

Tura Mirzayev's Folklore Expedition Diary And Its Significance In Identifying Folk Bakhshis

Barno Mirzayeva

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philology, Senior Researcher, Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature and Folklore, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

Nigora Abdusalomova

Basic Doctoral Student, Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature and Folklore, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article analyzes several entries from the personal diary kept by the scholar Tura Mirzayev, who made an enormous contribution to the development of Uzbek epic studies, during the folklore expedition organized in Surkhandarya region in 1973.

Keywords: Folklore, diary, expedition, bakhshi, dombra.

Introduction: The scientific study of works of folk oral artistic creativity begins directly with folklore expeditions. A folklore expedition, along with recording works of folk creativity, provides an opportunity to collect materials necessary for the preservation and study of oral artistic traditions. The factual materials collected during each expedition are recorded directly during live oral performances in notebooks, as well as on audio and video media. These materials later serve as a fundamental basis for conducting folkloristic research and for publishing various editions of works of folk oral artistic creativity.

An important source that reflects highly valuable information related to the state of historical and folkloric processes in a particular region, or to the life, activity, performance skills of a specific folklore performer, as well as to the process of performing a work, is the folklore expedition diary. In the practice of field research, specialists working in a specific region and amateur folklore collectors traditionally keep diaries during expeditions in order to record their observations, the biographies of performers who transmit works of folk creativity, master-apprentice

relationships, characteristics of their repertoires, explanations of certain difficult-to-understand words in the texts of performed folklore works, the meanings of various names and terms, the facial expressions of bakhshis (singers, storytellers, askiya performers, etc.) during performance, and the audience's response to the performance.

In expedition diaries, every detail and fact is accurately recorded, and valuable information concerning the living process of oral folk creativity is documented. Tura Mirzaev, the first scholar to study the notes recorded in the personal expedition diary of Hodi Zarifov during the 1929 expedition to the Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions, writes as follows:

"The young collector is extremely joyful, because he has discovered a new epic performer—a talented folk poet. This poet is Abdullah Nurali ogli. The diary vividly reflects all aspects of the bakhshi's—poet Abdullah's—performance: his behavior, movements, appearance, musical instrument, the manner of plucking the dombra, his voice and melodies, as well as the audience's reactions—from shouts and approval to denial, joy, or disappointment. While listening to the

epic Alpomish as performed by poet Abdullah, the collector carefully noted in his diary the distinctive features of this performance and its clear differences from the version of Alpomish performed by Fazil Yuldosh ogli. Such a high sense of responsibility toward his work, meticulous attention, accurate recording of every fact in its proper place, and systematic organization demonstrated by Hodi aka serve as an exemplary model and positive example for every scholar engaged in 'fieldwork' on folk oral creativity" [1:31].

Typically, the first entry in a folklore expedition diary is made immediately after meeting the performer. The diary records the performer's full name, age, education, composition of the repertoire, information about teachers and apprentices, as well as the place and time of recording. After the expedition is completed, the diary, along with other recorded and collected materials, is submitted to the Folklore Archive.

The Folklore Archive of the Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan preserves expedition diaries kept during various years by the founder of Uzbek folklore studies, the prominent scholar Hodi Zarifov, as well as by Muzayyana Alaviya, Zubaida Husainova, Mansur Afzalov, and Tura Mirzaev, who made significant contributions to the systematic collection of works of folk oral artistic creativity. These diaries contain information on expedition routes and the territorial scope of field research, data on folklore performers, distinctive features of performers' repertoires, various linguistic, topographical, and ethnographic materials, dialectal vocabulary used in performers' speech, toponymic terms and the legends and narratives associated with them, as well as records concerning bakhshi-poets belonging to particular epic schools. This demonstrates that folklore expedition diaries are sources that preserve essential factual data for folkloristic research. The diaries kept by scholars during folklore expeditions possess exceptionally high scientific value and therefore require separate study and systematic scholarly analysis.

The diary of the folklore expedition organized to Surkhandarya Province in 1973 is preserved in the Folklore Archive under inventory number 861. This diary begins with the following entry by the head of the

expedition, Tura Mirzaev:

"July 4–5, 1973. Preparations for departure have been completed. We are ready to set off" (ZFA, Inv. No. 861).

According to the diary records, the scientific expedition included staff members of the Institute's Folklore Department—Z. Husainova, O. Sobirov, B. Sarimsakov, A. Musakulov—dialectologists Q. Muhammadjonov and Sh. Nosirov, a lecturer from Termez State Pedagogical Institute (present-day Termez State University) Q. Mamashukurov, as well as Khushvaqt bakhshi Mardonakulov, who at that time was a student at this higher educational institution.

According to the entry dated July 13, 1973, the expedition arrived that day in Yangiobod village of Termez District. The population of this village had migrated from Poshkird and Vandob villages of Sherobod District; they reportedly spent winters in Angor village and moved to the fields during the summer. Folklorist scholars located a bakhshi named Gaffor Roziboev, a resident of Yangiobod. It was established that Gaffor bakhshi, born in 1931, mainly knew several epics memorized from books. His father, Roziboy Omonov (82 years old at the time of the expedition), and his grandfather, Omon yuzboshi, were also bakhshis. Omon bakhshi had performed epics in the Sherobod area. On the same day, the expedition visited Tallashgan Desert, located in the territory of the 27th brigade of Poshkird village, described as a "thousand-house Karacharbog." According to Tura Mirzaev, "the local people say that this plain is the place where the racehorses in Alpomish competed for the path" (ZFA, Inv. No. 861 – July 13).

The expedition diary of Academician Tura Mirzaev also contains rare information about the epic repertoire and exceptional improvisational talent of Yusuf O'tagan ogli, one of the folk bakhshis who made a significant contribution to the development of epic traditions in southern Uzbekistan:

"After lunch, we took Ohunjon Sobirov and Abiyr (Askar Musakulov) from the Sherobod district hotel and, together with poet Yusuf O'tagan ogli, arrived at Chigatoy village, which belongs to the Sepan rural citizens' assembly of Sherobod District," writes T. Mirzaev. "According to Yusuf qori, Sherna (that is, Shernazar Beknazar ogli, the founder of the Sherobod epic school) used to perform thirty-two branches of the

Goroghli epic cycle. Yusuf O'tagan ogli knows the following epics: Alpomish, Barchinqush (Nurali), Alimkhan, The Yellow Merchant, Goroghli's Battle with Shahdorsah, The Rider of the Spotted Horse (Avaz's Journey to Zaynab), Avaz's Journey to Suvonkulshah's Daughter Guldasta, Avaz's Journey to Erzurum, Zangivon, Oyparcha, Ahmad's Plot Against Avaz, Shahidnama, The Battle Between Nurali and Ahmad (Nurali falls in love with the daughter of Ahmad's younger brother Yusuf), The Golden Pumpkin, Avaz Kills Yusuf (when Ahmad takes Girot from Goroghli and gives it to Yusuf, Avaz intercepts and kills him), The Birth of Goroghli, Zayidqul, Bringing Avaz, Bringing Hasan, Queen Quvon (The Cunning Queen)" (ZFA, Inv. No. 861 – July 13).

In this context, the fact that the names of the epics included in Yusuf Qori O'tagan ogli's epic repertoire are presented together with notes indicating the thematic focus of certain works, and that information is provided—based on the testimony of Sherna poet—regarding the number of works belonging to the Goroghli cycle as consisting of thirty-two epics, is of great significance for epic studies. This is because the scholar, who during his folklore expeditions observed that differing views existed among folk bakhshis regarding the number of epics belonging to the Goroghli cycle, noted in the preface to his book *The Story of Sultan Goroghli* that the total number of folk epics included in this cycle amounts to seventy-five. At the same time, he expressed the following observations regarding the diversity of bakhshi-poets' interpretations of this matter:

"There are various opinions among bakhshis concerning the number of epics in the cycle. Most of them say that 'Goroghli consists of forty epics.' According to the performance of Avaz's Resentment by Bekmurod Joraboy ogli from Nurota, his teachers described Goroghli as consisting of sixty-four epics. According to Uzbek bakhshis (soqis) of southern Tajikistan, the famous nineteenth-century epic performer Qunduz Soqi used to perform Goroghli as consisting of one hundred and twenty branches (epics). Even then, when Goroghli died, Yunus Pari reportedly lamented: 'You have departed unfinished, my lord'" [2:175–176].

Thus, it is evident that each epic school holds its own distinctive views regarding the determination of the

number of epics belonging to the Goroghli cycle, depending on the degree of preservation of epic tradition and the artistic capacity of the bakhshis.

During a conversation with Yusuf O'tagan ogli, Tura Mirzaev established that in 1933 Mardonakul Avliyoqul ogli had bestowed fotiha upon Yusuf Qori, that among his disciples Sherna bakhshi had regarded his son Normurod as the most promising, and that the teacher of Sherna Beknazar ogli had been Qosimkor. Indeed, widely known among the people as "Qosim bakhshi," "Qosim yuzboshi," and "Qosimkor poet," he learned the major secrets of epic performance from his teacher—Bobo poet from Sherobod. Prominent representatives of the Sherobod epic school, such as Shernazar Berdinazar ogli, Kholmurod Qosim ogli, and Alim yuzboshi, are considered disciples of Qosim yuzboshi.

Speaking about Normurod Shernazar ogli, Yusuf Qori remarked that "Normurod performs epics in a restrained manner; he does not reach the same emotional intensity as Mardonakul." He added that Mardonakul would perform the same epic at different weddings without altering it, noting: "He would go with full preparedness." Yusuf Qori also recalled that at a wedding held in Angor, Mardonakul yuzboshi once recited:

Do'mbiramni oldim qo'lima,

Tulki-shag'al kuldi mening holima,

Choynakda choy ko'rinmaydi oldima (ZO'FA.Inv.No861. – July 13),

after which he performed his Dombiram terma for the folklorist scholars.

As is well known, the terma dedicated to the dombra is of a traditional nature, and almost all folk bakhshi-poets perform it in their own distinctive manner. For this reason, having attentively listened to the performance, Tura Mirzaev recorded in his diary, which he held on his knee:

"The traditional lines were modified and adapted to the current situation. He added that his teacher was Mardonakul, that his son Khushvaqt was not performing in the gathering, and that scholars had come from Tashkent and recorded epics for two days. Yusuf Qori performed the Yakhshiroq terma under the title Behroh"

(ZFA, Inv. No. 861 – July 13).

In 1929, the folklorist scholar Hodi Zarifov, as a member of a folklore expedition, worked in the Surkhandarya region, studied the creative legacy of Kholyor Abdukarim ogli, and recorded from him the epic *The Amir Fled* (Amir Qochdi) [3:980–985]. Tura Mirzaev recalls the following conversation with his mentor Hodi Zarifov:

“There once lived in Boysun a great epic performer named Kholyor Abdukarim ogli. In 1929, I recorded the epic *Amir Qochdi* from him. Later, this bakhshi was arrested on false accusations that he had performed epics for the Basmachi rebels. For many years, I had no information about his fate. During this expedition, while traveling through Samarkand, I coincidentally met an intellectual who had held leadership positions in Boysun during those years and had spent a long time in prison and labor camps. When he learned that we had come on an expedition to collect folk art materials, he said: ‘In 1937, I shared a prison cell in Termez with Kholyor bakhshi for forty days. When they brought him into my cell, he recognized me and began to cry, saying, “We are simple folk, but if even educated people like you are imprisoned, what kind of times are these?” We comforted one another. For forty days, he recited episodes from the *Goroghli* epics to me. After forty days, they took him away. He never returned. I believe he was executed. It would not be surprising if the epics Kholyor bakhshi recited helped me survive the prison camps and return alive, allowing me to speak with you today’” [4:236–237].

On July 25, the folklore expedition arrived in Padang village. There, Tura Mirzaev spoke with 62-year-old Chori Davlatov, a member of the Mandak clan of the Toqqiz lineage, and began to gather information about the prominent epic performer Kholyor yuzboshi, who had lived in Padang. According to accounts, when Kholyor was a young shepherd in the Tangimush Desert, he once fell asleep in a certain place. An elderly man appeared, placed a dombra in his hands, and upon awakening, Kholyor reportedly began reciting epics spontaneously. Kholyor Toqsabo Karim ogli was originally poor and joined the Basmachi movement; during that period, he served under Rahmonbek of Padang. According to Chori bobo, under pressure from his wife and a detachment leader named Eshniyoz Amin Yunusov, he surrendered and joined the Red

Army. After the suppression of the Basmachi movement, he traveled among the people as a yuzboshi. Kholyor yuzboshi was of medium height and ruddy complexion. He had one daughter, who at the time of the folklore expedition (1973) lived on the “Surkhan” collective farm. Chori bobo recalled that in 1934, the kolkhoz chairman of Denov, Ollamurod Sattorov, with Chori bobo’s assistance, brought Kholyor to Denov and had him perform epics continuously for eight days and nights.

While Kholyor yuzboshi was performing epics at the house of a man named Qurban Sari in Boyankara village of Boysun District, a man named Belousov, head of the district finance department, entered and asked the bakhshi, “How much income do you earn in one night?” Jokingly, the bakhshi replied, “I went to Qorluq and after performing epics for two nights, returned with eight donkeys loaded with raisins.” At that time, Kholyor was living in Kultoba village of Sho’rchi District. Belousov wrote all of this down, sealed it in an envelope, and said, “The head of the Sho’rchi district finance department is my friend—deliver this to him,” and sent the letter with Kholyor himself. The very next day after delivering the letter, the bakhshi was arrested. According to Chori bobo’s recollection, Kholyor toqsabo was arrested around 1935; at the time of his arrest, he was approximately 48 years old. It is said that the renowned folk bakhshi died in that prison (ZFA, Inv. No. 861 – July 24–25).

During this folklore expedition, the devoted scholar Tura Mirzaev, who made an immense contribution to the development of Uzbek epic studies, documented exceptionally rare factual materials concerning prominent epic performers of his era, including the lineages of bakhshis such as Qosim yuzboshi of Sherobod, Kholmurod Qosim ogli, Alim yuzboshi, Shernazar Beknazar ogli (Sherna poet), Normurod Sherna ogli, Mardonakul Avliyoqul ogli, Omon yuzboshi, Roziboy Omonov, and Gaffor bakhshi Roziboev; as well as Alisaid Hayim polvon ogli, Yusuf O’tagan ogli, Shodmon Qori of Jarkurgan, Chorsha yuzboshi, Eshqobil bakhshi Qoshoqov of Sho’rchi, Mumin Rahmonov, Mirzo sozanda, Farmon jogi, Ergash bakhshi, Beknazar bakhshi Rahmat ogli of Sariosiyo, Mulla Poyon yuzboshi, and Kholyor Toqsabo Karim ogli. This provides a broad and comprehensive basis for the systematic study of the epic creativity of Uzbek folk

bakhshis across all regions.

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