic traditions. In its variant appearances it is one of the basic episodes of the “Return of Alpamiş.” On the evening of May 11, 1990, and on July 3, 1991, Qahhar Raximov told it according to the standard version of his tradition. In this version Alpamiş appears at the

wedding of Ultan and Barçın, disguised in the clothing of the servant Qultay. He sees a young boy, apparently an orphan serving the guests. Although he does not know that this is his son Cadigar (whom he has never seen), he pities the boy's forlorn and hungry appearance, and, taking a piece of the best cut of meat (from the upper thigh), he gives it to the young man. However, when the cook spies Cadigar feasting on the lamb's thigh, he becomes angry and strikes him in the face. Cadigar is hurt and confused by the seemingly kindly behavior of the stranger that has nevertheless caused him pain and embarrassment. The speech of Cadigar is a feature of the Sherabad tradition, as it had been performed by Qadir Şair, and both performance A from 1990 and performance B from 1991 reflect the same episode.¹⁰

Performance A: May 11, 1990

1. *Muna çöldä körinädi bay adamnıñ karvanı*
Sağır bolsa adamzad kop boladı armanı
Tuyalärgä taylar mikän karmanı
Bul gäpimä qulaq salğın babacan
Şul boldı mı bir Xudanıñ parmanı

In this desert a rich man's caravan appears
 If he is orphaned, many of a man's desires are unfulfilled
 Do they throw rich grass to the camels?
Give ear to my speech
 Is this the decree of God?

2. *Cürek bağrın xanäsüdän tilindi*
Sağırlıgım naylay şu bugundä bilindi
Ne säbübdän cilik berdiñ babacan
Aq tenedä qızıl qanlar körindi

My heart is torn from its home
 My orphanhood today is made known

¹⁰ On the afternoon of May 11, 1990, Qahhar had performed the meeting of Alpamiş and Cadigar as an isolated scene at the birthday celebration in Dehkanabad. There he had employed another version, in which there is no leg of meat, and therefore no striking of Cadigar by the cook. The following comparison does not include this performance, which was based upon a different version of the tale.

Why did you give me the thigh bone?

Red blood appeared on my white flesh

3. *Oylay bersäm temir tegdi tenemä*
Aq otawda cılab qaldı enäm-ä
Caman qursın caxşı gäpgä konämä
Bir pasılğa qara deymän babacan
Çini bilän boşaydı mı xanäm-a

[If I think of it] iron touched my flesh
 My mother weeps bitterly in the white yurt
 Let there be no evil, will one listen to good talk?

I bid you stop and look for a moment

Truly, will my house be destroyed?

4. *Baländ tawlar başı boladı qıya*
Ata bolsa adamğa berär saya
Sağırğa bir keñ ekän dä dünya
Ne säbübdän cilik berdiñ babacan
Bu sağırnı cılattıp kopeymädimi guna

The tops of the tall mountains are peaks
 A father gives shade to a human being
 The world is wide (i.e., without shelter) to the orphan

Why did you give me the thigh bone?

Were his sins so great that you caused this orphan to weep?

Performance B: July 3, 1991

1. *Tawlar xonik bolar baba läläsiz*
Şähär vayran bolar baba qalasız
Adam garip bolmas biliñ naläsiz
Cilik bermäy axir boğun babacan
Ne säbübdän urdurduñ aytqın baläsiz

Without a tulip the mountains are ugly
 Without a fortress the city is ruined
 Without a groan a man is not mournful
Give no more thigh bone to me,
Tell me, why did you cause me to be beaten, o childless one?

2. *Açılmayın baba gullär solğan ma*
Ya bolmasa bu paymanın tolğan ma
Kocädägi adamlar häm uradı
Ya çini bilän babacan meniñ atam ölgän ma

If they do not bloom, will the flowers fade?
 Is this destiny fulfilled?
 Men in the street strike me as well
 Tell me truly, is my father dead?

3. *Bedawiñdi maydan maydan celdirdiñ*
Cilik berip duşmanıñdı güldirdiñ
Cüregimdä tawça alam qaldırdıñ
Cilik bermäy axir boğun babacan
Atacanıñ coqlıgını bildirdiñ

You galloped your bedouin steed around the square
By giving the thigh bone you caused your foe to laugh
 In my heart you left a pain great as a mountain
Give no more thigh bone to me,
 You let it be known that I have no father

4. *Garip cılasa güpgü qulaq salmıyma*
On beş bolsa asmanda ay tolmayma
Niyät qılsañ babam bir kun bolmayma
Cilik berip qızıl qanğa boyadıñ
Käşäl ketgän atacanım kelmaymä

If he weeps, will they not give ear to the wretched stranger?
 If it is fifteen days old, is the moon in the sky not full?
 If you have the proper intention, will it not come to pass?
By giving me the thigh bone you bathed me in red blood
 Will he not come home, my father who has gone to Kasha?

5. *Mingän atıñ baba seniñ kökmiymdi*
Qılğan içiñ yalğançı ya xaq mıydı
Bir awladıñ aytgın baba bek miydi
Ne säbübdän cılattıñ da sağırdı
Ya bolmasa babacan seniñ balañ coq mıydı

Are you riding a gray horse?
 Was your deed false or true?
 Tell me, was this son of yours a *beg* ?
Why did you cause the orphan to weep?
 Is it because you have no child?

Analysis

The theme of Cadigar's speech in both performances is a meditation on orphanhood. Qahhar Bāxşi presents what he considers the essence of the life of an orphan in the last strophe of performance A. When I questioned him about the meaning of the world being "wide" (*keñ*) for a [fatherless] orphan (*sağır*), he explained that an orphan sees much more of the world than a normal child. The orphan must be aware of everyone's actions and how these might bear upon him—information with which a child within a family would not concern himself. The orphan cannot allow himself to misbehave, because he has no one to protect him from just or unjust punishment (cf. B2: "men in the street strike me as well"). In the ecological context of the Khoja Makhmud district, the peaks of the "tall mountains" in A4 are bare and treeless, and it is the father who "gives shade," shelter from the heat of the sun. All his life Cadigar has lived as a fatherless orphan, yet he is not certain that his father has died. The generous deed of the disguised Alpamiş seems "fatherly," yet its results prove bitter. Cadigar interprets this development as a cruel plot on the part of the stranger. Unlike his grandfather Bayborı, or his aunt Qaldırğaç, he is not certain that he has seen Alpamiş. Therefore the ambiguity of this episode is greater than in parallel episodes in the "Return" cycle. This ambiguity is what creates the pathos of this scene.

There is, however, a difference in emphasis between these two performances. Performance A speaks almost exclusively about orphanhood (*sağırlıq*). The word *sağır* or *sağırlıq* appears in three out of four strophes, including an early appearance in strophe 1. It is the motif-line, speaking of the meaty thigh bone (*cilik*), that links this general lament to the specific situation of the episode. Performance B is exclusively concerned with the episode itself.

The nature of this difference is not dissimilar to what we have seen in the two versions of the speech of Bayborı. Both Cadigar and Bayborı address two different aspects of the same predicament. In particular, Bayborı's speech in A could have developed in a very different direction, and become a lament over his lost youth, as Cadigar's in A is a lament on

orphanhood. It is probably not accidental that the performance A versions of both episodes are more “philosophical,” more general, and less concerned with the specific situation than those of performance B. It is possible that B, as an elicited performance, was more narrowly directed toward the episode, perhaps because this is what Qahhar thought was required. The performance A versions, on the other hand, were not elicited (by me). They represent two different performance situations on the same day, both having larger audiences (25 people in the afternoon, 10 in the evening).

Formally, the two performances employ alternating four- and five-line strophes with eleven-syllable lines. In A the succession is 5, 4, 5, 5, while in B it is 5, 4, 5, 5, 5. Melodically, performance A was sung to *turkmennamä*, while performance B used a melody of the *gariṣnamä* family. A alternates between two different motif-lines while B uses two motif-lines in succession in each strophe. However, one of the motif-lines of A is almost identical to the first motif-line of B. The most obvious formal difference between the two performances is the constant insertion of the two-syllable word *babam* or *baba* (“old man”) in performance B. In strophe 1, line 3 *biliñ* (“know”) is substituted for *baba*. These two-syllable words (not indicated in the translation) are part of the eleven-syllable structure, although they contribute little to the meaning.

The key-word of the motif-lines of both performances is *cilik*, “meaty thigh bone.” Here, this part of the sheep’s anatomy symbolizes much of what a father can do for a son. In the context of Cadigar’s degraded existence, *cilik* is something that he cannot hope to have, and perhaps has never tasted. *Cilik* appears in two of the four strophes of performance A and in four lines within the five strophes of B. As we have seen, this greater concentration on the core of the episode is characteristic of performance B.

Cilik also appears as the keyword of the motif-line of a third performance, recorded in October 1991 in New York. The Cadigar speech in this performance had five five-line strophes. In three of these the word *cilik* appeared in the following contexts:

1. *Ne sebedän cilik berdiñ boyuñdan*
“Why did you give the thigh-bone, o dear stature?”
2. *Negä cilik berdiñ babacan*
“Why did you give the thigh-bone, dear old man?”
3. *Ne sebedän cilik berdiñ babacan*
“Why did you give the thigh-bone, dear old man?”

This motif-line appeared in identical or very similar form three times over a period of over eighteen months, a regularity that suggests that it is a somewhat stable feature of this sub-tradition. The later performance of the Cadigar episode contained only one overt echo of one of these two earlier performances. Compare the very last line of the last strophe—

Käşälgä ketgün atacanım enäcan aytgin kelmäymi

“Tell me dear mother, will he not come home, my father who has gone to Kasha?”

—with the fifth line of strophe 4 in performance B:

Käşäl ketgün atacanım kelmäymä

“Will he not come home, my father who has gone to Kasha?”

These are identical lines, except that in the former Qahhar adds the parenthetical “tell me, dear mother” (*enäcan aytgin*), which breaks the syllable count of the line. Thus we observe another obvious link between the performances of May 1990 and October 1991.

The syllabic structure of the motif-line in A is (1-3-2-2-3):

[X	XXX	XX	XX	XXX]	
<i>Bul</i>	<i>gapimä</i>	<i>qulaq</i>	<i>salgın</i>	<i>babacan</i>	
<i>Ne</i>	<i>säbäbdan</i>	<i>cilik</i>	<i>berdiñ</i>	<i>babacan</i>	(2x)
<i>Bir</i>	<i>pasılğa</i>	<i>qara</i>	<i>deymän</i>	<i>babacan</i>	

“Give ear to my speech”

“Why did you give me the thigh bone?”

“I bid you stop and look for a moment”

In performance B the syllabic structure becomes (2-2-2-2-3):

[XX	XX	XX	XX	XXX]	
<i>Cilik</i>	<i>bermäy</i>	<i>axir</i>	<i>boğun</i>	<i>babacan</i>	(2x)
<i>Cilik</i>	<i>berip</i>	<i>duşmanıñdı</i>		<i>güldirdiñ</i>	
<i>Cilik</i>	<i>berip</i>	<i>qızıl</i>	<i>qanğa</i>	<i>boyadıñ</i>	

“Give no more thigh bone to me”

“By giving the thigh bone you caused your foe to laugh”

“By giving me the thigh bone you bathed me in red blood”

Cilik has two syllables. The root of the verb *bermaq* (*ber-*, “to give”) is a single syllable. When combined with either the participle *-ip* or the negative participle *-mäy*, it forms a two-syllable word. The three-syllable slot at the end of the line, which is not as variable as the other slots, can be filled either with an apostrophe or with a finite verb. In Uzbek, both a two-syllable verbal root plus the second person past suffix and a monosyllabic verbal root plus a causative suffix plus the second person past suffix will result in a trisyllabic word (e.g. *güldirdiñ* or *boyadiñ*). These patterns will generate seven out of the eleven syllables needed for the stich, and they will insure its opening and closing. The remaining four syllables in the middle of the stich can be generated from a wide variety of patterns. In the three examples above, each of these four-syllable segments represents a different part of speech.

In strophes B1 and B5 the bard repeats the basic structure of the second motif-line of performance A, beginning with the phrase *ne säbäbdän*. In B1 he mistakes the syllable count:

[X XXX XXX XX XXX] (1-3-3-2-3=12)
Ne säbäbdän urdurduñ aytqın baläsiz

“Tell me, why did you cause me to be beaten, o childless one?”

In strophe 5 the syllable count is correct, but the breakup is not elegant:

[X XXX XXX X XXX] (1-3-3-1-3=11)
Ne säbäbdän cılatıñ da sağırdı

“Why did you cause the orphan to weep?”

The ineptitude in handling this type of line probably indicates that he has not used it for some time, perhaps not since performance A fourteen months before.

The motif-line of performance A, strophe 3 repeats a structure familiar to us from the Bayborı episode:

Bir pasılğa qara deymän babacan,

“I bid you stop and look for a moment”

to which may be compared:

Bir pasılğa qara deymän aydahar
Bir pasılğa toxta deymän colawçı

“I bid you [stop and] look for a moment, o mighty dragon”
 “I bid you tarry a moment, o traveler”

Here the three-syllable *babacan* fills the place taken elsewhere by *aydahar* (“dragon”) and *colawçı* (“traveler”). The first strophe employs a similar syllabic and syntactic structure for its motif-line:

[X	XXX	XX	XX	XXX]
<i>Bul</i>	<i>gapimä</i>	<i>qulaq</i>	<i>salgin</i>	<i>babacan</i>

“This to my speech ear do give dear old man”

This line has no reference to *cilik* or *sagır*, but appears to be an “all-purpose” motif-line that calls attention to what will follow.

This type of syllabic patterning and syntactic parallelism resembles essential techniques of folk verse in many Turkic languages (Zhirmunsky 1965; Reichl 1992:178). It is also not distant conceptually from the type of patterning that forms the basis for South Slavic epic (Lord 1960:45-58). What is significant here is that it has a specific function in the creation of a particular kind of line, which in turn has a specific function in the *doston*. From this limited sample it would appear that some motif-lines are varied and restructured until only a single word or a syntactic pattern remains, while in other cases the line may be preserved through several performances virtually intact. Such a stable line may even form the nucleus around which the entire speech is built.

In the sample adduced here, these motif-lines could represent one line out of a four-line strophe, one line out of five, or two lines out of five, or even two lines out of four. However, not every motif-line is equally formulaic. As noted above, there is a structural difference between the “classical” formulicity of the type of *bul gapimä qulaq salgin babacan* or the pattern *bir pasılğa XX deymän XXX*, on the one hand, and the motif-lines of performance B of Bayborı on the other:

Kättä bolğan pärzänd atasın taşlay mı
 “Does a son who has come of age throw away his father?”

Käriğändä keräk emäs mi ata minän ana-ya
 “When they grow old, isn’t there a need for father and mother?”

Pärzänd degän balam sendäy bola mı

“Does a real son behave to his father as you have done?”

Both the syntax and the syllabic structures of these three lines are extremely divergent. They cannot be considered formulaic in the usual sense of generation through syntactic manipulation and lexical substitution. The very fact that the bard has elided the first syllable of *atasın* and gone over the syllabic limit in the second line may stem from his struggle to avoid the syntactic patterns used elsewhere in this motif-line or in the speech in general.

Performance A of the Bayborı speech is created as four-line strophes that give the impression of having come from two distinct speeches or perhaps themes. The two motif-lines always occupy the second half of the strophe and are clearly related to Bayborı’s lament. They seem like “classic” motif-lines that can be manipulated and reformulated with minimal change of meaning. We know that the first motif-line, beginning with the formula *öz atañdı* (“your own father”) was in fact manipulated to serve as the motif-line of performance B. The opening half of each strophe is also composed of lines that are so formulaic—and seem so appropriate to express another theme (namely the lament for lost youth)—that some of them may have functioned as motif-lines in another episode. In strophe 3, in addition to the formulaic opening *qayğa barsam* (“wherever I would go”), the remaining words *nurli edi bu betim* (“this face of mine was luminous”) echo a formula found in other epics of the Sherabad tradition: *sargaymasın nurli cüz* (“may the luminous face fade not”). Thus, this particular speech appears to contain the highest density of formulas of the three examined here.

Conclusion

Qahhar Bāxşi constructs his *doston* text in an essentially performance-generative manner, with no evidence of a previously learned text. Despite the common Turkic heritage of syntactic parallelism and syllabic patterning, his technique is quite remote from the documented practices of Karakalpak or Kazakh *zhıraus* in neighboring areas of Central Asia. This is admittedly a very small sample, but it coincides well with what is known about the Uzbek epic tradition as a whole (see Reichl 1992, Feldman 1983). A much larger sample, especially from the same region, would very likely unearth many other verbal resemblances with other versions. Nevertheless, the type

of rearrangement of essentially text-oriented material that predominates in the Karakalpak and Kazakh epic, not to mention the direct text-reproduction of the Turkmen or other Oghuzic traditions, does not seem to be present here.

The Uzbek epic texts show a much smaller degree of text-reproduction than any of the other Central Asian Turkic oral epics.¹¹ Within a particular performance, the motif-line represents formularity of a different order from the bulk of the text. This series of variants of one or two lines is usually created through syntactic manipulation and lexical substitution in a much more restricted way than is the rest of the text. Whatever their relationship to earlier performances might be, in a particular performance the motif-lines are rather close conceptually to the formulaic lines studied by Albert Lord in the South Slavic epic. In the short examples analyzed here, there are instances of a motif-line corresponding to a line-pattern recorded in an earlier performance by the same bard. In other cases we have no way of knowing whether a given line-pattern had been employed earlier. However, the structural resemblances to the Balkan epic line should not disguise an important difference in the Uzbek material. As I have noted earlier, in the Uzbek *doston* the “constant reformation of the syllabic lines allowed little retention of fixed elements. This fact contrasts with the situation in Yugoslavia where an isosyllabic format did permit the continuous use of many inherited and regionally stable formulas and epithets.”¹²

Considering Reichl’s convincing conclusions on the creation of the Karakalpak and Kazakh *zhur* and his suggestions about the Kirghiz *Manas*, the Uzbek *doston* would appear to be the only form of oral epic in Turkic Central Asia that practices significant performance-generation, without “text-orientation” or “memorization.” At the current state of our knowledge it is difficult to determine whether the Uzbek practice represents the continuation of the more ancient tradition, so that it was these other Turkic groups who abandoned “creative” performance-generation for epics (they still practice it for competitive poetic genres), or whether it was the Uzbeks alone who applied the performance-generation techniques long used in competitive poetic genres and adapted them to epic. In any case it is

¹¹ Reichl’s fieldwork in Uzbekistan is less extensive, but his material, along with the evidence of published texts, leads him to conclude that “in the southern Uzbek tradition comparable love-romances such as *Kuntuǰmic* vary far more radically from variant to variant” (1992:268).

¹² 1983:14. I pursue the question of the motif-line and in particular its relationship to the style of the Turkmen literary *destan* elsewhere (Feldman 1994).

significant and hopeful to learn that, despite the negative pronouncements of the academic folklore establishment in Tashkent, one region of the country is still producing a generation of oral bards who show every sign of bringing the Uzbek oral *doston* into the twenty-first century.¹³

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