

SURXON VALLEY BARDS

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Abstract: This article explores the creative legacy of the bards (baxshis) from the Surxon Valley, focusing on their performance style, adherence to folklore traditions, and contributions to national culture. The distinctive features of the Sherobod bardic school, the creative activities of baxshis, and their influence on the development of oral folklore are thoroughly analyzed. The study highlights the works performed by Surxon bards, their thematic diversity, artistic techniques, and their role in preserving and transmitting folkloric traditions. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the importance of researching, preserving, and passing on the rich cultural heritage of the bards to future generations.

Keywords: Baxshi, bardic traditions, Surxon Valley, oral folklore, cultural heritage, Sherobod school, artistic techniques, national culture.

The traditions of the Sherobod bardic school have been preserved and celebrated across all districts of the Surxondaryo region, as well as in the neighboring regions of Qashqadaryo (G'uzor, Qamashi, and Dehqonobod), Turkmenistan (Chorshangi), and Tajikistan (Qabadiyon and Shahartuz). The art of baxshi in these areas remains deeply rooted in ancient customs and has been passed down through generations.

One notable figure is Egamberdi Yuzboshi, a descendant of the Kesovli clan, born in 1869 in the village of Xayriobod near Hisorsay. Though he could not play musical instruments, Egamberdi was always accompanied by talented musicians like Otamurod from Anbarsoy and Allanazar from Dalvarzin, among others. Egamberdi performed over thirty epics, including Alpomish, Go'ro'g'li, Zulayho Pari, and Malla Savdogar. Despite being illiterate, Egamberdi had a remarkable memory and would innovate his performances with new melodies and expressions each time.

Another prominent bard, Qosim Baxshi, lived in the mid-19th century in the Sherobod district. Known as "Qosim Yuzboshi" or "Qosimko'r Shoir," he was a disciple of Bobo Shoir and contributed significantly to the Sherobod school. He trained many talented bards, including Shernazar Berdinazar o'g'li and Alim Yuzboshi. Alim Baxshi, in turn, became a celebrated performer of Alpomish, Go'ro'g'li, and Ollonazar Olchinbek.

Shernazar Berdinazar o'g'li, also known as Sherna Baxshi, was born in 1855 and passed away in 1915. He was a student of Qosimqur, who, in turn, had been taught by the renowned Bobo Baxshi. Sherna was widely admired for his eloquence and played a pivotal role in training a new generation of bards.

These bards exemplify the richness of Surxon Valley's bardic traditions, which continue to serve as a vital link to the region's cultural heritage and identity.

Prominent figures such as Mardonaqul Avliyaqul o'g'li, Ahmad Yuzboshi, Saodat Jo'ra Eshmirza o'g'li, Xudoyqul Loqay, and Eson Shomurod o'g'li were among the direct disciples of Shernazar Berdinazar o'g'li. Shernazar Baxshi, a bard renowned for his unique style of epic performance, left a lasting legacy in the oral traditions of the Surxon Valley. The documentation of over 50 epics associated with his name highlights the richness and diversity of his repertoire. His performances were said to be so captivating that caravans of camels and horses passing by would halt, enchanted by his melodies.

Shernazar Baxshi's artistry is notable for preserving unique narrative elements, ancient motifs, and cultural imagery, which were once on the verge of being forgotten. This feature underscores his contribution to the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan's epic landscape, particularly in Surxondaryo, where the bardic traditions have continued to thrive in oral performance and evolve over time.

Among the prominent works, the Alpomish epic holds a special place. Variants of Alpomish in the repertoires of Surxondaryo bards, particularly those belonging to the Sherobod, Beshqo'ton, and Boysun bardic schools, are characterized by their unique narrative structure, artistic sophistication, and interconnectedness within a larger epic cycle. The contributions of Surxondaryo bards to the evolution of the Alpomish epic, particularly the Qo'ng'iro't version, are remarkable.

The Sherobod Bardic School was established by figures like Qosim Baxshi, also known as Qosim Yuzboshi, who lived in the mid-19th century in the Sherobod district. Another towering figure, Shernazar Berdinazar o'g'li, emerged from the Azon village in the Istara region. Known as Sherna Baxshi or Sherna Yuzboshi, he became a pillar of the Sherobod bardic tradition.

The Beshqo'ton Bardic School was founded by Alim Baxshi, a master performer who lived in the mid-19th to early 20th century in the village of Beshqo'ton, Sherobod. Alim Baxshi enriched the tradition with his skilled performances of Alpomish, Ollonzar Olchinbek, and the Go'ro'g'li epic cycle, establishing a distinctive repertoire and style that set the foundation for the Beshqo'ton school.

The Boysun Bardic School traces its origins to Abdurasul Yuzboshi, a renowned bard who lived between 1827 and 1902. His contributions laid the groundwork for the Boysun bardic tradition, which remains a vital part of the Surxondaryo region's cultural heritage.

The Surxon Valley bardic tradition, through its various schools and legendary figures, continues to serve as a living testament to the oral and artistic legacy of Uzbekistan.

In the 19th century, the bardic schools of Sherobod, Boysun, Beshqo'ton, Chiroqchi, and Qamay played a pivotal role in shaping the moral and intellectual consciousness of the people. Through their consistent creative works, master bards and their disciples promoted themes of patriotism, humanity, diligence, bravery, and courage, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan.

One of the most renowned Uzbek bards, Sherna Berdinazar o'g'li, was born in 1866 in the village of Ozan, Sherobod district, into a wealthy family. Remarkably, Sherna was recognized as a talented bard at the tender age of seven. According to his father, Berdinazarboy, Sherna experienced a mystical encounter in his dream where the legendary figure Khizr Bobo asked him, "Shall I bless your tongue or your forehead?" Frightened, the young Sherna replied, "Bless my tongue." The figure then told him to close his eyes and open his mouth, after which he disappeared. Upon waking, Sherna found himself spontaneously singing while using a stick as a dutar (traditional Uzbek string instrument).

Sherna disappeared for three days, wandering through villages and captivating people with his songs. A merchant from Denov later informed Sherna's family about a young boy reciting poems in the market, attracting crowds who were moved to tears. Upon finding him, Berdinazarboy brought Sherna back home. From that day on, Sherna's bardic journey continued with extraordinary talent and vision. During a wedding, Sherna performed an improvised verse: "There will be paths in the sky, paper will be used as money, Water will flow from the East, Sherobod's desert will flourish, Yet sorrow will come as many brides will remain widows, And mutton will be wrapped in paper."

These lines left the audience astonished. Sherna Baxshi was recognized as a skilled improviser with sharp wit and an unmatched ability to adapt his art to the mood and taste of his audience. One of Sherna's disciples, Rajab Baxshi Normurod o'g'li, recalled in 1968: "No one could rival Sherna. He would recite at night and sing during the day. He possessed knowledge of all the epics and their history."

Sherna Baxshi established a significant bardic school that nurtured numerous talented disciples. Among his notable students was Alim Yuzboshi, who mastered the performance of epic cycles such as Go'ro'g'li and Alpomish. In addition to these, Alim Yuzboshi composed and performed new epics and lyrical songs. Despite being slightly older than Sherna, Alim regarded him as his mentor, embodying the spirit of collaboration and learning in the bardic tradition. Both Sherna Baxshi and Alim Yuzboshi contributed significantly to the cultural landscape of Surxon Valley by training future generations of bards, ensuring the continuity and vitality of Uzbekistan's rich oral heritage.

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