

# Lyric Poetry and the Motives in the Works of Poets of Syr Darya River Vicinity

Nuraddin Sadykov, Saule Erzhanova, Akmaral Dalelbekkyzy, and Mukhit Tolegenov

**Abstract**—This article provides a comparative analysis of poetries of diverse nations around the world while largely focusing on Kazakh lyric poetry (Kazakh zhyraulyq oneri). Alongside, it sheds the light to the historical development and contemporary progress path of foremost poetry school located along the Syr Darya coast. Hereby, it's content and central motives are examined.

**Keywords**—Lyric poetry (zhyraulyq oneri), poet-musician (zhyrshy), Sufi tradition (sopylyq dastur), hermeneutics (germenevtika).

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE field of poetry has its unique role in the art of world nations. Notably, the actual value of that prudent tradition can be revealed through the process of mental refining and thoroughly reading them. As a matter of fact, their motives are in the line with the major works of the resembling nature. By and large, the poetries of the religious grounds prevails them. The art of lyricists with the early educations in the madrasas and religious higher institutions define the character of their compositions which conform with the ideas of sinless life and religious purity. It is striking that regardless of location whether it is west or east, either South or Central Kazakhstan; the ideas of the poets harmonize with and complete each other. Given the absence of current scientific capacity and achievements, the conformity of their knowledge about the globe or religion and faith puts forward the notion that they may have distinct undercover and should be investigated beyond the well-known subject disciplines.

## II. SIMILARITIES IN THE WORKS OF POETS ACROSS DIFFERENT NATIONS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

It is worth to bring poets, bards and story tellers into the headlines whenever we are making a talk concerning the bard tradition. Bards-poets or artists in the resembling profession exist in all nations. Despite their contrasting names, they have unity and affinity in their functions. For instance, Kazakhs call them - **zhyrshy-zhyraular**, Germans – **minnesingers** and

**meistersingers**, Russians – **skazitels**, ancient Russian poets-musicians – **bahars, guslyars, griots** - in Western Africa nations, **bahshy's** – among Turkmens, **meddahs** of Arabs, Turkish - **ashugs, ozans** and **gusans** of Armenians.

The lifestyle of the above-named story tellers bears resemblance to a nomadic manner of living. They do not settle to particular locale, but globe-trotting demonstrated their talent over the numerous folks. To a degree, **griots** of western Africa had kindred wandering style of living, whose name according to some researches, originates from Portuguese “criado” (“slave, servant”), transliterated version of French *guiriot* [1].

In the earlier period, they were not allowed to possess a private property; they used to consistently move from one settlement to another by entertaining folks with their poems and stories. The griots accompanied their poems-narratives and stories with the musical instruments. Notwithstanding their low positions in a society, they enjoyed certain privileges (having the right to move to any place, they were provided with the food and shelter by ordinary people) and utmost prominence. Moreover, as the life of settlement was the very picture of isolation, griots played the role of the messengers of the outside world. Correspondingly, the Russian poets as bahars and guslyars used to vindicate vagabonding life and demonstrated improvisational compositions. Their repertoire consisted of not only complex epic works, but of humorous poems, songs and chastushki's.

Obviously, given the fact that a foreknown artist played the role of **entertainers**, their primary audience was the common people. The relation between the story teller and general folk is defined by the sender-receiver model and the rich folklore works has been accumulated and preserved thanks to that. The requirements, aspirations and demands of the public forced them to seek the ways of constant proficiency and self-development in their art. The compositions were of diverse themes, mainly covering the heroic epics, religious stories and legends. In fact, the love poems had central place among the traveling poets of Europe. For instance, the Minnesingers (minne - “love”), the German lyric poets of the medieval ages, expressed their love feelings and struggles on that route through the poetry and storytelling. From the middle of XII century, their repertoire had been enriched by cultivation of heroism, prowess and spiritual values. The works of religious background had taken special role. In combination, they were of use in building the aesthetic preferences of the folk. Afterwards, the poems-bards of minnesingers transformed into and gave way to the tradition of Meistersingers. They emerged in the beginning of XIV century and composed the

N. Sadykov, PhD Candidate of the Kazakh literature and literary theory Department of the al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan (e-mail: nuraddin\_q@yahoo.com).

S. Erzhanova, Dr. Professor of the Kazakh Literature Department of the Kazakh State Teacher Training University, Almaty, Kazakhstan (e-mail: aldaspan@mail.ru).

A. Dalelbekkyzy, PhD Candidate of the Kazakh literature and literary theory Department of the al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan (e-mail: dalakma@mail.ru).

M. Tolegenov, MBA of the Department of Religious Studies and Theology Department of the H.A. Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkistan, Kazakhstan (e-mail: mukhit86@mail.ru).

poems in accordant with the Biblical stories. Their opus about Trinity, Original sin and serving to Saint Mary had been widely spread and were often narrated in the Easter, Trinity and Christmas holidays. Among the renowned Meistersingers there are “master of voice of heaven Joseph Schmierer”, “master of silver voice Hans Sachs and “Ambrosius Metzger” [2].

The poems of religious nature are prevalent not only in western countries but also among east nations with Islamic traditions. Producing the lyrical poems around religious motives was common amidst poets of Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, etc. Its geography is determined by the territories heavily outspread by Islam. The Islam disseminated across Kazakhstan through the Sufi traditions. The committed Arab meddahs and Sufi-dervishes while traveling on Turkic-Kazakh steppes transmitted the values of Islam to the general folks. They were adept spreaders of narratives and lyric poems as well. They played distinct role in propagating the pillars of Islam which was overlapped with the poetry through composing religious verses.

Indeed, the words of V.V. Radlov are extremely convincing: “To me, it seems that in the way of expanding Islam, the resultance of composition of “Zhumzhuma” is more impressive and emphatic than the work of hundreds of imams travelling and spreading the religion across the steppes” [3, pg. 12] The words recited in the Dhikr (“Remembrance [of God]”) came to usage in children’s lullabies in the form of poem verses. The well-known child lullaby in Kazakh tradition starting with the verses “aldi-aldi” («әлди-әлди») originates from the “Allah-ai, Allah-ai” belonging to Dhikr parts. In accordance with the old Kazakh transliteration rules, the double consonants in the same word is not pronounced at one go. The Kazakh say “Alda” instead of Arabic word “Allah” and announce “molda” as a substitute to “molla”. Thus, the word combination of “Alda-ai, Alda-ai” through softening process transformed into “aldi-aldi”. While being considered as the exclamation which had lost its meaning, the word “alaqay” (“алақай”) has in-depth meaning. In fact, it comes from Arabic “Allah hay” – “Allah is eternal” which is Dhikr word as well. The poems of Rumi and Yunus Emre have exercised immense influence on the poesy of ashugs and ozans. The central accomplishment of the religious lyric poetry is its incorporation and aggregation of Quran verses and Prophet Sayings (hadith) into poem strokes.

Side by side with antecedent congruence, the poet-musicians of all nations get hold of musical instruments. Kazakh bards owned dombyra and kobyz, Russian poets – guslyars played on gusls, griots on kora and lutnya, bahshy’s on dutar, meddahs used rebab while ashugs and ozans preferred to hold instrument named – saz. Predominantly, the instruments were made from wood and poets-musicians used to ubiquitously carry them all around. Indisputably, accompanying any poem with the musical support will open a direct way to people’s heart because when a word and music are brought together - they become almighty. In addition, the special attention was paid to a sound and appearance of the

musical equipment. There are other similarities apart from those enlisted earlier. But we will limit ourselves with the three major and crucial resemblances.

In summary of this part, the poets-bards and story tellers have particular role in history of art of each nation. Firstly, they had a vagabonding and wandering lifestyle; secondly, their poems were of mainly lyrical and religious themes; thirdly, with the support of certain instruments they played improvisational works.

### III. THE FORMATION OF “ZHYRAU” PERCEPTION AMONG KAZAKHS

The opuses of Kazakh poet-musicians played a significant role in delivering the art of ancient bards to a new generation of Turkic nations.

Zhyrau (poet-musician) – the holder of super sanity, intelligence and a sage philosopher who is able to explain and analyze events according to certain principles; a guru consultant who directs and solves the routine life problems of common people; an ideologist cultivating humanity ideals; speaker, rhetorician and psychologist who gets to know with the characters and morals of people and spots, filters and portends accordingly; a narrator who depicts the life episodes and put it into words; a logician with high-rationale and reasoning; vigorous, explicit historian, chronicler [4, pg. 199].

In their works M. Auezov, E. Ismailov, B. Kenzhebayev, H. Suyunshaliyev, E. Tursynov, M. Magayin and J. Tilepov mention about the poets-musicians, bards and story tellers.

1. There are males and females among the representatives of poets. Even it is impossible to imagine the *aitys* of a girl and boy without a girl. As poets-musicians comprised of only male strata and that is a clear evidence of emergence of poet-musicians in the times of strict patriarchy [5].
2. The poet is a representative of a tribe. In due course of *aitys*, he speaks on behalf of his tribe. At the same time, a poet-musician exemplifies an entire nation or confederation of tribes. While the poet’s undertaking happens within the border of a village, the *zhyrau performs* in Khane’s palace by advising, consulting officials and entire public. This testifies the notion that the poets-musicians appeared in the period of mass unification of individually existing tribes under the central confederation. If in case the class of poets emerged in the later times and carried on the tradition of poets-musicians, they could be granted the authority of speaking on behalf of the whole country.
3. The precision of this hypothesis could be assured through the following facts: The poet is an attender and supervisor of the superstition activities. In fact, these activities are among the most ancient ones. For instance, the central superstition activities related to a marriage are done by the poets. Whereas poets-musicians are the protagonists in the event when somebody dies and he carries out necessary sorrow poems. Given the fact that veneration of ancestors appeared in the era of military democracy and the existence of abundant sincret features of poets in

comparison with poets-musicians, we arrive at conclusion that the class of poets are older than of poets-musicians.

4. The next evince proving the belonging of poets to the age-old times: in the perceptions related to the art of poets, there are present the concepts of totemism. At the same time, it is well-known that the totemism examples are among the most ancient types of beliefs. For instance, stating Zhambil, each poet has the protector in the face of animal. These sorts of protectors are seen only to the given poet. It is striking that totemic concepts are never attributed to the poets-musicians.
5. The fact that the primary genre of poets was aitys puts forward the clear evidence that the roots of class of poets extends to the older periods. However, poets-musicians have never participated in aitys [7, pg. 35].

But according to the explanation of Budagov, the word *zhyrau* originates from Indian word for treasure stone [8, pg. 12].

There exists a tie-up amidst the wordings *zhyrau* (poet-musician) and *zhylau* (to cry). Whenever somebody passes away, it is said that *zhyrau* is expressed as a feeling of sorrow and grief on his/her address. Moreover, the poets-musicians were less involved into the routine problems and in the main, dealt with issues of epoch, past and future, humanity, goodness and badness and used to state brainy words. These sorts of expressions did not contain lyrics which awake emotions but were of proverb and verse nature.

V. Zhyrmunski and H. Zarifov advocated the hypothesis that poets-musicians are the primeval class of poets as well [9, pg. 27]. The Kazakh and Karakalpak folklorists who researched on that theme afterwards are also supportive of that notion. "The word *zhyrau* means someone telling a *zhyr* (poem)...The institute of poets-musicians is as old as its actual name" - states professor N. Smirnova [9, pg. 40]. Professor E. Ismailov relying on convictions of N. Ilminski and on similarities of words "zhyru", "zhyruche" in Tatar language to the Kazakh "zhyr", links wordings "zhyr", "zhyr narrator", "telling zhyr" to the noun "zhyrau" and deduces its meaning as "narrator of historical poems, foreteller" [6, pg. 39-40]. At the same time, E. Tursynov describes the period of emergence of *zhyrau* class in the following manner: "That justifies the fact of appearance of poets-musicians in the times of military democracy. As known, the poems of heroes narrate about brave, fearless heroes and leaders. Every folklorist is aware that that sort of poems had been composed in the honors of afore-stated heroes. As the early hero poems dedicated to glorifying ancestor souls and were performed in magical purpose, to our mind, those poems always had happy end. Thus, the emergence of poets-musicians was coincides with the period of the ancestor veneration [7, pg. 175].

*Zhyrau* (poet-musician) - is less known and less examined concept in the social science. In fact, the poets-musicians are indication and symbol of zenith of ethnic-cultural advancement of newly appeared Kazakh Khanate. He is a creator of improvisational poems and teller of heroic epics and representative of folk poesy. Mahmud al-Kashgari explains the word *zhyrau* as "yarigu", composer and musician. The

poet-musicians played a significant role in the poesy of medieval ages. Their works consisted of philosophical perceptions with didactical descriptions. The bards-musicians convey about their life conclusions, morality, ethics and raises social problems. In a war time, they participated in battles and being a hero or a leader composed poems on civil and defense themes. The methods they used are in accordant with inner content of their poesy and the virtues of foretelling, dream interpretation, elucidation of events and capability of making predictions relying on natural phenomenon - are inherent to them. The opus of poet-musician is influential, sharp as a tack, concise, eloquent and extremely inspiring. Asan-Kaygy and Kaztugan are among the earliest representatives of poet-musicians of Kazakh literature. To the ideas of homeland defense and fight against foreign intervention there are given enormous attention in the works of poets-musicians of XVII-XVIII centuries like Zhiyembet, Margaska, Aktamberdi and Umbetey. Bukhar *zhyrau*, the representative of XVIII century bards-musicians, lead the Kazakh poetry to new a level by enhancing and broadening the theme.

#### IV. THE TRENDS IN THE COMPOSITIONS OF POET-MUSICIANS OF SYR DARYA RIVER VICINITY

Through the method of hermeneutics, it is very important to examine the works of poets and *zhyrau's*, *sulei's* and *shaiyr's* from Syr Darya region where Islam spread and flourished. Since hermeneutics enables us to decode the secrets and undisclosed ideas of poets.

The bard and Poetry School of Syr Darya River surroundings, based on spiritual inspections, has been formed and existed from the earlier times. Remarkably, its zenith overlaps to XIX-XX centuries. The representatives of those schools are known as *sulei's* among the folk. The notion of "Sulei's of Syr Darya region" was popular, which comprised the group of poets like Nurtugan *zhyrau*, Ayagan kozha, Budabay, Azilkesh, Yeshniyaz, Ongar, Balki Bazar, Karsakal Yerimbet, Kete Zhusip, Kanli Zhusip, Shorayaktin Omari and Turmagambet. The central distinct feature of *sulei's* was their education according to Quran rules from the childhood. They mastered the eastern literature which was established and developed by Sufi's. Thence, whenever we consider Eastern literature primarily, we face with the Sufi Poetry. It is no coincidence that the ideas of *sulei's*, skillful in that literature, resemble the mindset, conceptions and artistic methods of Sufi's.

The concept of hermeneutics is related to the notion of general mystic and unknown things. The abundance of mysticism in the word of Kazakhs distinguishes it from other nations. "The mystic of heart - the part of spirit of human being directed to its creator. It always preserves the light of Allah within. Like a heart, it is a tool which always enables the person to differentiate the halal (permissible) and haram (sinful); truth and lie".

Regardless of whether it is an oral literature or other sort of cultural inheritance, hereby we can notice an exuberance of mysticism. From one side, this is the clear evidence of broad thinking capacity of Kazakhs, from the other hand; they are

the real pictures of epochs while away. The unique features of hermeneutics in spiritual and literature values of Kazakhs have become the utmost target of recent research studies.

The hermeneutics in Kazakh oral literature is spotted in poems as “Alpamys batyr” and “Kobylandy batyr”. In general, the poem of “Alpamys batyr” is a new version of composition named “Bamsy bayrak” attributed to Korkyt baba. The significance of the poem from the viewpoint of hermeneutics is in its revival after the according emergence of necessity. Depending on demand to folk cultural achievements, the heroic epics experienced the huge revival periods. If we investigate and examine the reasons behind them, the purpose of this research could become clearer.

With the spread of Islam the nomadic tribes who had priority worshipped Tengri, experienced a real spiritual renaissance. The brand-new civilization and know-how brought along with the religion were resulted in the establishment of sound mind and broad view of the nations habituating Turkic steppes. There have been appeared ample artworks with hidden, mystical meanings. All of them had been the fruits of adore to purity of Creator and eternal love to God.

Speaking with certain mysticism and clarifying their poems with hidden notions was the principal characters of Eastern poets (shayir's) and in the later times, the whole world followed those artworks. In the medieval ages and after it, there have been formed the group “seven poets”. The testimonial and confession of Goethe, the greatest European poet who left the masterpiece as “Faust”, stated “there are seven poets in the east, however, I can't stay with them in the same podium” which is an appraisal of the deepness of their artwork.

The presence of similar peculiarities in Syr Darya poets (sulei's) is revealed through the close examination of their opuses. Receiving the education in the renowned madrasa's of Bukhara and Urgench, the sulei's of Syr Darya river vicinity attempted to fulfil their oath and purpose of their life, already defined in their school years. That sacred goal was explaining the order of God to common people in simple way, directing public to the route of belief and keeping them on the true path of ancestors by clarifying delusions. In that big way, they needed to be armed with inspiring, sharp words of poems which could find a direct route to the heart of people. Ibray akun Kulbayuly, the follower of Sufism who inhabited the region of Mangystau, through the following wordings explain the central purpose of poetry:

The art of poetry demonstration

This is also the type of supplication [4, pg. 117]

Indeed, these huge poetic inheritance teaches us about the greatest value of art of poetry and reminds that its harvest, fruits could be sewn only when it is done so for the sake of God and performed days and nights with the extreme devotion. It is also applied to the sage poets as Bazar zhyrau Ondasuly, Shegebay Bektasuly, Yerimbet Koldeybekuly, Seyitzhan ahun Bekshentayuly, Shorayaktin Omari and Nurtugan Kenzhegululy.

The opus of Bazar zhyrau Ondasuly regarding the humanity and faith were popular not only in the area of Syr Darya but in

the surroundings of Yedil, Zhayik, Ustirt and Karakalpak territory as well. The attempt to unleash the truth alone and candid ambition of directing the heart of human beings to their Creator determined the very success and utmost popularity of those lyric poems among the wide public. Bazar zhyrau, putting forward the concepts of “saint”, “gayip yeren, kirik shilten” (a group of saints) and “sahar”, referring on Quran and hadith staples, being the continuation of Khodja Akhmet Yassawi, lists the virtues of ideal human being [10, pg. 99]. For instance, the following couple verses precisely describe the standing of saints beloved of God and doing service on its name:

There have been passed those

Who rolling up their sleeves

Called for the dispassionate belief

Bursting into tears for the sake of Creator

*Gayip yeren, kirik shilten* saints,

Everybody cleaving to them

While mourning in entirety

*Auliye* (saint) – is a plural form of wording “*uali*” i.e. “friend” which occur in Quran as “*Auliyah Allahi*” – “friends of Allah”.

In the works of Budabay Kabiluly and Shegebay Bektasuly, the fellow poets of Bazar zhyrau, there are given abundant descriptions of genuine examples of mysticism in Islam. Budabay Kabiluly was not only poet, but renowned *sheshen* (orator) and *bi* (sort of judge) as well. Shegebay Bektasuly, in accordant with the accepted rule of that times, transformed the “*Qasas ul Anbiya*” (Prophet Stories) into the poem verses in Kazakh language, covering the history of Prophets starting from Adam. By the *accepted rule*, we mean the tradition of popularizing the “*Qasas ul Anbiya*” which was present not only around Syr Darya area, but in other regions as well. For example, the distinguished celebrities as Kashagan Kurzhimanuly, Sattigul Zhangabyluly and Tuyte Ahun Otesbayuly who inhabited west Kazakhstan and Mangystau area in XIX-XX centuries, created their compositions based on the “*Qasas ul Anbiya*”.

We have already mentioned that all of the poets, shayir's and sulei's who are known from the history, have spent their life staying in the way of God, fulfilling the order of the Creator and spreading the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad among the common people. Evidently, Yerimbet Koldeybekuly is among them, whose opus and compositions have been preserved due to oral literature and were put into writing in the later period. Primarily, we can relate his poetry route and the reason of staying firmly in the mind of public, to the influence of the group of Syr Darya poets and secondly, to his early passion in acquiring the spiritual knowledge.

Mazhit Aytbayev, Kosheney Rustembekov, Bidas Rustembekov and Mansur Bekezhanov are the XX century representatives of Syr Darya river vicinity poetry tradition. Amidst them, Mazhit Aytbayev has a distinct place. The well-known Turmagambet Iztileuly and earlier poets, shayir's as Budabay akin and Kalzhan ahun have greatly influenced to the young mind of Mazhit Aytbayev. Eventually, he was attached to his pen from the childhood. Despite being captured during

the Second World War, he did keep his writings in Germany and have prepared large epic poem named "Abylay".

The theme of freedom dreamed by Kazakhs more than half century was the basis and subject for the epic "Abylay". The poem has been produced in the years of sovereignty and is free of fear and scariness. The feeling of independence and liberty in that opus touches the soul and immediately absorbs in it.

Mazhit Aytbayev is a significant name in our literature. He hasn't seen the joy of these years of sovereignty, but fought with the courage in the way of gaining freedom of this country. He had a dream of returning to his homeland but never could realize it.

The vision and desire of freedom was the theme which is present in the artworks of zhyrau's, in the poems of Makhambet and even in the compositions of the Soviet period. Despite being cut due to Red army invasion and being thrown to overseas, their compositions were full of ideas of aspiration of the independence of the country from both Germans and Russians, and they struggled to build a country of Turkistan. Due to that common goal, they kept their collaboration and unity regardless of staying in foreign country.

#### V.CONCLUSION

In the process of consideration of Kazakh lyric poetry and Syr Darya area art poetry in particular, we comprehend how much the national treasures still necessitate the urgent revival. The day of large-scale researches of artworks, their intensive implementations in the science and their popularization among the public has come. In that sense, it is the sacred duty of our generation to explore the huge inheritance and artistry of poets-musicians and their life.

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