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### **A KYRGYZ SINGER OF TALES: FORMULAS IN THREE PERFORMANCES OF THE BIRTH OF MANAS BY TALANTAALY BAKCHIEV**

**Abstract.** In 2017, the Analyzing Kyrgyz Narratives (AKYN) Research Group, based at the American University of Central Asia, made three separate recordings of Talantaaly Bakchiev performing an account of the birth of Manas. This paper examines Bakchiev's performances in regard to Parry and Lord's theory of formulas in oral traditions. The paper suggests that, contrary to Parry and Lord's concerns about the effect of literacy on the composition of oral literature, the method of improvisation they saw in illiterate bards can also be present in a highly-literate performer. A modern performer can use printed variants (and audio recordings) in the same manner an illiterate performer would reuse formulas learnt from their mentors. The paper proposes that a database of variants would allow this aspect to be studied further.

**Key words:** «Manas» epos, Talantaaly Bakchiev, Milman Parry, Albert B. Lord, AKYN Research Group.

### **КЫРГЫЗДЫН ЖОМОК АЙТУУЧУСУ: ТАЛАНТААЛЫ БАКЧИЕВДИН ҮЧ ЖОЛУ АТКАРУУСУНДА МАНАСТЫН ТӨРӨЛҮШҮНҮН ФОРМУЛАЛАРЫ**

**Аннотация.** 2017-жылы Борбордук Азиядагы Америка Университетиндеги Кыргыз поэмаларын изилдөө тобу (AKYN) Талантаалы Бакчиевдин айтымында Манастын төрөлүшүн үч жолу жазууга түшүрдү. Бул изилдөө иш Бакчиевдин айтымын Пэрри жана Лорддун оозеки чыгармалардын теоретикалык формулаларынын негизинде изилдейт. Бул изилдөө долбоору Пэрри жана Лорддун оозеки адабиятка сабаттуулуктун болгон таасири жөнүндөгү изилдөөлөрүнө карама-каршы көз карашты сунуштап, жогорку окумуштуулар белгилеп кеткен сабатсыз акындар арасында кезиккен импровизация ыкмасы абдан сабаттуу акындарда да жолугат деген жыйынтыкка келди. Азыркы акындар басылып чыккан тексттерди (жана аудио жазууларды) колдоно алса, ошол эле учурда сабатсыз акындар устаттарынан үйрөнгөн ыкмаларды кайра колдоно алат. Бул илимий макала айтымдар варианттарынын маалымат базасынын түзүлүшү бул жагдайды андан ары терең изилдөөгө мүмкүнчүлүк берет деп сунуштайт.

**Негизги сөздөр:** «Манас» эпосу, Талантаалы Бакчиев, Милмэн Пэрри, Альберт Бейтс Лорд, АКYN Изилдөө тобу.

### **КЫРГЫЗСКИЙ ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬ СКАЗОК: ФОРМУЛЫ В ТРЕХ ИСПОЛНЕНИЯХ РОЖДЕНИЯ МАНАСА ОТ ТАЛАНТААЛЫ БАКЧИЕВА**

**Аннотация.** В 2017 году исследовательская группа «Анализ кыргызских эпосов» (AKYN) при Американском Университете Центральной Азии сделала три разные записи Талантаалы Бакчиева, повествующего о рождении Манаса. Данная статья сопоставляет манеру исполнения Бакчиева с теорией формул Пэрри и Лорда в устных традициях. В статье высказывается предположение, что, вопреки опасениям Пэрри и Лорда, грамотность не влияет на состав устной литературы. А именно, метод импровизации, свойственный неграмотным поэтам, может быть использован и очень грамотным исполнителем. Современный исполнитель использует печатные варианты (и аудиозаписи) также как и неграмотный исполнитель воспроизводит формулы, полученные от своих наставников. В связи с этим, автор предлагает создать базу данных разных вариантов исполнения эпоса, для того, чтобы глубже изучить данное открытие.

**Ключевые слова:** эпос «Манас», Талантаалы Бакчиев, Милмэн Пэрри, Альберт Бейтс Лорд, АКYN Исследовательская группа.

From the moment Kyrgyz heroic poetry was first transcribed in the mid-nineteenth century, scholars have questioned the vitality of the tradition. Claims it has become moribund, changed indelibly, or a mere imitation of former glories, are frequent. Those deemed responsible include sedentism, Soviet scholarship, new technology, mass media, globalization, and the uninterested youth. Such claims disregard the continuation – and, at times, resurgence – of Kyrgyz oral heroic poetry in the turbulent twentieth century and its apparent renewal in the twenty-first.<sup>1</sup> This short study examines three variants by the same *manaschi* – a performer of the Manas epos – the same part of the Manas epos recorded on different occasions. Rather than making sweeping claims about the vitality of the tradition and making value judgments, this paper establishes what can be said about a specific *manaschi*, Talantaaly Bakchiev (b. 1971), his use of formulas in performance, and his influences. With regards to this individual performer, it suggests that the traditional methods of oral poetry are still present and concludes by proposing a database to further scrutinize such details.

In 2017, a group of scholars connected to the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) established the Analyzing Kyrgyz Narrative (AKYN) Research Group. AKYN was founded to use technology to reveal new insights into Kyrgyz heroic poetry. I proposed that AKYN should record the same passage of the Manas epos on different occasions being performed by the same *manaschi*. The method of recording variants is long established; the Homeric scholar, Milman Parry, explained the purpose of such a practice.

Briefly, the aim wherein it differs from the form of written story poetry. Its method was to observe singers working in a thriving tradition of unlettered song and see how the form of their songs hangs upon their having to learn and practice their art without reading and writing.<sup>2</sup>

Parry was influenced by comments made by Wilhelm Radloff who had collected Kyrgyz epic poetry in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Parry's student and successor, Albert Lord, expanded Parry's statement. "Stated briefly", Lord clarified in his *The Singer of Tales*:

oral epic song is narrative poetry composed in a manner evolved over many generations by singers of tales who did not know how to write; it consists of the building of metrical lines and half lines by means of formulas and formulaic expressions and of the building of songs by the use of themes. [...] By formula I mean "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." This definition is [Milman] Parry's. By formulaic expression I denote a line or half line constructed on the pattern of the formulas. By theme I refer to the repeated incidents and descriptive passages in the songs.<sup>4</sup>

Two elements feature: the formula, and the theme. The latter Lord described as 'a recurrent element of narration or description in traditional oral poetry' that is 'not restricted, as is the formula, by metrical considerations'.<sup>5</sup> However, the role and number of such formulas in Kyrgyz epics is disputed; Karl Reichl has asserted that 'Kyrgyz epics do not show the kind of formulaic density that is familiar from the analyses of Lord and Parry', while noting 'an element of stability in the transmission of *Manas* when it comes to typical

<sup>1</sup> For a study of such claims, see Karl Reichl, 'Oral Epics into the Twenty-First Century: The Case of the Kyrgyz Epic *Manas*', *Journal of American Folklore* 129 (2016): 327-344; the adjective 'moribund', is from A. T. Hatto, 'Kirghiz (Mid-nineteenth century)', in *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry*, vol. 1: *The Traditions*, ed. A. T. Hatto (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1980), pp. 300-327 (p. 303). See also, soon, my 'A Telling Tradition: Preliminary Comments on the *Epic of Manas*, 1856-2018' (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Albert B. Lord, 'Homer, Parry, and Huso', in *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 465-478 (p. 469).

<sup>3</sup> W. Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur der Nördlichen Türkischen Stämme*, vol. 5, *Der Dialect der Kara-Kirgisen* (St. Petersburg: Commissionäre der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1885), p. xvi: "Jeder nur irgend wie geschickte Sänger improvisirt stets seine Gesänge nach der Eingebung des Augenblicks, so dass er gar nicht im Stande ist, einen Gesang zweimal in vollkommen gleicher Weise zu recitiren. Man glaube nun nicht, dass dieses Improvisiren ein jedesmaliges Neudichten ist. Es geht improvisirenden Sänger gerade, so wie dem Improvisator auf dem Klavier. Wie der letztere verschiedene ihm bekannte Läufe, Uebergänge, Motive nach der Eingebung des Augenblicks in ein Stimmungsbild zusammenfügt und so das Neue aus dem ihm geläufigen Alten zusammenstellt, so auch der Sänger epischer Lieder."

<sup>4</sup> Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* [second edition], ed. Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 4; for the Parry quotation, see *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 272.

<sup>5</sup> Albert B. Lord, 'Composition by Theme in Homer and Southslavic Epos', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 82 (1951): 71-80 (p. 73).

scenes or motifs'.<sup>6</sup> I wanted to investigate this claim, and to see whether the Parry-Lord paradigm could be used to address a contemporary debate. A frequent complaint against modern day *manaschis* is that they are not 'real *manaschis*' (*chīnigī manaschīlar*) who can improvise in the traditional manner, but rather 'book *manaschis*' (*jattama manaschīlar*) who have memorized the text from a book and therefore repeat when they perform. I wanted to study, first-hand, the features noted by Parry and Lord at work in a Kyrgyz context, and see what effect the literacy of the performer has – if any – on the performance. The focus of this paper consequently concerns formulaic expressions in the variants collected by AKYN; these texts, with lines numbered for reference, are being made available on our website.<sup>7</sup>

The subject of this study, Talantaaly Bakchiev, was the first *manaschi* recorded by AKYN.<sup>8</sup> For a Kyrgyz audience, Bakchiev needs little introduction: he is one of the prominent *manaschis* mentioned in Kyrgyzstan's successful 2013 application for Manas, Semetey, and Seitk to be listed as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.<sup>9</sup> Foreign scholars are aware of Bakchiev because of his frequent performances and his appearance in Nienke van der Heide's monograph *Spirited Performance*.<sup>10</sup> He is a highly literate academician who has published several studies on the Manas epos, and previously taught at AUCA.<sup>11</sup> The part of the epos selected was the birth of the hero Manas. This section was selected because it typically appears in narratives. Details of AKYN's three recordings are as follows.

T <sub>1</sub>	973 lines	October 31 <sup>st</sup>
T <sub>2</sub>	1016 lines	December 12 <sup>th</sup>
T <sub>3</sub>	1851 lines	December 22 <sup>nd</sup>

As requested by AKYN, the first two performances were close to thirty minutes; the third was nearly an hour.<sup>12</sup> Each audiovisual recording was made in the AUCA recording studios in front of a small audience. Kamila Baimuratova, an AUCA student, managed the equipment. Alymkan Jeenbekova, a student at the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences, later transcribed the materials. It should be stressed that recording in such conditions removed many of the typical variables of performing *Manas* that would affect the poet's composition of the material; it is hoped that these elements can be examined later in the course of AKYN's research.

The three variants – T<sub>1</sub>, T<sub>2</sub>, and T<sub>3</sub> – reveal Bakchiev's craft. Take the frequent word 'мына'. Bar one notable example (from T<sub>1</sub>, in Bakchiev's spoken introduction), in all three variants Bakchiev only uses this word at the start of a line, suggesting that is habitual. The subsequent words can be grouped as follows to show the frequency of usage in the three variants.

мына ошондо жарыктык	40	мына ошентип турганда	16
_____ бай Жакып	22	_____ айтканда	7
_____ энекең	21	_____ тургуча	5
_____ Акбалта	11	_____ алганда	3
_____ Чыйырды	8	_____ бай Жакып	1
_____ Каракыз	7	_____ жарыктык	1

<sup>6</sup> Reichl, 'Oral Epics', p. 338; see also his comments on p. 336.

<sup>7</sup> <http://akynproject.auca.kg/en/>.

<sup>8</sup> AKYN later recorded, in the same parameters, Dolot Sydykov (b. 1983).

<sup>9</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kyrgyz-epic-trilogy-manas-semetey-seytek-00876>.

<sup>10</sup> Nienke van der Heide, *Spirited Performance: The Manas Epic and Society in Kyrgyzstan* (Bremen: EHV Academicpress GmbH, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> For instance, see Т. А. Бакчиев, 'Интерпретация некоторых символов в эпосе «Манас»', *Вестник БГУ: Гуманитарные исследования Внутренней Азии* 1 (2017): 9-15; and the articles 'Посещение святых мест в сказительской традиции', 'Социальный статус сказителя в прошлом (на примере сказителей эпоса «Манас»)', 'О чудесном приобретении сказительского дара', in *Научная дискуссия: вопросы филологии, искусствоведения и культурологии* 1 (2016): 32-37, 37-42, 42-47 respectively.

<sup>12</sup> These lengths were chosen to provide a manageable amount of material with which to gain experience in recording and to begin the research project. The two-short and one-long choice was deliberate: the aim was to see whether formulaic expressions and content appeared in the same order in all three versions, and to examine how a performer decides what to include when affected by time. With comparable material recorded of Sydykov, a comparative investigation of this question is planned.

_____ баягы	4	_____ калган дейт	1
_____ сураба	3	_____ суранды	1
_____ сурасаң	3	_____ айткын дейт	1
_____ Ак Балта	3	_____ ыроолоп	1
_____ Акчайым	2		
_____ кайран жан	1	мына ошондой жан экен	2
_____ Кара-Айгыр	1	_____ жайы бар	1
_____ гана Акбалта	1	_____ зат эке	1
_____ Тор-Айгыр	1		
_____ гана энекең	1	мына ошондон Актинте	1
_____ гана Каракыз	1		
_____ көркөмүң	1	мына аманат кылып алып кел	1
_____ баланын	1		
_____ байбиче	1	мына кей тапкан балаң,— деп	1
_____ бу бала	1		
_____ байкасаң	1	мына айтканыңды гана кылдым,— деп	1
_____ атакем	1		
_____ катындар	1	мына ошо жерден	1 <sup>13</sup>

Visible in these lines is Bakchiev's adherence to the traditional meter of the epos.

Recording multiple variants provides scholars the opportunity to see whether a performer has merely memorized a text or is capable of extemporizing at the moment of performance. Jeenbekova noted that Bakchiev depicts a sacrifice in all three variants while using seemingly no apparent signs of linguistic similarities. Below: T<sub>1</sub> is on the left, T<sub>2</sub> centre, T<sub>3</sub> right. Examination revealed a repeated phrase (printed below in bold).

Актинтени гана колго алып,	Төрт аягын бек байлап,	Кайып гана болду кара айгыр
Баягы жетеке келген кунанды,	Эми курмандыкка чалууга,	Ала калып колуна,
Төрт аягын гана тең байлап,	Камданып калган чагында,	Актинтенин жарыктык,
Курмандыкка гана эми чалууга,	Ошо кезде сураба,	Мына ошондо бай Жакып,
Күн батышты каратып,	Ошо кезде сурасаң,	Ошо кокого эми урган,— дейт
Ошондо атадан калган гана Актинте,	Сага жалган, мага чын,	Кокуйлатып баягы,
Эми моюнга урарда,	Көрүп келген бир жан жок.	Кашында турган айгырды
Ошо гана кезде бу кунан ой,	Атаганат дүнүйө,	Ошо кезде жарыктык
Кайып болду көрдүңбү?	Кудай бетин көргөзбө,	Бир кишинеп өтгү,— дейт,

<sup>13</sup> The line numbers of these are as follows: **мына ошондо жарыктык** T<sub>1</sub>: 134, 205, 330, 405, 708, 740; T<sub>2</sub>: 17, 29, 101, 448, 504, 598, 629; T<sub>3</sub>: 17, 42, 91, 111, 157, 303, 375, 389, 403, 423, 518, 531, 564, 575, 664, 692, 766, 956, 965, 1067, 1106, 1271, 1276, 1279, 1292, 1363, 1604 **бай Жакып** T<sub>1</sub>: 151, 167, 684, 865; T<sub>2</sub>: 122, 917, 976; T<sub>3</sub>: 185, 207, 223, 416, 449, 620, 630, 667, 705, 780, 1617, 1679, 1687, 1786, 1845 **энекең** T<sub>1</sub>: 287, 364, 494; T<sub>2</sub>: 41; T<sub>3</sub>: 74, 128, 177, 369, 713, 721, 879, 907, 926, 962, 979, 986, 1007, 1014, 1017, 1175, 1236 **Акбалта** T<sub>2</sub>: 232, 237, 793, 810; T<sub>3</sub>: 238, 296, 309, 438, 481, 1357, 1464 **Чыйырды** T<sub>1</sub>: 34, 283, 300; T<sub>2</sub>: 21, 72, 863; T<sub>3</sub>: 163, 1368 **Каракыз** T<sub>1</sub>: 346, 568; T<sub>2</sub>: 590; T<sub>3</sub>: 893, 918, 1078, 1250 **баягы** T<sub>1</sub>: 441, 471, 664; T<sub>3</sub>: 1023 **сураба** T<sub>3</sub>: 768, 1761 **сурасаң** T<sub>2</sub>: 660; T<sub>3</sub>: 769, 1762 **Ак Балта** T<sub>1</sub>: 149; 210, 722 **Акчайым** T<sub>2</sub>: 764; T<sub>3</sub>: 1494 **кайран жан** T<sub>3</sub>: 60 **Кара-Айгыр** T<sub>1</sub>: 460 **гана Акбалта** T<sub>3</sub>: 501 **Тор-Айгыр** T<sub>3</sub>: 676 **гана энекең** T<sub>3</sub>: 912 **гана Каракыз** T<sub>3</sub>: 1043 **көркөмүң** T<sub>3</sub>: 1599 **баланын** T<sub>3</sub>: 1685 **байбиче** T<sub>3</sub>: 1817 **бу бала** T<sub>2</sub>: 534 **байкасаң** T<sub>3</sub>: 664 **атакем** T<sub>1</sub>: 93 **катындар** T<sub>1</sub>: 755-ошентип турганда T<sub>1</sub>: 222, 425, 487, 748, 761, 900; T<sub>2</sub>: 428, 925; T<sub>3</sub>: 53, 572, 1080, 1095, 1135, 1157, 1305 **айтканда** T<sub>1</sub>: 115, 193, 507; T<sub>2</sub>: 623, 836; T<sub>3</sub>: 1322, 1831 **тургучу** T<sub>1</sub>: 527, 611; T<sub>2</sub>: 342; T<sub>3</sub>: 698, 1396 **алганда** T<sub>1</sub>: 181; T<sub>2</sub>: 798; T<sub>3</sub>: 381 **бай Жакып** T<sub>3</sub>: 429 **жарыктык** T<sub>3</sub>: 618 **калган дейт** T<sub>3</sub>: 888 **суранды** T<sub>3</sub>: 1075 **айткын дейт** T<sub>3</sub>: 1268 **ыроолоп** T<sub>1</sub>: 869 **-ошондой жан экен** T<sub>1</sub>: 177, T<sub>3</sub>: 905 **жайы бар** T<sub>3</sub>: 212 **зат эке** T<sub>3</sub>: 628-ошондон Актинте T<sub>2</sub>: 377-аманат кылып алып кел T<sub>3</sub>: 591-кей тапкан балаң,— деп T<sub>3</sub>: 1104 **-айтканыңды гана кылдым,— деп** T<sub>3</sub>: 511 **-ошо жерден** T<sub>1</sub>: spoken prose introduction.

Кайда экени көрүнбөй, Көп түтүн болду көрдүңбү? Кашында турган кара айгыр, <b>Кайда экени билинбей.</b> Караса көзгө илинбей, Жерге гана танган каны жок, Кармай турган жаны жок. Мына ошондо кара айгыр, <b>Кайда экени билинбей,</b> Кайып болду көрдүңбү? (T <sub>1</sub> , 435-453)	Өзүң көргөн гана бай Жакып, Актинтени баягы, Кокото гана бир урса, Кайыбына кабылып, Кайда экени гана көрүнбөй Жерге гана тамган каны жок, Мунун учуп кеткен гана жаны жок, <b>Кайда экени билинбей,</b> Караса гана көзгө илинбей (T <sub>2</sub> , 384-403)	Караса көзгө илинбей, <b>Кайда экени билинбей</b> Жерге тамган каны жок, Мына ошондо Тор айгыр, Айланайын кудурет, Кашында турган жылкы жок <b>Кайда экени билинбей,</b> Караса көзгө илинбей, Кайып болду бул жылкы. Муну көрүп бай Жакып Аң-таң болуп турду,— дейт (T <sub>3</sub> , 676-694)
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One can argue whether the line ‘Кайда экени билинбей’ is a formula (as the line fits the metrical requirements, and is repeatable) or a theme (as it coincides with a particular scene).<sup>14</sup> Less arguable though is the finding that Bakchiev is not merely repeating a memorized text. The variance, rather, shows he is constructing a description of a set feature in the moment of performance.

The three variants provide further insight into Bakchiev’s methods of constructing a narrative in performance. Repetitive linguistic phrases – the ‘formulas’ described by Parry and Lord – are easier to establish with multiple performances. I used computer software designed to spot repetitions in texts – creatively employing plagiarism-spotting programs that note shared material in different variants. This quickly highlighted shared expressions between the different performances by Bakchiev. One of the clearest – and for the reader more visible – are repeated lines. T<sub>1</sub>, T<sub>2</sub>, and T<sub>3</sub> all include the following 2, 3, and 4 word lines that fit the required seven-syllable meter. The most frequent (with combined usage indicated) are the following.

айланайын кудурет	107
атаганат дүнүйө	62
атаңдын көрү дүнүйө	31
ошо кезде бай Жакып	36
мына ошондо бай Жакып	22
ал аңгыча болгон жок	20
Кудай бетин салбай кал	15

Many of these one-line expressions contain no particular meaning. Bakchiev uses these lines to indicate shifts in the narrative, for emphasis, and to provide time to consider what will come next. As such, they are comparable to use of the expression ‘Кудай билет ким билет’ by the performer Kenje Kara in the earliest known recorded performance of Kyrgyz poetry.<sup>15</sup> A 40-line example from T<sub>1</sub> on the left and a 36-line example from T<sub>2</sub> on the right below show how Bakchiev uses such expressions.

Капталында Калмак бар	Ошо кездең энекен,
Каптал кирип келдиби?	Төбөм кокуй төбөм, – деп,
<b>Атаганат дүнүйө</b>	Төбөмдү кокуй жеди, – деп,
Оң жагында Ойрот бар	<b>Айланайын кудурет,</b>
Оой ондурбай Ойрот келдиби?	Мени бу жей турган балабы?
Сол жагында Солон бар	Балаң эмес балеби?
Оой соолутуп Солон келдиби?	Кантейин кокуй кантейин?
<b>Айланайын кудурет</b>	Кандай айла терейин?
Кандай шумдук болду? – деп	Бу көрөкчө өлөйүн

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that ‘Кайда экени билинбей’ appears elsewhere; the full list of its appearance is T<sub>1</sub>: 97, 447, 452; T<sub>2</sub>: 400, 958; T<sub>3</sub>: 685, 690.

<sup>15</sup> For a transcription, English translation, analysis, and copy of this recording, see *The Semetey of Kenje Kara: A Kirghiz Epic Performance on Phonograph with a Musical Score and a Compact Disc of the Phonogram*, ed. and tr. Daniel Prior (with the assistance of Ishembi Obolbekov in transcribing the Kyrgyz text) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006).

Мына ошондо Ак Балта  
 Сообол салса Жакыпка  
**Мына ошондо бай Жакып**  
 Айтып турат Балтага:  
 Айланайын Ак Балта!  
 Оо карыганда катынды  
 Оо Кудай урду кантейин?  
 Оой, эптеп тапкан малымдын  
 Эсебин эми табабы?  
 Оо катынымды жин урду  
 Жин урганда дин урду  
**Атаганат дүнүйө**  
 Эптеп тапкан малымды  
 Оой курмандыкка чалган деп  
 Азабыңды берди дейт  
**Атаганат дүнүйө**  
 Арды мээнет күнүгө  
 Эми кокуй кантем деп  
**Мына ошондо бай Жакып**  
 Жакып жайынсураба  
 Жакып жайын сурасаң  
 Ошо кезде бай Жакып  
**Атаңдын көрү дүнүйө**  
 Оой сараңдыгы болжосуз  
 Саар эсеп жан экен  
 Оой жетим менен жесирге  
 Оой чычкак улак бербеген  
 Сараңдыгы болжосуз  
 Мына ошондой жан экен  
 Ошо кезде Ак Балта  
**Айланайын кудурет**  
 Эми кандай кылам? – деп  
 (Т<sub>1</sub>, 140-80)

Кыямат жайды көрөйүн.  
**Айланайын кудурет,**  
 Жаным аман болсо деп,  
**Айланайын кудурет,**  
 Кокуй, кокуй каран күн,  
 Жараткан жалгыз мен жалгыз,  
 Менден калар бу жалгыз,  
 Ушу курсагымда бала деп,  
 Өзүң көргөн Чыйырды,  
 Чымындай жаны чыркырап,  
 Канчалык кыйын болсо да,  
 Катын эмеспи Чыйырды,  
**Айланайын кудурет,**  
 Катуураак ыйлап алды дейт,  
 Карагызды чакырып,  
 Ал аңгыча болгон жок,  
 Ошо кезде жарыктык,  
**Айланайын Каракыз,**  
 Калаадагы катынды,  
 Кокуй үйгө жакын койбостон,  
 Токой көздөй айдагын,  
 Айылдагы аялды,  
 Айылга кокуй койбостон,  
 Алысыраак айдагын.  
 Көрө албаган көз жаман,  
**Айланайын кудурет,**  
 Сүйлөп койсо сөз жаман.  
 (Т<sub>2</sub>, 456-91)

The density of formulas within these two extracts suggests Kyrgyz epic poetry is similar to the poetry studied by Parry and Lord. Comparison of the start of T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub> shows Bakchiev using repeated phrases, in the manner Parry and Lord noted for formulas and themes, to assist the construction of the narrative.

**Миң күндөрдүн бири экен,**  
 Кудайдын сүйгөн күнү экен,  
**Бейшембинин күнү экен,**  
**Жуманын кадыр түнү экен,**  
 Ошондо көргөн бүгүн жокпу? (Т<sub>1</sub>, 1-5)

The bold sections of the above quotation also appear in T<sub>2</sub>, albeit later in the text following a versified opening.

Мына ошондо жарыктык,  
**Миң күндөрдүн бири экен,**  
**Бейшембинин түнү экен.**  
**Жуманын кадыр күнү экен,**  
 Мына ошондо Чыйырды. (Т<sub>2</sub>, 17-21)

Bakchiev uses such memorized formulas for the narrative when necessary for the performance.

Айланайын байым деп, <b>Азыр жатып түш көрдүм,</b> Оо жагымдуу бир иш көрдүм. <b>Түндө жатып түш көрдүм,</b> <b>Түйшүккө салар иш көрдүм.</b> <b>Таңга маал түш көрдүм,</b> <b>Таңгала турган иш көрдүм.</b> Жана жатып түш көрдүм (T <sub>1</sub> , 24-31)	Жана байкаң өзүмдү, <b>Азыр жатып түш көрдүм,</b> Адам көргүс иш көрдүм, <b>Түндө жатып түш көрдүм,</b> <b>Түйшүккө салаар иш көрдүм.</b> <b>Таңга маал түш көрдүм,</b> <b>Таңгала турган иш көрдүм.</b> Бул эмине болучу? (T <sub>2</sub> , 45-51)
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The performer's choice when to use these formulas is made apparent in the next example, where they appear much later in T<sub>1</sub> than T<sub>2</sub>.

Оой менин атам Бакберген, <b>Бу дүйнөдөн өткөнү,</b> <b>Жети жылдай болду эле.</b> <b>Жети жылдан бери карай,</b> <b>Атакемдин алдына,</b> Курмандык бир чалбадым (T <sub>1</sub> , 75-80)	Айланайын атакем, <b>Бу дүйнөдөн өткөнү,</b> <b>Жети жылдай болду эле,</b> <b>Жети жылдан бер карай,</b> <b>Атакемдин алдына,</b> Арбагына багыштап (T <sub>2</sub> , 63-68)
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These examples show that Bakchiev has a toolkit of set phrases that can be used when necessary. Certain formulas can be repeated across the performances and within a single performance. Consider the following example from T<sub>1</sub>.

**Күн эки күн жол жүрүп**  
**Ат аябай мол жүрүп**  
Мына ошондо Ак Балта  
Атаганат дүнүйө  
Кудай бетин салбай кал  
Карагырдын ойуна,  
**Күн эки күн жол жүрүп** (T<sub>1</sub>, 208-14)

The two-line formulation of the above lines in bold, “Күн эки күн жол жүрүп / Ат аябай мол жүрүп”, is repeated in this two-line form later in T<sub>1</sub> (403-4, 709-10, 951-52), and in T<sub>2</sub> (744-5, 830-31), and T<sub>3</sub> (387-88). Only on one occasion does Bakchiev employ a different second line.<sup>16</sup> Bakchiev's repeated lines fit with Parry's definition of ‘a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.’<sup>17</sup> Such usage, in a contemporary literate performer, show that the methods seen earlier in the oral tradition are still present.

Formulaic expressions can also be studied to establish influence. Bakchiev has repeatedly stated that Shaabai Azizov (1927-2004) was his mentor. Jeenbekova noted that in T<sub>3</sub> Bakchiev uses phrases not from Azizov but from another performer: the famed Saghimbai Orozbekov (1867-1930). Below: Orozbekov is on the left, Bakchiev center, Azizov right.

«Айтканымды туюнчу, Арстаным Жакып, сүйүнчү! <b>Карыганда байбиче</b> <b>Кабылан тапты, сүйүнчү!</b> Жобогондо байбиче Жолборс тапты, сүйүнчү! <b>Жоголордо байбиче</b>	Талпынып айтты бакырып, «Ой сүйүнчү, сүйүнчү! Ой, бай Жакып сүйүнчү! Жоо душманга күйүнчү, <b>Эриккенде байбичен,</b> <b>Эрмек тапты сүйүнчү!</b> <b>Карыганда байбичен,</b>	Бай Жакыптан сүйүнчү Барып сурап ал» - деди. «Белин бекем бууду – де, Атандын көрү Дүнүйө, Алтымыш келин, кырк кызды Он эки жолу бүгүлтүп, Ак байбиче Чыйырды
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<sup>16</sup> T<sub>3</sub>, 1614-15: Күн эки күн жол жүрүп, / Түнү такыр тынбастан .

<sup>17</sup> Parry, *Making of Homeric Verse*, p. 272.

<b>Жолдош тапты, сүйүнчү!</b>	<b>Кабылан тапты сүйүнчү!</b>	Эркек бала тууду,- де!»
<b>Эриккенде байбиче</b>	<b>Жоголоордо байбичен,</b>	(Azizov) <sup>18</sup>
<b>Эрмек тапты, сүйүнчү!</b>	<b>Жолборс тапты сүйүнчү!</b>	
Кайгырганда байбиче	Ой сүйүнчү, сүйүнчү!	
Каралды тапты, сүйүнчү!»	(Т., 1642-1652)	

(Orozbekov, 1828-1839)<sup>19</sup>

Bakchiev's use of expressions from Orozbekov, who had died more than forty years before Bakchiev was born, reveals an interesting feature of an oral tradition: the reintegration of published material in performance. A modern performer can use printed variants (and audio recordings) in the same manner an illiterate performer would reuse formulas learnt from their mentors. Comparison of variants of the same performer reveals the methods of that performer; comparison of variants between performers reveals the transmission of the tradition. Comparing Bakchiev's variants reveals information about Bakchiev; comparing a variant by Bakchiev with variants by Orozbekov and Azizov reveals the connections between performers. Identification of such phrases would be assisted by a database of variants of Kyrgyz heroic poetry. Such a resource would greatly aid scholars in recognizing the lineages and influences of other performers (both contemporary and past) made visible by the performer's incorporation of material into his or her performance.<sup>20</sup> In this specific case, Bakchiev's bookish use of Orozbekov in the same manner an illiterate poet would have learnt lines from his or her instructor shows that different media is being used like a mentor by the modern oral poet. The rootedness of the current oral tradition in printed variants – particularly Orozbekov's – is an element that requires further investigation.<sup>21</sup> The widespread availability of printed versions by Orozbekov, and its frequent use as an influence (and source material) by modern performers, is a feature that requires closer scrutiny.<sup>22</sup>

Bakchiev's use of formulas is visible in the variants collected by the AKYN Research Group. Contrary to the fears expressed by Parry and Lord regarding the effect of literacy on oral poets, the example of Bakchiev shows a literate *manaschi* can perform using the same methods of his or her illiterate predecessors, albeit using materials accessible through printed materials, audio recordings, or potentially through other performers reusing such material, rather than formulas learnt via a mentor. Close study of the transcripts revealed these features, and provided a more detailed insight into the workings of Bakchiev's craft.

Further study, with the assistance of technology, can provide greater insights. Comparison of formula usage with other contemporary performers might be able to establish whether such techniques are widespread, and to what degree improvisation is the norm. Another possibility is studying, with greater accuracy, the extent to which a performer, at different ages and stages of career, uses set phrases and formulas, i.e. whether a younger performer stays attached to a set text, and the older (and more established) is freer to deviate.<sup>23</sup> With a database of variants, including those from the past and those of the future, it would be possible to see the fluctuations and continuations of the epic tradition over time, seeing the degree to which historical phenomena as well as technological and social change has influenced the content, and diagnose with more accuracy its current health.

<sup>18</sup> Ш. Азизов, *Манас эпосу*, ред. Ш. Азизовдун (Бишкек: Кут бер, 2013), p. 43. Lines are not numbered in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> С. Орозбаков, *Манас: киргизский героический эпос*, ред. А. С. Мирбадалева и др, том 1. (Москва: Наука, 1984), p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> The resource would also provide an unrivalled linguistic corpus for a Turkic language. This could, for example, chart changes and continuations in vocabulary. A prototype programme to analyze Kyrgyz grammar is being designed by Kamen Bonov and Anguelina Popova.

<sup>21</sup> One issue, for instance, is which edition of Orozbekov is used – whether the harmonized *Манас, Семетей, Сейтек*, ред. Б. М. Юнусалиев (Фрунзе: Кыргызмамбас, 1958-1960), or the later attempts to print his oeuvre. On this, see my forthcoming 'A Telling Tradition'.

<sup>22</sup> Since Bakchiev has stated Sayakbai Karalaev (1894-1971) appeared in his calling dream and taught him how to recite, investigation into Karalaev's versions accessible in print, film, and LPs would both illuminate the reception of earlier *manaschis* and the learning practices of modern *manaschis*. For Bakchiev's study on calling dreams, see his *Бакчиев О чудесном приобретении сказительского дара*; for other scholarly views, see Daniel Prior, *Patron, Party, Patrimony: Notes on the Cultural History of the Kirghiz Epic Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2000), p. 36, and Heide, *Spirited Performance*, pp. 119-129, and my forthcoming 'A Telling Tradition'.

<sup>23</sup> On this, see Lord, *Singer of Tales*, pp. 31-34.



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