

Article

The Masters of the Khorezm Bakhshi Tradition

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Abstract: This scholarly article examines the Khorezm school of epic storytelling and the distinctive features of the Khorezm *bakhshi* (epic bard) tradition that differentiate it from the epic storytelling traditions of other regions of Uzbekistan. It explores the artistic careers of two prominent masters of the Khorezm *bakhshi* tradition Qurbonnazar Abdullayev (Bola Bakhshi) and Ro'zimboy Normatov (Qalandar Bakhshi) highlighting their contributions to the development of epic performance. The article also discusses the achievements and enduring legacy of the Khorezm *bakhshi* dynasties in preserving and enriching the national epic heritage. Furthermore, it outlines the increasing attention and support that the Government of Uzbekistan has devoted to safeguarding and promoting the art of *bakhshi* performance in recent years.

Keywords: Ancient Khorezm, culture, art, epic poetry, the art of bakhshi performance, "Qubbai Hofiza," musician, dutar, mulberry tree, "Nihol" Award.

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1. Introduction

The Khorezm school of *bakhshi* performance is one of the oldest forms of Uzbek oral folk literature and traditional musical art. Khorezm *bakhshis* traditionally perform epic narratives (*dostons*) and folk songs accompanied by national musical instruments such as the *dutar*, *ghijjak*, *nay*, and *doira* [1].

One of the distinctive features of the Khorezm *bakhshi* tradition is the master-apprentice (*ustoz–shogird*) system, through which the art has been faithfully transmitted from one generation to the next [2].

As an integral part of the nation's cultural heritage, the art of *bakhshi* performance has long been cherished for its role in promoting themes of love, heroism, patriotism, and moral values. In recognition of its outstanding cultural significance, the Art of Bakhshi Performance was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2021 [3].

The growing recognition of *bakhshi* performance as an invaluable element of the national cultural heritage is clearly demonstrated by the regular organization of the International Bakhshi Art Festival, which has become an important platform for preserving and promoting this unique artistic tradition [4].

Despite the growing scholarly and institutional attention devoted to the preservation of bakhshi art, the distinctive features of the Khorezm school and the individual contributions of its prominent representatives require further systematic examination [5]. In particular, the creative continuity between generations of performers,

the role of the master–apprentice tradition, the development of individual performance styles, and the contribution of prominent bakhshis to the preservation of epic heritage are important for understanding the historical development of the Khorezm tradition [6]. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the distinctive artistic characteristics of the Khorezm bakhshi tradition through the creative activities of its prominent masters, particularly Qurbonnazar Abdullayev (Bola Bakhshi) and Qalandar Bakhshi Normatov, and to assess their contribution to the preservation and transmission of the region’s epic storytelling heritage [7].

2. Metrials and Methods

The study employed a multi-method research design combining theoretical analysis, empirical observation, and quantitative measurement to ensure the reliability and validity of findings.

This study employs a qualitative historical and biographical research approach to examine the development of the Khorezm bakhshi tradition and the artistic contributions of its prominent representatives. The research is based on the analysis and interpretation of published historical, biographical, journalistic, and documentary materials concerning the Khorezm school of epic storytelling, with particular attention to the creative activities of Qurbonnazar Abdullayev (Bola Bakhshi) and Qalandar Bakhshi Normatov.

The principal methods used in the study include historical analysis, biographical analysis, comparative interpretation, and qualitative content analysis. Historical analysis was applied to reconstruct important stages in the development and transmission of the Khorezm bakhshi tradition. The biographical method was used to examine the professional development, repertoire, performance practices, artistic achievements, and master–apprentice relationships associated with the selected bakhshis. Comparative interpretation was employed to identify continuity and distinctive features in the artistic practices of different generations of Khorezm epic performers.

The source base includes published materials from the periodical press, documentary sources, biographical accounts, and materials devoted to the history and performance of Khorezm epic storytelling. Particular attention was given to materials published in *Guliston* magazine and *Xorazm Haqiqati* newspaper, as well as the documentary film *Qalandar Bakhshi* and other sources listed in the reference section. These materials were analyzed thematically to identify evidence concerning artistic continuity, repertoire, performance style, cultural transmission, and the role of individual masters in preserving the Khorezm bakhshi tradition.

3. Results

3.1 Cultural and Historical Context of the Khorezm Bakhshi Tradition

This appreciation is also reflected in the speech delivered by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at the opening ceremony of the Fourth International Bakhshi Art Festival, held in the ancient city of Khiva, where he emphasized the historical and cultural significance of this remarkable art form.

“Dear friends! It is especially meaningful that this prestigious international festival, whose global recognition continues to grow, is being held this year in the unique land of Khorezm the ancient jewel of the East [8]. This lends the event a distinctive spirit and profound significance. The epic storytelling tradition of this region possesses an exceptionally rich and ancient history. It is no exaggeration to say that world-renowned classical musical and dance traditions, including the celebrated ‘*Lazgi*’, have drawn their inspiration from this remarkable cultural heritage [9].

This blessed land has produced many outstanding People's *Bakhshis* of Uzbekistan, including ‘Bola Bakhshi’ Qurbonnazar Abdullayev, ‘Qalandar Bakhshi’ Ro‘zimboy Normatov, Abdulla Qurbonnazarov, and Yetmishboy Abdullayev, whose exceptional

artistry has made a significant contribution to the development of the art of *bakhshi* performance [10].

Taking this opportunity, I would like to wish every success to the participants of the competition, as well as to the International Scientific and Practical Conference held within the framework of the festival.

May you always be blessed with good health, strength, and inspiration as you continue to celebrate and promote the noblest and most heartfelt values of our people [11].”

Shavkat Mirziyoyev President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Khorezm is an ancient yet ever-flourishing oasis, where history and modernity coexist in remarkable harmony. The roads leading to this land pass through vast deserts and rivers, ancient architectural monuments, rolling sand dunes, lush gardens, and contemporary urban landscapes. These routes bear the footprints of some of the greatest figures in the history of Central Asian civilization, including Al-Khwarizmi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ogahiy, Avaz O'tar, Makhtumkuli, Bola Bakhshi, Khudoybergan Devonov, Egam Rahim, and Komiljon Otaniyozov [12].

Khorezm has long been renowned for its rich cultural heritage and distinguished artistic traditions. Throughout history, poets, writers, and scholars of the arts have produced numerous remarkable works celebrating the glory and uniqueness of Khorezm's cultural legacy [13].

In this regard, the poet Abdunabi Hamro expressed his admiration for Khorezm in the following verses: O heart, have all your sorrows found their cure? Hear the timeless song that fills the endless blue. To see fair Khorezm only once, be sure, Makes this passing life worth living through [14].

We, his fellow artists, fondly referred to our mentor Alqar Damin as “the Lover of Khorezm.” Whenever we spoke with him, he would often say:

“I envy the people of Khorezm. You were born in such a great land; you live in a world filled with melody and art.”

These heartfelt words reflected his deep admiration for the cultural richness of Khorezm. In this regard, I would like to present several excerpts from the poem our esteemed mentor dedicated to the art of Khorezm [15].

Khorezm the land where Komiljon first opened his eyes; Within every grain of your soil, a song resides. You are the enchanting melody of Ortiq Kenja, A garden where every blossom blooms in song.

What would this world be without Khorezm? How could it endure without Ogahiy and Feruz? Khorezm a flower nourished by the waters of the Amu, Khorezm a nightingale forever singing its own name. At the mere mention of Khorezm, Every lover's heart begins to resonate with joy. What would this world be without Khorezm? How could it exist without Komil Khorezmi? The gardens of Khorezm whisper in gentle breezes, Stretching ever higher toward the endless sky. Here grow the sweetest melons that delight every tongue, Here stand mountains of wisdom mountains of great scholars.

What would this world be without Khorezm? Because Khorezm exists, cherish it above all else, O world.

Indeed, as the poet so eloquently describes, the art of Khorezm is distinguished from that of other regions by its unique character, captivating charm, and vibrant expressiveness.

Khorezm is a land with a history spanning several millennia. The oasis possesses an exceptionally rich tradition of oral folk literature, which continues to captivate admirers of traditional arts. One of the finest examples of this rich heritage is the Khorezm school of *bakhshi* performance, which remains a source of great pride for the region (Author).

3.2 Qurbonnazar Abdullayev (Bola Bakhshi): Artistic Formation and Legacy

Among the most prominent representatives of the Khorezm epic storytelling (*dostonchilik*) and *bakhshi* tradition is Qurbonnazar Abdullayev.

Qurbonnazar Abdullayev was born in 1899 in the village of Gullanbog' (Sayot) near Khiva. At the age of ten, he first took up the *dutar*. Fascinated by the epic poems and folk songs performed by master *bakhshis*, he eagerly committed them to memory. He even fashioned a simple *dutar* from a reed stalk, fitted it with strings and frets, and practiced singing together with his friend Khojikhon Boltayev.

Recognizing his son's exceptional talent, his father, Abdulla, entrusted his musical education to the renowned master storyteller Jumanazar Bakhshi. By the age of thirteen, Qurbonnazar had already gained recognition among the local people. At first, he performed epics such as "Avazkhan," "Bozirgon," and "Khirmondali," closely following the style of his teacher.

As his artistic mastery matured, however, he developed his own distinctive interpretations of these epics. Reflecting on the creative nature of epic performance, he once remarked:

"If a storyteller does not compose more than half of an epic himself, he cannot truly be called a storyteller."

Over time, his repertoire expanded considerably. He performed beloved epics such as "G'arib Oshiq and Shohsanam," "Oshiq Mahmud," "Oysulton," and "Go'ro'g'li," as well as the poems of Makhtumkuli, the great classical poet of Turkmen literature, with remarkable skill and heartfelt expression.

As a result of his extraordinary artistry, Qurbonnazar became widely known by the honorary title "Bola Bakhshi" (Young Bakhshi). His fame spread throughout the Khorezm oasis and neighboring Turkmen communities, where audiences listened to his performances with deep admiration and affection.

As the years passed, Bola Bakhshi became increasingly aware that he needed to deepen his knowledge and broaden his education. At the beginning of 1931, he enrolled in the Teacher Training Course in Khiva. Even there, his passion for the arts remained unwavering. He established an amateur artistic society at the institution and personally directed its activities. After completing the course, he joined the newly established Khiva City Theatre, where he continued his artistic career.

In 1933, Bola Bakhshi traveled to Tashkent together with Safo Mug'anniy, Sheroziy, and Qurbon Sozchi. During his stay, he became acquainted with the People's Singer of Uzbekistan, Mulla To'ychi Toshmuhammedov, and had the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with renowned artists such as Muhiddin Qoriyoqubov, Tamarakhonim, Lutfixonim, and Karim Zakirov. He also participated in gatherings of prominent Uzbek writers and literary figures.

In 1938, Bola Bakhshi won first place at the Olympiad of Folk Artists of Uzbekistan, held in Tashkent. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the preservation and performance of epic traditions, he was awarded the honorary title of People's Epic Storyteller of Uzbekistan. Around the same period, excerpts from the Khorezm epics he performed were recorded on gramophone records, helping to preserve and disseminate his artistry to a wider audience.

In 1941, when the Second World War reached the Soviet Union, the distinguished *bakhshi*, like thousands of other young men, departed for the front. On the day of his departure, fifty horse-drawn carts stood lined up in front of the Nurlavoy Palace. As the cart carrying Bola Bakhshi prepared to leave, a group of village elders gathered around him to bid him farewell, reflecting the deep respect and affection the community held for their beloved artist.

"May you return safely, Bakhshi," the elders said as they bade him farewell.

“Defeat the enemy with your rifle—and with your songs.”

The people of Khorezm have always held the art of *bakhshi* performance in the highest esteem. This admiration extends far beyond the region itself, as evidenced by letters sent from across Uzbekistan to the magazine Guliston.

One such letter from young readers in Dehqonobod states:

“We especially enjoy the epics performed by young bakhshis and are always delighted to discover new talents through your magazine.”

Another reader writes:

“The epics and songs performed by Qalandar Normatov deeply inspire us. The clarity and expressiveness with which he delivers every word bring us immense pleasure.”

3.3 Qalandar Bakhshi Normatov: Continuity of the Master Apprentice Tradition

Qalandar Bakhshi Normatov devoted himself from an early age to mastering the rich traditions of the Khorezm school of epic storytelling. Having acquired this invaluable knowledge through years of dedication, he now passes it on to younger generations, continuing the time-honored master-apprentice tradition.

His repertoire includes dozens of traditional epics, among them “Oshiq Mahmud,” “The Liberation of Avaz,” “Go‘ro‘g‘li and Bozirgon,” “Khirmondali,” and “Guloyim and Erxasan.” In addition to performing classical works, he has also composed original epics and narrative poems on contemporary themes.

While still a schoolboy, Qalandar Normatov would often take up his *dutar* and sing for his classmates. His performances were warmly appreciated by both his peers and himself. Whenever listeners asked him to sing another song, the future *bakhshi* would gladly oblige, performing with great enthusiasm. These early experiences strengthened his determination to pursue a career as a traditional folk artist.

He initially practiced independently at home, mastering various musical instruments. Later, he became a disciple of the celebrated Khorezm singer Komiljon Otaniyozov, affectionately known as the “Nightingale of the Oasis,” from whom he learned the refined art of traditional singing. He subsequently became an active member of the renowned “Feruz” Song and Dance Ensemble, further developing his artistic skills and performance experience.

The “Young Bakhshis” competition, organized by the “Yoshlik” editorial department of Khorezm Television, brought great success and recognition to Qalandar Bakhshi.

His performance of the epic “Oshiq Mahmud” resonated with a distinctive melody and a powerful, passionate voice, bringing joy and inspiration to all those who cherish traditional art. From that moment onward, Qalandar Normatov became widely known among the people as Qalandar Bakhshi.

Several years earlier, this promising young *bakhshi* had participated in the traditional Republican Bakhshis Competition held in the city of Shahrisabz, where he was honored with a diploma and certificate of appreciation from the Ministry of Culture.

In his creative work, Qalandar Bakhshi has always relied on the artistic legacy and guidance of his mentor, Bola Bakhshi. He is respected among the people not only as a highly accomplished *bakhshi*, but also as the artistic director of the “Avazkhan” Folk Ensemble. The establishment and development of this ensemble owe much to the efforts and support of his teacher, Bola Bakhshi.

Below, we present an excerpt from a song performed by Qalandar Bakhshi.

Blessed be my brothers, O my beautiful land, My cherished Khorezm, my homeland so grand. Ever youthful, a beacon forever bright, My unmatched Khorezm, my heart’s delight.

The creative activity of Qalandar Bakhshi was highlighted in an article entitled “The

Magic of Epics" by Feruza Tangriberganova, published in the newspaper "Xorazm Haqiqati" on November 22, 2003.

"There is a melody that touches the deepest parts of the heart and awakens a sense of self within the soul; it surrounds your entire being with its spiritual power. At that moment, you find yourself completely captivated by the words and artistry of Qalandar Bakhshi..."

This passage reflects the profound emotional impact of Qalandar Bakhshi's performances, where the combination of meaningful words, expressive voice, and traditional melodies creates a powerful connection between the performer and the audience.

I have seen you in my dreams since I was seven years old,
I have looked upon countless beauties across this earthly world.
I have wandered and traveled through every corner of this life,
Yet, having come into this world, I have found none more beautiful than you.

The melody of Gharib's song addressed to Hilolay Pari casts away all the worries of the world from your mind and seals you within the enchanting magic of the epic.

Hilolay Pari is unmatched in beauty. In order to win Gharib's love, she is even prepared to kill him if she cannot have him. Gharib realizes that love has blinded the girl's eyes. If she were to surrender completely to her passion... The wise young man immediately understands the danger and begins to think of a way to avoid becoming her victim. His response is so beautifully composed that there is no choice but to admire his wisdom. Hilolay enjoys his words; the beautiful maiden smiles and acknowledges the young man's intelligence:

"Your description alone is enough for me."

Hilolay grants Gharib permission to return to his homeland.

Every word spoken by the *bakhshi* flows directly into the heart. The charm of his expressions, subtle humor, elegant couplets, graceful and passionate lines, and perfectly crafted melodies create an unforgettable artistic experience.

"If there is no sorrow within your heart. Do not open the pages of my soul's diary," the *bakhshi* says with a smile.

His face radiates warmth and kindness, and his eyes seem to hold a mysterious light, as though they conceal a magical secret.

"A person must live with love," I listen attentively to Qalandar Bakhshi's words.

"Whether it is love for one's profession or love for a friend, without love itself being born, epics could never become so divine and so beloved. If I do not love Gharib as Shokhsanam and Shokhsanam as Gharib with a love that burns the heart then the song cannot truly emerge from the soul, and it becomes impossible to achieve genuine artistic expression or touch the listener's heart. I place myself in Gharib's position and take the musical instrument into my hands. Only then does the heart truly awaken."

I compare the art of *bakhshi* performance to acting and theatre. This is because portraying characters such as Bozirgon, Go'ro'g'li, or the cruel old woman, and performing the same epic through different voices and interpretations, requires the talent of an actor.

The greatest happiness of a *bakhshi* lies in being able to sit before an audience and successfully narrate the entire history and essence of an epic. Sometimes, when discussions turn to traditional singers (*hofizs*), I encounter different opinions and interpretations. However, not everyone fully understands that the tradition of maqom itself has roots connected with the art of *bakhshi* performance.

A *bakhshi* can become a *hofiz*, but, in my view, it is much more difficult for a *hofiz* to become a true epic storyteller. This requires a completely different kind of talent. As I mentioned earlier, one must possess the qualities of an actor. Just as an actor can appear in many different forms and characters, a *bakhshi* must be able to embody the thoughts,

emotions, and personalities of all the characters within the epic tradition through his own performance.

Traditionally, *bakhshis* perform epics accompanied by the *dutar*. In an interview with the newspaper “Xorazm Haqiqati,” Qalandar Bakhshi shared the following reflections:

“For me, there is no sound in the world as beautiful and captivating as the melody of the dutar. The frets of the dutar are deeply connected with the human soul. The dutar is made from mulberry wood, which gives it a remarkably pleasant and warm tone. The same can be said about the bulamon. The bulamon exists nowhere else but in Khorezm. The masters of epic storytelling were traditionally the bulamon players. I always remember that Bola Bakhshi’s teacher was the late Yodgor Bulamonchi. Bola Bakhshi was my own mentor. Every conversation we had with him could have become a book; such people were like rivers—deep, endless, and full of wisdom.”

This reflection reveals the profound connection between the *dutar*, *bulamon*, and the Khorezm *bakhshi* tradition. For Qalandar Bakhshi, these traditional instruments were not merely musical tools but powerful means of expressing human emotions, preserving cultural memory, and transmitting the spiritual heritage of generations.

3.4 Intergenerational Transmission of the Khorezm Bakhshi Tradition

The children of Qalandar Bakhshi also chose the path of traditional artistry and dedicated themselves to the performance of epic storytelling. Today, Feruzbek Normatov is recognized not only by the people of Khorezm but throughout Uzbekistan. He is a recipient of the prestigious “Nihol” State Award. His talented sons, including Sanjar and Dostonbek, are also continuing to serve the people through their artistic contributions. (Author)

During an interview with Qalandar Bakhshi, our correspondent asked him:

“Qalandar aka, all of your epics are equally precious to you, like your own children. However, which one is closest to your heart?”

Qalandar Bakhshi replied:

“Oshiq Gharib”. After Gharib returns from his seven-year exile, he finds his home in a state of despair. He learns that Shokhsanam is about to marry King Shokhvalat. Returning to his old hut, Gharib sees that his mother has become blind from constantly waiting for her son’s return. Then, one day, Gharib asks his mother to welcome him as a guest in his own home. The words spoken in the epic on behalf of Gharib’s mother are so deeply moving that they make every listener’s heart tremble.”

This song was taught by Komiljon Otaniyozov, the People’s Artist of Uzbekistan, to Kommuna Ismoilova. Since the performance became extremely popular among admirers of traditional music, audiences would regularly request this song at concerts and artistic meetings.

Later, Kommuna Ismoilova taught this song to her most beloved student, Davron Ahmedov.

Today, Davron Ahmedov continues to perform this remarkable song in a new interpretation, presenting it as a renewed artistic gift to audiences.

Now, we would like to present the lyrics of the song “Bolama o’xshamaydi ovozing sani” (“Your Voice Does Not Sound Like My Child’s”).

Figure 1. Traditional Performance of the Bakhshi Art



O precious guest whom God Himself has sent to me,
 Your voice sounds just like my son's to me.
 Quickly, tell me your news before you leave, my dear,
 O Gharib, your voice bears the likeness of his.
 Since my son departed, my noble head has bowed in sorrow,
 My heart has yearned to see my beloved child again.
 From endless weeping, my two eyes have lost their sight,
 O Gharib, your voice sounds just like my son's.
 Your voice resembles my child's voice.
 From the very beginning, my fate was written with sorrow,
 From my hands, my duck and my goose have flown away.
 Separated from my lamb, I have lost the light of my eyes,
 Your voice is like the voice that once comforted my soul.
 O Gharib, your voice sounds just like my son's.
 You have been to the place where my son once went,
 You must have shared words and conversations with my child.
 Either you are my son, or you have seen my son,
 For your voice sounds just like my child's.

The song from this epic has become one of the most beloved compositions of our time, touching the hearts of almost everyone who listens to it. (*Author*)

4. Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate that the continuity of the Khorezm bakhshi tradition has been sustained not only through the preservation of epic texts and melodies, but also through a complex system of artistic transmission based on the master-apprentice relationship. The creative trajectories of Bola Bakhshi and Qalandar Bakhshi illustrate how traditional knowledge, repertoire, performance techniques, and artistic values are transmitted between generations while simultaneously allowing individual performers to develop distinctive styles of interpretation.

The analysis also indicates that the artistic identity of the Khorezm bakhshi school is closely associated with the interaction of verbal, musical, dramatic, and mnemonic elements. The ability of a bakhshi to embody different epic characters, adapt vocal expression to the emotional content of a narrative, accompany the performance with traditional instruments, and retain extensive epic material in memory demonstrates the

multidimensional nature of this artistic practice. In this context, the concept of “Qubbai hofiza” may be understood as an important characteristic of the Khorezm tradition, combining powerful memory with vocal mastery and the ability to preserve and artistically reproduce extensive epic narratives. Furthermore, the cases examined in this study show that the preservation of bakhshi art is a dynamic rather than purely reproductive process. Bola Bakhshi’s development of individual interpretations of traditional epics, Qalandar Bakhshi’s continuation and adaptation of his mentor’s artistic legacy, and the participation of subsequent generations of the Normatov family demonstrate that cultural transmission involves both continuity and creative renewal. This relationship between preservation and innovation is particularly important for maintaining the vitality of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary cultural environments.

Khorezm is a sacred land that has served as a cradle for many great scholars and intellectuals. The culture and art of this region continue to amaze and inspire the world with their uniqueness and richness.

In Khorezm, one of the oldest centers of civilization, we can witness how the traditions inherited from our ancestors have harmoniously merged with modernity, acquiring a renewed and distinctive form.

The fame of Khorezmian musicians and singers has spread across the world. In particular, the Khorezm tradition of Uzbek epic storytelling (*dostonchilik*) differs from other regional schools through its unique performance style, distinctive poetic texts, and the exceptional strength of performers’ “Qubbai hofiza” —their powerful memory, vocal mastery, and ability to preserve and artistically reproduce vast epic narratives.

Epic storytelling represents an inseparable part of the rich spiritual heritage of our people.

When discussing the art of *bakhshi* performance in Khorezm, it is impossible to imagine it without Qalandar Bakhshi, the People’s *Bakhshi* of Uzbekistan. The joy of his passionate epic performances during national celebrations, weddings, festive gatherings, and among friends and guests is truly incomparable.

It is impossible to fully describe the happiness of sitting around a bonfire in the evening while listening to traditional songs and epic narratives. Especially unforgettable is the experience of sipping tea brewed in a traditional qumg’on (copper teapot) while listening to a *doston* performance.

5. Conclusion

In the future, we must continue to develop the art of *dostonchilik*, which represents the pinnacle of our oral folk heritage, and strengthen the younger generation’s love and respect for our national cultural legacy. Fostering feelings of patriotism, humanity, kindness, love, loyalty, and other noble values in the hearts of young people is undoubtedly one of the highest expressions of true humanity.

To read the beautiful reflections on the significance, charm, and multifaceted nature of Khorezm epic storytelling art in the book “Baxshili el – baxtli el” (“A People with Bakhshis Are a Blessed People”) by Khorezmian journalist Feruza Tangriberganova, and to explore the secrets of *bakhshi* performance one of the most unique and precious forms of our national heritage would be truly enriching. Indeed, recognizing that the world of art is a realm that beautifies the human soul and living with this understanding reveals that our spiritual world itself is deeply connected with and inspired by art. The study concludes that the Khorezm bakhshi tradition represents a distinctive and historically significant school of Uzbek epic storytelling in which verbal artistry, musical performance, dramatic interpretation, and exceptional mnemonic ability function as an integrated artistic system. The analysis of the creative activities of Qurbonnazar Abdullayev (Bola Bakhshi) and Qalandar Bakhshi Normatov demonstrates that the

preservation of this tradition has depended substantially on the continuity of the master–apprentice system and the transmission of repertoire, performance techniques, artistic values, and professional experience from one generation to another. The study further shows that continuity within the Khorezm bakhshi tradition does not imply the mechanical reproduction of inherited artistic forms. Bola Bakhshi developed individual interpretations of traditional epics as his artistic mastery increased, while Qalandar Bakhshi continued to rely on the artistic legacy and guidance of his mentor while developing his own repertoire and performance identity. This combination of continuity and individual creativity has contributed to the vitality and sustainability of the Khorezm epic storytelling tradition.

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