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INTERACTION OF THE TRADITIONS OF EPIC AND SONG ART

Abstract. In regions where the epic tradition is highly developed, folk songs and the works of orally trained professional composers generally remain on the periphery of scholarly attention and, as a consequence, are insufficiently represented in academic discourse. The Syrdarya region, due to the widespread presence of the epic tradition and its active functioning within the local environment – in the forms of listening, performance, and intergenerational transmission – is perceived and characterized as a “land of storytellers”. In this context, a view has emerged and become widespread regarding the limited nature of the region’s song repertoire. This study seeks to demonstrate the relevance of song forms shaped by the zhyr tradition. Accordingly, the aim of the article is to identify the continuity between epic and song through demonstrating the impact of the epic tradition on song art and through an analysis of the songs of Nartay Bekezhonov. The scientific significance of the work lies in its comprehensive examination of the interaction between epic tradition and song art, as well as in offering a new perspective on the formation of the song culture of the Syrdarya region. Furthermore, the undertaken analysis of Nartay Bekezhonov’s (creative work) provides a scholarly basis for substantiating the continuity between the genres of zhyr and song, thereby expanding the research field of national musicology in this direction. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying its results in the educational process of higher education institutions in the fields of musicology and art studies, as well as in the development of repertoires for performers of traditional music and in cultural and educational activities. In the course of the research, the works of folklorists, art scholars, and zhyrshy performers were used as the methodological foundation, being widely employed in informational, source-based, and theoretical-analytical aspects. The main results of the study and the conclusions drawn from the analysis have made it possible to establish that the influence of the epic tradition on the song genre manifests itself not only at the level of content, but also at the melodic, structural, and performance levels.

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Keywords: zhyr (epic), song, zhyrau, zhyrshy, interaction, Nartay Bekezhonov.

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ЖЫР ЖӘНЕ ӘН ДӘСТҮРЛЕРІНІҢ САБАҚТАСТЫҒЫ

Аңдатпа. Жыршылық мектептері қарқынды дамыған өңірлердегі халық әндері мен кәсіби композиторлар шығармалары ғылыми айналымда жеткілікті деңгейде қамтылмай, зерттеу тұрғысынан

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кенже қалып отырғаны байқалады. Жыршылық дәстүрдің жергілікті ортада кеңінен таралып, тыңдалу, орындалу және ұрпақтан ұрпаққа берілу арқылы сақталуы нәтижесінде Сыр өңірі «жыр елі» ретінде сипатталады. Осыған байланысты музыкалық қоғамда аталған аймақта ән репертуарының ауқымы шектеулі деген көзқарас орныққан. Соған қарамастан жыршылық дәстүр ықпалымен қалыптасқан ән үлгілерінің өзектілігін арттыру бұл жұмыстың негізгі идеясын айқындады. Мақалада жыршылық дәстүрдің ән өнеріне әсерін зерттеп, Нартай Бекежанұлының әндерін талдау арқылы жыр мен әннің сабақтастығын айқындау мақаланың негізгі мақсаты болып табылады. Жұмыстың ғылыми маңыздылығы жыршылық дәстүр мен ән өнерінің өзара ықпалдастығын кешенді түрде қарастырып, Сыр өңіріндегі ән мәдениетінің қалыптасу ерекшеліктерін жаңа қырынан айқындауымен анықталады. Сонымен қатар Нартай Бекежанұлы шығармашылығын талдау арқылы жыр мен ән жанрларының сабақтастығы ғылыми тұрғыдан негізделіп, отандық музыкатану ғылымындағы осы бағыттағы зерттеулердің аясын кеңейтуге үлес қосады. Практикалық маңыздылығы зерттеу нәтижелерін жоғары оқу орындарының музыкатану, өнертану бағыттарындағы оқу үдерісінде, сондай-ақ дәстүрлі музыка орындаушыларының репертуарын толықтыруда және мәдени-ағартушылық жұмыстарда пайдалануға болатындығымен сипатталады. Тақырыпты зерттеу барысында фольклортанушылардың, өнертанушылардың, жыршы-орындаушылардың еңбектері әдіснамалық негіз ретінде басшылыққа алынып, ақпараттық, деректемелік және теориялық-талдамалық тұрғыдан кеңінен пайдаланылды. Зерттеудің негізгі нәтижелері мен талдау қорытындылары жыршылық дәстүрдің ән жанрына ықпалы тек мазмұндық деңгейде ғана емес, сондай-ақ әуендік, құрылымдық және орындаушылық деңгейлерде де көрініс табатынын нақтылады.

Алғыс: Мақала ҚР Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігі Ғылым комитетінің 2026-2028 жылдарға арналған BR31715839 «Әдебиеттану мен өнертану саласындағы іргелі зерттеулер: академиялық сабақтастық пен жаңа парадигмалар» жобасының қаржыландыруы негізінде әзірленді.

Кілт сөздер: жыр, ән, жырау, жыршы, сабақтастық, Нартай Бекежанов.

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ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ ТРАДИЦИИ ЭПИЧЕСКОГО И ПЕСЕННОГО ИСКУССТВА

Аннотация. В регионах с интенсивно развитой эпической традицией народные песни и произведения устно-профессиональных композиторов оказываются, как правило, на периферии исследовательского внимания и, как следствие, недостаточно представлены в научном обороте. Сырдарьинский регион в силу широкого распространения эпической традиции, её активного бытования в локальной среде в формах слушания, исполнения и передачи из поколения в поколение, воспринимается и характеризуется как «край сказителей». В связи с этим сформировалось и распространилось мнение об ограниченности песенного репертуара в регионе. В такой связи стремление подчеркнуть актуальность песенных образцов, сформировавшихся под влиянием традиции жыр, определило основную идею аннотируемого исследования. В соответствии с этим целью статьи избрано выявление преемственности «жыр» и песни через доказательство воздействия эпической традиции на песенное искусство и анализ песен Нартая Бекежанова. Научная значимость работы определяется комплексным рассмотрением взаимодействия эпической традиции и песенного искусства, а также специфики формирования песенной культуры Сырдарьинского региона с новой точки зрения. Кроме того, предпринятый анализ творчества Нартая Бекежанова позволяет научно обосновать преемственность традиций эпического и песенного искусства и тем самым расширить исследовательское «поле» отечественного музыковедения в указанном направлении. Практическая значимость заключается в возможности использования полученных результатов в учебном процессе высших учебных заведений по направлениям музыковедения и

искусствоведения, а также при формировании репертуара исполнителей традиционной музыки и в культурно-просветительской деятельности. В ходе исследования в качестве методологической основы были использованы труды фольклористов, искусствоведов и жырши-исполнителей, которые были широко привлечены для разработки в информационном, источниковедческом и теоретико-аналитическом аспектах. Основные результаты исследования и выводы анализа позволили установить, что влияние эпической традиции на песенный жанр проявляется не только на содержательном уровне, но и на мелодическом, структурном и исполнительском уровнях.

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Ключевые слова: жыр, песня, сказитель, жырши, взаимосвязь, Нартай Бекежанов.

1. Introduction

In regions where epic traditions are highly developed, folk songs and the works of orally trained professional composers have remained relatively underexplored from a research perspective. In the Syrdarya Region, known as the land of zhyr (a musical and poetic work, most often of an epic character) due to the local population's continuous practice of listening to, performing, and transmitting the art of zhyr from generation to generation, there has been a prevailing opinion that the repertoire of songs is rather limited. However, it can be observed that there are also songs that emerged under the influence of the epic tradition. Until now, collections and ongoing anthologies have primarily included only the works of folk composers, while the folk songs of the Syrdarya Region have largely remained on the periphery. Consequently, these songs have not been extensively studied. The anthology "Ancient Saryns of the Great Steppe", presented in 2019 as a separate region, aroused great interest. In the introductory article of this work, the following lines appear: "In this publication, the folk songs of the Syrdarya Region have been included in order to provide a more complete anthology of the songs and music of Kazakhstan. The most capable and knowledgeable performers were chosen to perform these folk songs" (Ancient Motifs of the Great Steppe, 2019: 40).

Several studies have examined the epic tradition of the region. However, based on the fact that the data often found in works is not a scientific vision, this question remains relevant. Such a problem is enough in today's publications: "The process of passing on epic works becomes a kind of ritual, symbolising not only the teaching of history, but also emphasising the role of the epic in shaping collective consciousness. In this context, the heroic epic becomes a bridge between the past and the future, uniting generations in a continuous flow of cultural heritage" (Kongyratbay, Omarova, Kaztuganova, Saimanov, Yelzhanova, 2025: 179).

The promotion, transmission, and study of epic works constitute a distinctive practice that is significant not only from a historical perspective, but also in terms of shaping collective consciousness through zhyr. From this point of view, given that the epic heritage serves as a bridge connecting the ancient era and the future, continuously reviving from generation to generation, over the centuries, there is a need to study from new angles. Issues such as the continuity between epic melodies and song melodies, the separation of zhyrs and songs in regions with a developed singing tradition, the syncretic artistic identities and singers are especially relevant*.

* One of the topics closely related to this subject is the issue of "an-kuy" and "zhyr-kuy", which is widely

The creative work of the outstanding singer of the Syrdarya Region, Nartay Bekezhanov, has been widely covered in studies introducing the vocal schools of this area. While some researchers place particular emphasis on his singing artistry, others highlight his mastery as a zhyrshy (epic performer). In relation to this, the following lines may be cited as an example: "Among those in Kazakh culture who successfully combined singing and poetic artistry, the most prominent and highly respected figures were Nareke, Doskey, and Shashubai. We say this because Nareke was, first and foremost, recognized as a singer. He skillfully used refined zhyr and expressive poetic language to give profound meaning and strong emotional intensity to his elevated melodies. Thus, his singing and compositional art stand above all else. For this reason, special attention should be paid to Nareke's vocal and compositional mastery, as well as to his contribution to Kazakh artistic culture" (Nartaev, 2007: 18).

In addition to his well-known songs that have already become deeply rooted in public consciousness, it is important to examine the relationship between zhyr and song in such works as "Bazarym Tarqap Barady", "Aq Urmash", "Atandym Nartay Sanglaq" and "Bastau" and to present them in notated form as performed by contemporary zhyrshy.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Methods

In studying the influence of the epic tradition on vocal art, the methodological basis was formed by the works of literary scholars and folklorists who researched epics, including M.Auezov, M.Gabdullin, K.Zhumaliev, E.Ismayilov, M.Karataev, A.Kongyratbaev, K.Sydykov, R.Berdibaev, S.Kaskabasov, T.Kongyratbay, B.Azibaeva, K.Alpysbaeva, K.Buzaubagarova, Zh.Rakysh, among others. Studies by musicologists B.Erzakhovich, A.Kunanbayeva, and A.Bultbayeva were also taken as methodological references. In this context, the work of zhyrshy such as A.Almatov, B.Saimagambetov, B.Zhussipov, E.Zhanabergenova, and U.Baybosynov proved valuable as methodological material.

In his monograph "The Song Culture of the Kazakh People", B.Erzakhovich identifies three main types of music in epics and legends in the chapter "Musical Embodiment of Epic Tales and Legends": "recitative-song", "illustrative music", and "finished music". Among these, special attention is given to "recitative-song", which he defines as follows: "By "song-recitative", we refer to the performance of an epic in a verse form called zhyr (syllabic in structure, with 7-8 syllables per line) set to a short, narrow-range melody with a uniform rhythm, introduced by an opening exclamation. Such a melody, closely related in character to *terme* and *zheldirme* (traditional song-recitations of poets, to which they perform poetic improvisations), is varied, expanded, or contracted in individual phrases, lines, or segments by the zhyrshy during the course of the epic. The performance of the epic is typically accompanied by one of the national instruments – *dombra* or *kobyz*, and, from the late 19th century, by the *syrai*, a two-row harmonized instrument" (Erzakhovich, 1966: 158).

discussed in instrumental music. In this regard, it is important to cite the research of A. Sarymsakova: "It is possible that the area of their existence is closely connected with the intensity of the functioning of those traditions that had a direct influence on their development. Thus, information relating to zhyr-kuy has mainly been collected in regions with "strong" epic and *dombra* traditions" (Sarymsakova, 2021: 4).

In her work on the epic tradition, Alma Kunanbayeva offers the following observation: "The growing interest in the epic draws non-epic singers into the realm of performance. They sing within the song tradition, employing more "static" lyrical melodies through their "elongation", since the need to perform tirade-like (epic) texts in strophic (couplet, song) form leads to the repetition of the most "convenient" lines several times. In this case, the song cadences prove unsuitable for the epic, as they possess a purely musical (modal-melodic) rather than speech-based nature. The rhythm of alternating recitative and singing in tales and songs of epic content thus differs. In short, the song form is an inadequate vessel for epic narration: it is a crystal, which in no way corresponds to the 'river' of epic intonation" (Kunanbayeva, 1984: 186).

That is, the transition of zhyr into a song form – its adaptation of epic texts into melody – addresses the rhythmic and structural differences between zhyr and song, as well as the interactions and influences between them.

In her work "The Zhyr Tradition of the Aral-Kazaly Region", E.Zhanabergenova notes: "According to elderly informants, the maqam of the zhyr from the Aral-Kazaly region have long been referred to by the people as "songs". In my youth, I often heard these elders say, "this is Zhanabergen's song", "this is the song performed before dawn", "this is the song performed in the evening", "this is Japparberdi's song", "this is Musabay's song", "this is Dariqul's song". Even now, from time to time, they are still referred to in this way" (Zhanabergen, 2022: 124).

In her study, U.Baibussynova notes: "In the history of culture, the works of poets and zhyrshy along the Syrdarya River, who preserved the ancient traditions of Kazakh art, have now formed new models of performance art. These performers include termeshy and zhyrshy. The creative output of each poet-zhyrshy along the Syrdarya, which formed the foundation of their performance art, also gave rise to maqam-musical schools reflecting stylistic individuality. Here, we observe that the audience, within the local community, preserved the tradition of these maqam-musical schools through the oral performance of the works of Syrdarya poets. Examples of the formation of such maqam-musical patterns include "Zhiembay-Rustembek Makham", "Tasbergen's Manyrama", "Akimgerei's Song", "Nartay's Melody", among others. This demonstrates the continuity and interaction of pre-Islamic and post-Islamic folk art traditions in the culture of the Syrdarya peoples" (Baibussynova, 2024: 117). Considering this, Nartay's songs reveal such continuity and interconnection of traditions are also reflected in the vocal art of the Syrdarya region.

A.Zhubanov, who wrote a special essay on Nartay Bekezhonov, focuses on his life, creative path, and extraordinary talents. The academician writes: "Among Kazakh folk singers, there were many remarkably versatile individuals. They were usually not only singers and performers, but also musicians and composers. Among them were also exceptional poets and improvisers. Today, they are referred to as singer-poets or poet-zhyrshy. Such poet-zhyrshy generally left a significant mark both in literature and in music. Their work has been studied by literary scholars and historians of literature, as well as by musicologists and historians of music. This is entirely understandable, as the era itself required such versatile figures, and the Kazakh land generously produced them. Despite the "division of labor" and narrow specialization among later masters of art, even

in our time there have been many such universally gifted individuals, whom Kazakhs call "eight-sided". The tradition has not died; it has merely acquired new forms and content. Contemporary singer-poets and poet-zhyrshy actively participate in the great construction of our time through their songs, poetry and music" (Zhubanov, 1967: 264). He continues: "Among the galaxy of epic singers and singer-poets, Nartay Bekezhanov occupies one of the most honored positions. He became famous at an early age as a singer" (Zhubanov, 1967: 266).



Nartay Bekezhanov

2.2. Materials

Among professional folk composers, the outstanding singer, zhyrshy, and poet of this region, Nartay Bekezhanov, holds a particularly prominent place in vocal art. Nartay's musical legacy is represented in several collections: the recordings of five songs are included in "1000 Kazakh Traditional Songs" (2010), six songs with recordings and notation are featured in the anthology "Ancient Motifs of the Great Steppe" (2019), and "The Legacy of Syrnai" (Smakova, 2021) contains recordings of 28 songs and notation for seven songs.

The songs preserved in these works were taken as research material, and the musical-zhyr continuity of these songs was identified and analyzed. During the musical and poetic analysis, music notation of the songs and poetic translations of the texts were provided.

1000 Kazakh Traditional Songs (2010)	Ancient Motifs of the Great Steppe (2019)	The Legacy of Syrnai (2021)	
CD	CD + notation	CD	notation
"Zhenis pen Shattvk" (A Kurmanov)			
"Altyn Kokem" (M Rustemov)	"Ak Urmash" (N Aktaev)	"Urmash Sulu" (M Sugurbay)	
"Igigay" (B Zhussipov)	"Altyn Kokem" (M Rustemov)	"Altyn Kokem" (M Rustemov)	"Altyn Kokem" (M Rustemov)
	"Igigay" (B Zhussipov)	"Igigay" (B Zhussipov)	"Igigay" (B Zhussipov)
	"Atandym Nartai Sanglaq" (K Bekpevisov)	"Atandym Nartai Sanglaq" (K Bekpevisov)	"Atandym Nartai Sanglaq" (K Bekpevisov)
	"Bazarym Tarkap Barady" (N Aktaev)	"Bazarym Tarkap Barady" (K Bekpevisov)	
	"Bastau" (M Bekpevisov)	"Bastau Gigi-Gay" (A Nogaybayeva)	
"Olenim Sokkan Dauvy" (R Stangaziev)		"Olenim Sokkan Dauvy" (K Bekpevisov)	
"Nartai's Song" (K Bekpevisov)		"Nartai's Song" (K Tolenbayeva)	
		"Avelderge" (K Bekpevisov)	"Avelderge" (K Bekpevisov)
		"Nakyl Soz" (K Bekpevisov)	"Nakyl Soz" (K Bekpevisov)
		"Ozdering Biler Nartaimyn" (K Bekpevisov)	"Ozdering Biler Nartaimyn" (K Bekpevisov)
		"El Seni Qadirlesin Akynym Dep" (K Bekpevisov)	"El Seni Qadirlesin Akynym Dep" (K Bekpevisov)
		"Elge Artau" (M Rustemov)	
		"Zhyr Bastau" (K Bekpevisov)	
		"Zhisit pe zhyrn toyda zhelikpegen" (K Bekpevisov)	
		"Qamal buzhandar" (N Aktaev)	
		"Men kimmin?" (K Bekpevisov)	
		"Beibitshilik" (N Ospanov)	
		"Zhaksy Men Zhaman" (Zh Spataev)	
		"Zhambul akyngha" (N Ospanov)	
		"Nartai's tolzau" (S Apzhanaparov)	
		"Soleimin khalgym buzin men" (M Bekpevisov)	
		"Ne zhetpevdi?" (K Bekpevisov)	
		"Nartai's last terme" (Zh Spataev)	
		"Zhenis kuni" (K Bekpevisov)	
		"Sylvaskangha ne zhetstin" (K Bekpevisov)	
		"Svidymak" (K Bekpevisov)	
		"Zhenis zhyrv" (K Bekpevisov)	

3. Discussion

Despite the widespread development of zhyrau art in the Syrdarya region, the folk songs of this region are also distinguished by their distinctive features. Most of them developed in close connection with the Zhyr tradition and were formed under the influence of Zhyrau performing arts. Such songs include "Begiler-ai", "Bozbala", "Saulem-ai", "Zhamal-ai", "Shaigil", "Zamandas".

One song that clearly reflects the influence of zhyr is "Bozbala". Songs bearing this title exist in various regions. Previous published versions, for example, appear in the anthology "1000 Traditional Songs of the Kazakh People": performed by G.Arysbaeva (version 1) and by G.Kurmangaliyev (version 2). However, this "Bozbala" differs from the "Bozbala" known elsewhere. This song was transmitted through the zhyr of the Syrdarya region, with its author being Zhienbai Zhyrau (epic poet). It was first performed by artists who inherited the epic tradition from their ancestors, such as Eshniyaz, Zhussip, Muzarap, and Sabyt. In order not to tire those gathered at weddings, zhyrau sometimes sang "Bozbala" to cheer up people. Such light songs subsequently became folk songs.

Among such songs, "Saulem-ai" – which exists in ten variations among the people – stands out. Through the interpretation of Garifolla Kurmangaliyev, one version of this song, memorized in the collective memory and performed mainly in western Kazakhstan, was identified as originating from the Syrdarya Region. This provenance was confirmed by the Nauryzbek Zhyrau. Singers who learned the song from Nauryzbek preserved it, and through Garifolla Kurmangaliyev, it also became widely known in the western regions of Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, the original source of the song is the Syrdarya region.

Since it is a folk song, it can be assumed that data on the specific history of its origin have not been preserved either orally or in writing. Judging by his lyrics, it can be assumed that this is a guy's song that he composed for a girl leaving for a distant country. In the song

tracks, along with a sense of stillness, the impeccable pure love of the young man can be traced, who called the girl to friendship and said: "Give the ring", that his hope has not yet been lost. You can also notice that the young man added passion to the song, which would lead to a dream of meeting him, talking about his social position, lifestyle. Note that the melody of the song retains regional specifics, the melody preserves the regional musical style.

This song, like others, has been preserved without losing its regional character, and its melody is harmoniously integrated with zhyr maqam, demonstrating the musical and structural continuity between zhyr and folk song traditions.

Songs from the Syrdarya Region that demonstrate continuity with the epic tradition provide valuable directions for research. For example, the maqam of Rustembek Duzbembetov's songs "Ak Tolyk-ai" and "Zhanim Monshan" reveal elements of the zhyrshy style. Similarly, the song "Balymshе" by Muzarap Zhussipov, performed by zhyrshy Ulzhan Baibussynova, exhibits comparable stylistic features. This song, like others, has survived for a long time without distortion, appropriation, or neglect. Thanks to the diligent work of scholars and performers, all of these songs have been preserved, studied, and included in anthologies of Syrdarya Region songs and performers' repertoires. This provides a tangible and well-documented rebuttal to the unfounded claim that "there are no songs in Syrdarya" demonstrating the rich musical heritage of the region.

Nartay Bekezhanov (1890-1954) was born in Bestam, Shieli District, Kyzylorda Region. From the age of ten, he memorized and performed the verses of prominent zhyr of the Syrdarya Region, absorbing their artistic traditions. Nartay's teachers included his elder brother Mansur Bekezhanov (1875-1933) and Tayzhan Kalmagambetov (1878-1938), a distinguished poet and singer from the Arka region. From them, he learned to integrate his twelve-tone soft button with the Tatars' garmon (folk wind instrument) to perform songs. In addition to his skillful performances of folk songs, Nartay composed his own pieces, including "Tolkyn", "Nartay Sazy" and "Osiyet Terme" (admonition). According to academician A. Zhubanov, Nartay's name began to gain recognition across the republic in 1938, when he participated in an event celebrating the seventieth anniversary of Zhambyl's creative activity.

Academician A. Zhubanov notes: "In 1938, Nartay was invited to the celebrations dedicated to the seventieth anniversary of the creative activity of Zhambyl, the giant of Kazakh folk poetry, the "father of poets" Noticing the famous Nartay among the poets, Zhambyl rejoiced, approached him, and addressed him with these lines:

O Nartay, with a ringing voice and eloquence!

Your words are sugar, your motifs are honey.

You sing and the heart ignites instantly,

As if the sun gilds the edge of the earth.

Zhambyl held Nartay in the highest regard. He spoke repeatedly afterwards about Nartay's remarkable talent and poetic mastery" (Zhubanov, 1967: 271).

Nartay's versatile talent and improvisational skill were evident in his poet, zhyrshy, oratory, composition, and singing*. He was also a poet who participated in aitys (poetic

* The "eight-faceted, one-secret" talent observed in Nartay Bekezhanov can also be found among zhyr of other

contests), with well-known exchanges involving the girls "Aq Urmash", "Saulen", and "Inkar". In 1937, an amateur art circle organized under the name "Nartay Bekezhhanov's Brigade" united poets and singers around Nartay in Shieli, then moved to the ensemble, and then to the regional philharmonic society.



Nartay Bekezhhanov's ensemble (1940).



Nartay Bekezhhanov's ensemble (1945).

The team, led by Nartay Bekezhhanov, included talented artists from different countries: aytysker poets (musical-poetic contestant), termeshy (performer of musical-poetic works composed in the tirade verse form), singers, dancers, kyushy (performer of instrumental music). Among them are Alibek Baikenov Budabay Kabylovich, Akmyrza Tuyakbaev, Hadisha Baimukhamedova, Kundebay Aldongarov, Myrzabay Adilov, Kalampur Adilova, Sabit Zhusupov and others.

Nartay's creative and pedagogical influence continued through his students, forming what became known as the "Nartay School" and establishing a concert ensemble. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, he was awarded the Order of the Badge of Honor, various medals, and the Honorary Certificate of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR. In 1939, he received the title of "Honored Art Worker of the Kazakh SSR".

Nartay Bekezhhanov's songs, like the works of Kotesch Akyn (poet) and Shal Akyn, continue the literary patterns inherited from the earlier zhyrshy, undergoing both structural and thematic transformations. This aligns with the perspective of S.Kaskabasov:

"The artistic patterns inherited from former zhyrshy continue in the works of subsequent poets. In particular, the bridging role of Kotesch Akyn (1745-1818) and Shal Akyn (1748-1819) is notable. They composed poems in both the traditional zhyr style and in new forms. On the one hand, they reflected on didactic themes of old, distinguishing right from wrong, and contemplating deceptive wealth and false life; on the other hand, they also addressed topics related to daily life, customs, and social norms. From their works onward, changes began to appear in the form of Kazakh poetry. They gradually restricted the formal freedom

regions. For instance, examining the creative work of poets and zhyr from the Mangystau region, N.S.Kamarova notes: "Zhyr of the Mangystau region, in addition to performing and popularizing the works of earlier poets and zhyr and incorporating praise into the zhyr, also created their own tolgau (poetic reflections), epic zhyr, and dedications, which they disseminated among the people. They performed all types of zhyr accompanied by the dombra. The eloquence of their speech, combined with their zhyr tradition, prepared them to become accomplished performers, dombra players, and singers capable of delivering extended zhyr, demonstrating their exceptional qualities" (Kamarova, 2024: 282-283).

characteristic of traditional zhyrshy: although free stanzas, rhymes, and line structures were not immediately abolished, they were increasingly constrained. Alongside the tirade-like free structure of older *tolgaus* (lyric compositions), four-line stanzas began to appear. Whereas the rhymes in zhyrshy were generally free and could extend across several stanzas, in later poets' works rhyme followed the strict *aaba* pattern and became more suited to melodic recitation than to strict rhythm. Gradually, the traditional *tolgau* gave way to the 11-syllable *kara-olen* form, whereas previously lines contained seven, eight, or more syllables, now standardizing at eleven syllables per line" (Kaskabasov, 2014: 240).

Thus, the influence of the epic tradition is also evident in Nartay's songs, reflected in both their structural and rhythmic features, allowing his work to be characterized as a synthesis of tradition and innovation.

The song "Altyn Kokem" reflects a period when, during the Soviet era, there was a deliberate state-level policy aimed at erasing the cultural heritage of each nation. National cultural figures consistently addressed pressing issues specific to their people in their work; regardless of the abstraction of a given piece, its roots drew nourishment from ethnic folklore, traditional pedagogy, ethics, and worldview. Unsurprisingly, this did not appeal to Soviet ideologues.

One of the Bolshevik "experiments" that inflicted the greatest damage on the indigenous culture of each nation was the campaign to utilize all of Kazakh cultural and literary resources as tools serving state ideology. As a result, nearly a hundred native cultural forms were lost forever, and the cultural and spiritual identity of many nations was severely diminished.

During this period, cultural and literary figures – including writers, poets, singers, zhyrshy and visual artists – were all mobilized under the framework of Soviet ideology. In the field of music, many songs underwent editorial revision, and numerous compositions were censored or banned for containing content deemed anti-state. Concurrently, the repertoire of songs celebrating themes such as "Motherland", "Lenin" and the "Soviet Union" increased significantly. Among these, the song "Altyn Kokem" by the singer Nartay Bekezhonov remains as a relic of that era. This particular song was recorded in the performance of Aizakhan Bizhanova*.



Aizakhan Bizhanova (1980).

* Aizakhan Bizhanova performed as part of Nartay Bekezhonov's ensemble. This composition was dedicated to the singer Aizakhan by a young man who had fallen in love with her. The work has been widely circulated as a folk song.

АЛТЫН КӨКЕМ Нартай Бекежанов Орындаған Айгүлхан Бижанова Асымдай, әлдеге $\text{♩} = 94$	Altyn kokem Otan ushin, halyq ushin tilektemin, Qaiyspasyn, talmasyn bilekterin. Elge bergen antymdy oryndaimyn, Qazhymasyn, talmasyn zhyrekterin. Qaiymasy: Arystandaj ajbatty altyn kokem, Tugan zherin esen-sau korer me eken? Otan ushin maidanda agalarym, Uly Lenin esimde babalarym. Qairat istep kolhozda qarttarym zhur, Aq sut berip osirgen analarym. Qaiymasy: Arystandaj ajbatty altyn kokem, Turan zherin esen-sau korer erteñ. Bozbalanyñ arystany altyn kokem, Zhaudy zhenip zharkyrap keler erteñ.
Altyn kokem For the Motherland, for the people, I offer my wishes, May your arms never bend, may they never grow weary. I will fulfill the oath I gave to my country, May your hearts never tire, never lose their strength. <i>Chorus:</i> My golden brother, fierce as a lion, Will he return safely to his native land?	For the Motherland, my brothers are at the front, The great Lenin lives in my memory, like my ancestors. With strength, our elders labor in the kolkhoz, And our mothers, who raised us with their milk, endure. My golden brother, fierce as a lion, Will he return safely to his homeland tomorrow? O lion among young men, my golden brother, Having defeated the enemy, he will return in glory tomorrow.

The melodic lines follow an abab rhyme pattern. The first and third melodic lines are united by phonetic correspondence (e.g., the endings -min / -myn), whereas the second and fourth melodic lines share a common ending (e.g., -rin). This demonstrates that the traditional rhyme scheme is preserved in an organized form while retaining the flexibility characteristic of the oral poetic tradition.

In addition, the melody is more focused on melody than rhythm. Repetitions within the lines (e.g., “Qayyspasyn, talmasyn” – “May it not weaken, may it not tire”, “Qajymasyn, talmasyn” – “May it not grow weary, may it not tire”) and the use of vocative intonation emphasize the song-like quality of the poem. Such a structure intensifies the emotional impact on the listener.

The lines are close to the 11-syllable kara-olen meter. The relatively stable syllable count indicates an alignment of the poem with the form of kara-olen poetry.

The presence of a refrain (“Arystanday aibatty altyn kokem...” – “My golden elder, mighty as a lion...”) further highlights the convergence of the poem toward the song genre. Here, the lyrical character is enhanced, emphasizing wishes, encouragement, and longing.

These stanzas preserve features typical of zhyrshy while gradually transitioning toward a melodic, song-like version of kara-olen, demonstrating a clear process of formal and melodic adaptation.

“Atandym Nartay Sanglaq” is an autobiographical (self-portrait) song by Nartay Bekezhonov. Such compositions are characteristic of many Kazakh poets. Across different regions of Kazakhstan, one frequently encounters similar works within the creative practice of sal-seri performers, where artists portray themselves through verse – expressing the

public's admiration or defining their own place within the artistic sphere. In their time, such songs functioned as a kind of artistic "passport" for the performer.

Other examples of autobiographical songs include "Igigay", "Bastau", and others. This particular song was performed by Kurmanbek Bekpeissov* and transcribed into musical notation.

Атандым Нартай саңлак Нартай Бекжанов Орандаган Құрманбек Бекпейіс Шырката, әлесте $\text{♩} = 90$ Сөз айт-сан - ау жо-һін та-уып ха-пак-к(а)ір-нау, Сым-бат-ты шат-тық жыр-дан күр-син - ш(ы)н - лу - ан. Жы-нат - тай жақ-с(ы)ө-лси - дер жа-ра - са - ды, Ен а - сыз ка - ма-на - дай тап-сан тап-дау. Ат дү-бір-дей жүй-ріс шық - па - са, шы-ғар-шп - тай, Ақ-сұң-қар ша-рып-тай - ды-оу ка-нат как-пай. А - сым-дан мақ - та - май-ақ кү-шы қам - бат, Те - рен - нен кой - мас - ынн о - сым-дан тап - пай. Ау, а - қын-быз ақ-та - рып-ғип, а, қы - ту қан - ды, Ша - ша - мыз жыр-дан ан - нен ша-шу - дәр-ды. "Па, шір-кін!"-деп кой - сым - дәр ан - да сым - да, Қы - зыр білср бір де - сен а-қан - дәр - ды.	Atandym Nartay sanlag Soz aitsan, zhonin tauyp halyqqa arnau, Symbatty shattqy zhyrdan qursanshy aluan. Zhannattai zhaqsy olender zharasady, En asyl qazynadai tapsan tandau. At dubirlei zhuirik shyqpasa, shygar shappai, Aq sunqar sharyqtaidy qanat qaqpai. Asyldyn maqtamai-aq quny qymbat, Terennen qoimaspun osymdy tappai. Aqynbyz aqtarylğan qyzu qandy, Shashamyz zhyrdan-annen shashulardy. «Pa, shirkin!» – dep, qojsandar anda-sanda, Qyzyr biler bir desen aqyndardy. Atandık sözden zhyirik Nartaj sañlak, Ystadyk zholymyzdy sözdi tynǵap. Sizdermen sau-salamat bas qoskanda, Әnimdi aırtajyn neshe tarmak.
Atandym Nartay sanlag If you speak, find the way – address the people true, Let your graceful joy take form in songs anew. Like paradise, let noble verses brightly shine, Like treasured gems, discovered, rare and fine. A swift horse needs no urging to take its flight, A white falcon soars without a wing's full might. The worthy needs no praise – its value stands, I will not rest till I uncover what depth demands.	We are poets, with ardent, surging blood, We scatter songs like gifts in festive flood. If now and then you sigh, "Ah, what delight!" Perhaps Khidr himself will know our poet's light. We became renowned – Nartay, swift in word, Following the path where true speech is heard. And now, gathered here in health and cheer, Let me unfold my song in verses clear.

* Kurmanbek Bekpeissov was born on 10.08.1965 in Botabay village, Syrdariya district, Kyzylorda region. From an early age he was awarded the status of zhyrau. A talented singer who promotes the motives of the Syr Darya area and the legacy of Nartay. Zhyr, terme performed by Kurmanbek Seydakhmeduly are inscribed in the golden archive of the Lord's International Conference. He accompanied himself in dombyra, synnai and kobyz. He is the Laureate of the Republican contests.

Verse sleep – with traces of the type of abca. Each line has sound harmony, the sounds at the end of the word are combined with each other and are associated with the sound structure of the poem. Despite the tendency to sing and melody, in the rhythmic structure there are repeated sounds (“Slender joy – variety”, “The most noble treasure – choice”).

The lines consist of approximately eleven syllables (3+4+4). Maintaining the size characteristic of the kara-olen verse helps to ease the rhythm. This metric facilitates the maintenance of rhythm and enhances the poem’s effect on the listener.

These stanzas emphasize content elements such as wishes for the people, praise, and appreciation of values. Formally, they also display features of the melodic, singable syllabic verse derived from the epic tradition.

The song “Bazarym tarqap Barady” reflects the immense esteem accorded to Nartay in his time – an honor as weighty as a load carried by sixty camels. Having passed the age of sixty, the poet turns inward in reflection, recalling the prime of his youth – his brilliance like a polished diamond, his ardent twenty-five, his accomplished thirty, his sharp and decisive forty, and his wise, respected fifty, when he had become a leader among his people. A song composed by the poet Nartay at the age of sixty. Reflecting on the different stages of life—from youth shaped by the wisdom of elders, through the passionate years of early adulthood, the energetic age of twenty-five, the maturity of thirty, the strength and determination of forty, and the wisdom and leadership associated with fifty—the poet ultimately realizes that human strength, success, and fortune are transient. The text of the poem means that a person has become a guest of this world. Created with a profound sense of responsibility to the nation and a commitment to upholding moral values, the song is distinguished by a melody that conveys these sentiments through its expressive, dignified, and emotionally compelling character. This song was transcribed into musical notation in the performance of Nurtilek Abdigapparuly Aktaev*.

* Nurtilek Abdigapparuly Aktayev (1990) was born at Station 21, Shieli district, Kyzylorda region. In 2012 he graduated from Korkyt Kyzylorda University, majoring in traditional musical art. In the same year, he began his teaching career at the Children's Music School in the Shieli district and in 2018 was appointed Deputy Director on educational affairs at this educational institution.

Базарым тарқап барады Нартай Бекжанов Орындаған Нұртай Ахмет	Bazarym tarqap Barady
	Dep edi Zhambyl magan qasqamandai, Auzynnan shyqqan sozin sheker baldai. Sher minez sheshen edi soiler sozge, Zharqyrap qarangyda zhanghan shamdai. Ua, dariga, otken kunder eske tusip, Alpystyn asuynda oira boilai. Zhazira zhastyq shaqtyn sairana bagyn, Aralap otippiz-au tugin qoimai. Bolmady sabyr-tagat bir orynda, Kokke ushyp zherge qonbai boldym torgai. Qyrandai qiada ushyp, qanat zhazyp, Otkizip kyndi-tyndi-au zherge qonbaj. Qaiymasy: Bajagy zhiyrma besim qaityp kelsin, Dariga-ai, zhuzer edim Syrdy boilai. Ahau, agagai, agagai, Agaga, ci. Ahau, agiga, daidim. Meni de eske alatyn tabylar zhan, Eger de tabylmasa, qalar marzhan. Artymda olmeitugyn sozim qalsa, Men de bir zhan bolarmyn bagym zhanghan. Aqquga aspandagy andi qosqan, Zhyrymnan zhibek estim balbyragan. Dana Abai sulu sozdin sheberi edi, Asem an artylgan zhoq Birzhan saldan. Ulytau, Saryarqany erkesi edim, Aigili orta zhyzde Taizhan agam. Nartaydy kim bilmeidi osy kyndi, Zhel sozdin zhyirik atyn qamshylagan. Qaiymasy: Ahau, agagai, agagai, Agaga, ci. Ahau, agiga, daidim.

"Bazarym Tarqap Barady" (lyrics excerpt)	
Zhambyl once said to me, broad-browed one, Your words flow sweet – like honey from the tongue. A speaker of depth, with thoughtful grace, Like a shining lamp in a darkened place. Ah, alas, as past days return to mind, At sixty's pass, I reflect and unwind. The vast gardens of youth, so free and wide, We wandered through them – nothing left aside. I knew no patience, could not stay still, Like a restless bird, I soared at will. Like an eagle in the heights, wings spread afar, Day and night in flight—I knew no bar. <i>Chorus:</i> If only my twenty-five would return again, Ah, I would drift along the Syrdarya then. Ahau, agegey, agegey, Agege, cy, Ahau, agige, daydim.	There will be one who remembers me still, If not, my words remain – a pearl of will. If immortal lines I leave behind, Then I too shall live, with fortune aligned. To the swan in the sky I joined my song, From my verse flowed silk, soft and strong. Wise Abay – master of the noble word, And Birzhan sal – no fairer song was heard. I was once the pride of Ulytau and Saryarka's land, My elder Taizhan, famed across the Middle Horde's span. Who today does not know Nartay's name, Who spurred the swift horse of eloquent flame? <i>Chorus:</i> Ahau, agegey, agegey, Agege, cy, Ahau, agige, daydim.

In the first lines, the rhyme structure (aaba pattern) is noticeable. For example, the pairs “qasqamañday – balday” – “like a leopard – like honey” and “sözge – şamday” – “to the word – like a lamp” correspond through phonetic harmony, complementing each other. This preserves the end-rhyme and musicality of the poem.

The stanzas are also melodic and adapted for singing. Words and interjections such as “Ua, dariga” and “Ahau, agagay” give the poem a distinctive melodic quality and emotional impact. Such words and calls as “Ua, dariga”, “Ahau, agai” adapted to melody and singing in noises, have a special emotional effect on the poem.

The lines consist of approximately eleven syllables, characteristic of kara-olen verse. The relative stability of the number of syllables in the poem enhances the rhythmic expression.

The poem conveys themes of sorrow, longing, freedom, and the beauty of nature. Images such as flying, writing wings, spending the day and night increase the dynamics of the poem and contribute to the predominance of passion.

The works clearly reflect the melodious, song-like features of the traditional kara-olen verse inherited from the zhyrau tradition. The combination of drowsiness, number of syllables and rhythm in the poem forms a description of the state of meaningful emotions.

The song “Aq Urmash” depicts a Kazakh girl combining the beauty of Urmash’s soul and body. Performed with deep emotional expression, the song begins with elevated, soaring tones and unfolds at a measured, expansive tempo.

Ақ Ұрмаш Нартай Бексалиев Орындаған Нұртілек Ақиев	Aq Urmash
Ақсыйқай, шырыста d = 70 	Aq Urmash, konilin aina shynysyndai, Azharyn aq kymistin syrlysyndai. El tansyq dauysyna tamagyn aq, Zhalt etip korinesin zhyl qusyndai. Qaiyrmasy: Ua, dariga, ei, oidam, Eki betin zhazyqtyn anaryndai, anaryndai. Ainalaiyn, Urmashzhan qurdasym-ai, syrlasym-ai. Bir shygyp bir tysetin qyr basyna-ai. Akennin qyz da bolsa ulyndaisyn, Orynsyz zhaman iske urynbaisyn. Zhaqyndap zhanabyna bargan saiyn, Altynnyn asyl magan kulondaisyn Qaiyrmasy: Ua, dariga, ei, oidam, Eki betin zhazyqtyn anaryndai, anaryndai. Ainalaiyn, Urmashzhan qurdasym-ai, syrlasym-ai.
Ak Urmash Ak Urmash, your soul is like clear glass, Your beauty shines like polished silver. Your voice amazes all who hear it, You flash by like a migratory bird. <i>Chorus:</i> Oh, dariga, hey, oydam, Your cheeks are like steppe pomegranates, like pomegranates. My dear Urmash, my peer, my confidant, Climbing up and down the hill again and again.	Though a daughter, you are like a son to your father, You never fall into unworthy deeds. Each time I draw closer to you, You are like a precious golden pendant to me. <i>Chorus:</i> Oh, dariga, hey, oydam, Your cheeks are like steppe pomegranates, like pomegranates. My dear Urmash, my peer, my confidant, Climbing up and down the hill again and again.

The poem follows an AABA rhyme scheme, in which the repeated endings of shynysyndai, syrlysyndai, and zhyl qusyndai ("like glass," "like a mystery," and "like a migratory bird") contribute to the poem's rhythmic and musical effect. The sound range of the song increases from the sound of the "g" first octave to the "a" second octave. Exclamations in the refrain, such as "Ua, dariga, ey, oidam" – "Oh, my goodness, alas, hey, I say" and "Ainalaiyn, Urmashzhan kurdasymai" – "My dear, my friend Urmashzhan", add emotional depth and musicality to the poem, capturing the listener's attention.

The lines consist of eleven syllables – kara-olen verse, which in content reflects the beauty of personality, proximity to the soul and a sense of friendship. Images such as "Eki betin zhazyktyng anaryndai" – "Your two cheeks are like the pomegranate of the plain" and "Bir shyghyp bir tusetin qyr basyna-ai" – "Onto the ridge that rises and falls, oh" are harmonized with nature, enhancing the lyrical effect.

These stanzas clearly reflect elements of the melodic, singable syllabic verse derived from the zhyrau tradition. The poem harmoniously integrates form and content, preserving musicality while delivering an emotional impact to the listener.

Among the songs in which the distinct influence of zhyr can be observed are "Bastau" performed by Mukhamedzhan Bekpeissov*, and "Iligai" performed by Balkhashbay Zhusipov**.

In her study of the zhyr "Kyz Zhibek", A.Bultbayeva notes: "Professional zhyr schools have been widely developed in the Syrdarya region. This sacred land has gifted the nation not just one, but several generations of zhyrau and zhyrshy. The phrase "The land of Syrdarya is the land of zhyr" has become a kind of motto for the Syrdarya region. With its traditions, musical distinctiveness, and talented zhyrau, the Syrdarya region has always delighted its audiences" (Bultbayeva, 2008: 99).

She further writes: "In general, the creative work of zhyrau and zhyrshy, as an expression of their devotion to tradition, led to the formation of several professional zhyr schools. Among them are the zhyrau and zhyr schools of the Aral, Kazaly, and Karmakshy districts; the creative school of the poet Nartay in the Shieli district; the artistic school of the poet Manap Koken in the Zhanakorgan area, and others" (Bultbayeva, 2008: 99).

4. Results

The study revealed that in the Syrdarya region the epic tradition and song art have developed in close interconnection. The study demonstrates that zhyr schools had a direct impact on the formation of the region's song culture, which is reflected in the thematic content, structural organization, and performance features of the songs.

* Muhammedali Bekpeissov (28.08.1995) was born in Shieli area, Kyzylorda region. He graduated from Korkyt Kyzylorda State University majoring in Traditional Art. In 2014-2018 worked in the Kyzylorda Regional Philharmonic. Currently, he is acting Deputy Director of the Department of culture and language development at the Nartay School of Art in Shieli. The Laureate of Republican contests.

** Balkhashbai Zhusipuly (1907) was born in Karmakshy district, Kyzylorda region in the family of a chairman of the aul council, a man of an educated, competent and often sung song. From the age of 12 he begins to play dombra, leaning towards the field of art. He studied with such masters as Zhusip, Zhiembai, Tasbergen, Moldahmet, Nartai. Since 1973 - artist of the Kyzylorda Regional Philharmonic. In his repertoire, in addition to songs from the Syrdariya region, there is Omar's dastan (epic) "Tau elibay", several parts of Kete Zhusip's kissa "Shahzada", "Korugly", as well as compositions by Turmagambet, Ongar, Bazar and others. There is a song of its own "Koktem". He was awarded the Kurmet diploma of the Kazakh SSR.

An analysis of the creative work of Nartay Bekezhanov showed that he was a versatile artist who successfully integrated the traditions of zhyrshy and song. Through such works as "Altyn Kokem", "Atandym Nartay Sanglaq", and "Bazarym Tarqap Barady" the influence of the ideology of the era, elements of self-representation, and philosophical reflection were identified. At the same time, his works preserve the recitative character, poetic structure, and distinctive performance manner typical of the epic tradition.

The analysis shows the performance model and creative tradition formed by Nartay were transmitted to subsequent generations and became established as the "Nartay school". This phenomenon reflects the syncretic nature of epic and song traditions and characterizes the unique features of the musical culture of the Syrdarya region. It was clarified that the influence of the epic tradition on the song genre manifests not only at the level of content, but also in melodic, structural, and performance dimensions.

5. Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that many folk songs of the Syrdarya region originated within the framework of the epic tradition, through which they were preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. Folk songs in connection with the widespread development of epic art in the region have long been ignored by research, which requires systematic attention to them. In the course of the study, it was noted that the intonation, structural and performing features of the epic influenced the song genre and laid the foundation for the formation of their own stylistic features.

The creative work of Nartay Bekezhanov is regarded as a vivid example of the interaction between epic and song traditions. In his works, the recitative character characteristic of creativity, poetic depth and performing specificity are preserved, there are moments in harmony with the song genre.

In general, from the point of view of interaction and interconnection of epic and song traditions in the Syrdarya region, the study will allow to comprehensively learn other regional traditional musical cultures of Kazakhs. Such research will remain relevant and important in the preservation, systematization and introduction of national heritage into scientific circulation.

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