

The Varieties of Formulaic Diction in Turkic Oral Epics

Abstract: This article tries to show that the formulaic diction on the level of verse line and formulaic patterning in the composition of scenes are closely related and must be studied together. The analysis is done on the example of Turkic epics. Of the formulaic patterns the most prominent one is the variety of use of the attribute *ak* (white), which appears to be one of the most common epithets in Turkic epic poetry. It is usually connected with cloth (e.g. caftan, yurt), different parts of body (face, bosom), antelope, the lumps of gold given as bride-price and various kinds of arms (sword, spear) etc. It is usually denoted evaluatively as purity and beauty. In this matter Turkic epics share its position with many national epics of the middle ages including Serbian, Old English, Old German etc. The same role is analyzed for the opposite pattern “dust of earth”, and for the two themes: preparation of the hero for his journey and council scenes which are also mutual to many medieval epic traditions such as aforementioned Serbian and others.

Key words: Turkic epics, formula, formulaic diction, pattern, composition

Formula, meter, parallelism

Martin P. Nilsson, in a book on Homer, writes that “[t]he singer is able to improvise because he has learnt the epic technique or, to quote Goethe: *eine Sprache, die für dich dichtet und denkt*” (Nilsson 1933: 202). The main reason why the language of oral poetry can be described as “a language that creates poetry and thinks for you” is doubtless its formulaic nature. There is, however, no agreement in the many studies devoted to formulaic style and diction on what is to count as a formula. A case in point is Old English. Serious scholarship on the formulaic nature of Old Germanic poetry began in 1889 with the publication by R. M. Meyer of a collection of “formelhafte Elemente” [formulaic elements] in Old Norse, Old English, and Old High German poetry, running to over 500 pages (Meyer 1990). Today, more than a hundred years later, our notion of the formula has been sharpened and Meyer’s all-inclusive use of the concept has been discarded. But even so, the work of the various scholars who have done research on the formulaic character of Old English poetry embodies widely diverging and sometimes mutually contradictory views. Despite disagreement and controversy, most scholars today will concede, however, that their point of departure is Milman Parry’s definition of the formula with regard to the Homeric epics, and that this definition should indeed be the basis for any definition of the formula, however much a particular tradition might call for adjustment and refinement. According to Parry (1971: 272), a formula

is defined as “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.”¹ For Parry the metrical conditions governing the “group of words” were those of the Greek hexameter, just as they are those of the South Slavic *deseterac* for Lord or those of the alliterative line for scholars in the field of Old Germanic poetry. When we look at the formulaic character of Turkic oral epic poetry, we find a close relationship between meter and syntactic structure on the one hand, and between syntactic patterning and parallelism on the other.

The verse of Turkic oral poetry is syllabic; two types of verse-line are most widespread in the epics, a line of 7 or 8 syllables, and a line of 11 or 12 syllables. The shorter line is typical of heroic epics, in particular in Kirghiz and Kazakh; the longer line is often found in “romances,” i.e. in oral narratives of a more lyrical character, generally love-stories that often have an unhappy ending. In Kirghiz and Kazakh heroic epics are as a rule in verse, while in other traditions (Uzbek, Karakalpak, Turkmen etc.) they tend to be performed in a mixture of verse and prose. Here the verse parts are sung, while the prose parts are spoken. This “prosimetric” form is typical of the oral romances.²

Parallelistic structures in Turkic are first found in the runic inscriptions of the eighth century; the earliest records of parallelistic lines in Turkic oral poetry occur in the eleventh-century *Dīvān luġāt at-Turk* by Mahmūd of Kashgar. In epic poetry, the formulaic beginning is frequently in the form of parallelistic locative constructions (suffix *-da*), as for instance in the Karakalpak epic *Qırıq Qız* (Forty Maidens):³

Buringi ötken zamanda,	In the days of old,
sol zamanniñ qädiminde,	in the days of yore,
qaraqalpaq xalqında,	among the Karakalpaks,
ata jurti Turkstanda,	in the homeland of Turkestan,
Sarkop degen qalada,	in a town called Sarkop,
az noġayli elatında...	in the small Noghay tribe...

As Viktor Zhirmunsky has argued, the predilection of parallelism has led to the creation of rhyme in Turkic oral poetry (Zhirmunsky 1985: 320–352). The Turkic languages belong to the agglutinative type of languages, which means that the various grammatical morphemes expressing case, number, tense etc. are suffixed to the word-stem and remain comparatively fixed. These suffixes vary only slightly according to the rules of vowel har-

¹ For a recent survey of the oral-formulaic theory, see Foley and Ramey, 2012: 71–102.

² For a discussion on this form, see Reichl 1997: 321–348.

³ Quoted from Q. M. Maqsetov, N. Žapaqov, T. Niyetullaev, eds., *Qırıq Qız* [Forty Maidens] (Nukus 1980: 42).

mony. In the quotation above the locative suffix is found in the forms *-da* after dark and *-de* after light vowels (as after *i* in *qädimin-de*).

A Turkic epic might also begin with some maxim or gnomic verses, arranged in parallelistic fashion, such as in the Kirghiz *Kökötöydün aşı* (*The Memorial Feast of Kökötöy-Khan*) from the *Manas*-cycle:

Altın iyerniñ kaşı eken:	A golden saddle has its pommel:
ata yurtnuñ başı eken.	a people has its chieftain.
Kümüš iyerniñ kaşı eken:	A silver saddle has its pommel:
tün tüškön kaliñ köp Noğay yurtnuñ	the Nogay teeming as shadows
başı eken.	at nightfall have their chieftain.

Here the parallelism of the lines can be analysed as Qualification + noun + genitive + noun + possessive + *eken* (is):

Altın ata kümüš tün tüškön kaliñ köp Noğay	iyer- yurt- iyer- yurt-	-niñ/ -nuñ	kaš- baş- kaš- baş-	-i	eken
gold father silver the Nogay teem- ing as shadows at nightfall	saddle- land- saddle- land-	-OF	pommel- head- pommel- head-	-ITS	is

Formula and formulaic system

In order to illustrate the formulaic patterning of Turkic oral epics, I will take a short passage from the Kazakh heroic poem *Qambar*. Äzimbay, a rich man of the Noghays, has six sons and a daughter. When his daughter, the beautiful Nazim, comes of age, she is allowed to choose a husband from the men who have flocked to Äzimbay's encampment as prospective husbands. But none of the suitors passing in review finds favour with Nazim. One young man had, however, not been invited to this gathering, Qambar of the impoverished clan of the Tobir, and it is precisely with this young man that Nazim falls in love when she first hears of him. Qambar has to prove his valour before he can marry Nazim, and it is his heroic deeds that form the substance of the narrative. In this passage Nazim is reviewing her suitors:⁴

⁴ Quoted from M. O. Auezov and N. S. Smirnova, eds., *Qambar-batir* [The hero Qambar] (Alma-Ata 1959: 38).

	Altın tuğır üstinde	On a golden perch,
	Nazım otır qonaqtap	Nazım was sitting
105	<u>aq tuyğınday erikken.</u>	105 in boredom like a white hawk.
	<u>Qara men töre talasıp,</u>	Ordinary people and noblemen argued with one another,
	<u>forimına qarasıp,</u>	looked at her stature,
	<u>aldınan ötti körikten.</u>	and passed in front of the beauty.
	<u>Qız Nazımın maydanı</u>	The <i>maydan</i> ⁵ where Qız Nazım was sitting
110	är toptıñ boldı bazarı,	110 turned into a bazaar, teeming with people of all kinds.
	tüsedı köpke säwlesi	Her brightness shone on the many people.
	qağazday kirsiz azarı.	Her complexion was spotless like paper.
	Osinša žurttıñ artınan	Among so many peoples
	awmadi žańǵa nazarı.	her gaze did not settle on a single person.
115	<u>Žerdiñ žüzin šañdattı</u>	115 The people who had gathered and surrounded her
	žiyilǵan qoršap adamı.	raised the dust from the earth.

This particular passage describes a fairly individual scene. The passage is certainly not a theme in the sense of oral formulaic theory; this explains the low “formulaic density” of these lines as compared to that of a type-scene. The formulaic density of a particular passage is not only relative to the degree it is a typical scene or part of one, but also to its length and to the size of the referent corpus. The longer an extract is and the more numerous the random passages selected for formulaic analysis are, the greater is the likelihood that the analysis will be representative; and the larger the referent corpus is, the more clearly the formulaic nature of a passage can be shown. The following formulaic analysis is based on a concordance of somewhat over 8,000 lines of Kazakh epic poetry, the epic *Qambar* in the version from which I quoted, and the epic *Qoblandı* in Šapay Qalmaganbetov’s version.⁶ Hence it must be stressed that a larger referent corpus may substantially change the percentage of formulaic lines, although it would not, I believe, give a radically different picture of the nature of Kazakh formulaic diction.

Looking at the referent, we find that parallels can be cited for only six out of the fourteen lines quoted (these lines are underlined in the quotation above). The first line in our sample having a parallel in the referent is line 105:

aq tuyğınday erikken 105	white hawk-like being-bored
aq tuğınday quntıydı 1726	white hawk-like he-hunched-up-his-shoulders

⁵ The word *maydan* (from Persian) means both “square” and “battlefield.”

⁶ The concordance comprises 1851 + 6490 lines. The text of *Qoblandı-batır* is based on the edition by N. V. Kidajš-Pokrovskaja and O. A. Nurmagambetova, eds. and trans., *Koblandy-batyr. Kazaxskij geroičeskij epos* [The hero Qoblandı-batır. A Kazakh heroic epic] (Moscow 1975). For further details, see Reichl 1989a: 360–381.

Aq, “white,” is one of the most common epithets in Turkic epic poetry. In *Qambar* not only the hawk (*tuygïn*) is white (105, 1726), but also Nazım’s face (81) and bosom (539), the various types of yurt (416, 799, 1774), the antelope (228), the caftan (1317), and the lumps of gold given as bride-price (1819). More important for formulaic diction is the use of *aq* as an epithet for arms. The sword has the epithet *aq* (665), and five out of six occurrences of *nayza*, “spear,” are modified by *aq*, either as *aq nayza*, “white spear” (1007, 1574, 1735) or in the collocation *aq saptı bolat nayza*, “white-shafted steel spear” (836, 1680; compare 1123 *aq bolat*, “white steel”). The latter is formulaic in the strict sense that the same metrical unit is repeated with identical words, differing only in grammatical morphemes such as case endings, postpositions, or possessive suffixes.

The epithet *aq* has in these lines three ranges of meaning. In collocations like *aq tuygïn* the adjective denotes a physical quality, the actual colour of a material object. When modifying parts of the body, as in *aq žüz*, “white face,” or *aq tös*, “white bosom,” the adjective not only denotes a colour, but is also used evaluatively. “White” suggests here purity and beauty; this is brought out by line 112 *Qağazday kirsiz aźarı*, “her complexion was spotless like paper.” We might compare to this the use of the adjectival epithet λευκώλενος, “white-armed,” in the Homeric epics, the epithet of Hera and women in general. When *aq* is, however, used as an attribute of weapons, it denotes brightness and radiance. Here, too, we find parallels in other epic traditions. Beowulf’s helmet, which he dons before descending into Grendel’s underwater den, is described as *hwit*, “white-shining” (*se hwita helm*, l. 1448). Shining armour and weapons are, of course, a common motif of heroic poetry. Hector is described in the *Iliad* as with a shining helmet (κορυθαίολος), and the various epithets used for weapons in the Homeric poems include a fair number of adjectives denoting a bright and radiant quality.

A more detailed analysis of formulas in the passage from *Qambar* quoted above than can be given here leads to a distinction between four types of formulaic line. The first type can be termed “formula in the strict sense.” This type of formula comprises lines which are repeated in the referent corpus without changes that affect its lexical composition. An example of this type of formula is the following:

aq saptı bolat nayzamen 826	with the white-shafted steel spear
aq saptı bolat nayzanđı 1672	your white-shafted steel spear

These lines only differ by their grammatical morphemes (possessive suffixes, case suffixes).

A second type of formula is more variable than the first insofar as variation within the line is not restricted to grammatical morphemes or

minor parts of speech. An example is line 115 of the passage, *žerdiņ žūzin šaņdattī*, “they raised the dust from the earth.” To capture the parallels to this line, we must have recourse to the notion of a formulaic system. Parry had defined a formulaic system as “a group of phrases which have the same metrical value and which are enough alike in thought and words to leave no doubt that the poet who used them knew them not only as single formulas, but also as formulas of a certain type” (Parry 1971: 275; cf. Lord 1960: 47ff.) This somewhat loose definition has not remained unchallenged, and various competing definitions have attempted to make the notion of a formulaic system more precise. In relationship to Old English A. Riedinger has proposed a threefold distinction between system, set, and formula, which is also helpful for Turkic oral poetry (Riedinger 1985: 294–317). According to Riedinger, a particular formula belongs with other formulas to the same set, if they all share at least one constant word and if the relationship of their variable elements can be semantically specified, i.e. if the variable elements are synonyms or belong to the same semantic field.

Line 115 consists of two phrases and hence two ideas: (1) “surface of the earth” and (2) “raised the dust.” If we take the first phrase as the constant element, we get the following parallel in *Qambar*:

žerdiņ žūsin šaņdattī 115	of-the-earth its-surface he-caused-to-be-dusty
žerdiņ žūsin sel aldī 1359	of-the-earth its-surface the-torrent took away

If we take the second phrase as the constant element, we get the following parallels:

awildiņ üstin šaņdatīp <i>Qambar</i> 1158	of-the-village its-top causing-to-be-dusty
köšeniņ awzīn šaņdatīp <i>Qoblandī</i> 1926	of-the-street its-mouth causing-to-be-dusty

There is strict parallelism in all variants of the first phrase; furthermore, all phrases are semantically related in as far as they are all geographical terms of some kind (earth, village, street) and specify a location (surface, top, mouth). The semantic affinity between the variants of the second phrase, however, is less tight. According to the oral-formulaic theory, we have here a formulaic system:

žerdiņ žūzin		šaņdattī	
awildiņ üstin		šaņdatīp	
köšeniņ awzīn		sel aldī	

represented by the sets:

(1)	žerdiņ žūzin		šaņdattī	
	awildiņ üstin		šaņdatīp	
	köšeniņ awzīn			

(2)	žerdiņ žūzin		sel aldī
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In a third type of formulaic line the semantic constraint on the variable elements of the line is dropped. It consists of a fixed phrasal unit in the first part of the line and a slot, with metrical and possibly also grammatical constraints on the lexical units filling the slot. An example of this type of formulaic line is *Qız Nazımın maydanı* (*Qambar* 109). Here the line begins with a genitive (*-nıñ*) and continues with a noun ending in a possessive affix (*i* or *ı*). The latter is caused by the preceding genitive (of-the-NOUN its-NOUN):

Qız Nazım-nıñ maydan-ı 109	of-Qız Nazım her-place
Qız Nazım-nıñ zaman-ı 125	her-time
Qız Nazım-nıñ awıl-ı-nıñ 412	(of) her-village
Qız Nazım-nıñ iç-i-ne 445	(to) her inside

There is finally a fourth type of formulaic line, exemplified in one of the occurrences of the epithet *aq* in *Qoblandı*. In this epic the word *mata*, “cloth, material,” is qualified by *aq*. This collocation invariably occurs in the following two lines:

Bazarda bar aq mata, oynaqtaydı žas bota 485-86, 693-94, 2583-84	At the bazaar there is white material; the young camel foal is frolicking.
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Lines like these punctuate the epic at irregular intervals. They often contain nature images, but also proverbial and gnomic lore. These cliché-like lines are similar to the repeated couplets in Serbian and Croatian heroic poetry as described by A. B. Lord:

Just as formulaic lines with internal rhyme or with a striking chiasmic arrangement have a long life, so couplets with clearly marked patterns persist with little if any change. For example:

Bez eđelja nema umiranja, Od eđelja nema zaviranja. (II, No.24: 631-632)	Without the fated hour there is no dying, From the fated hour there is no escape.
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or:

A zečki je polje pregazio, A vučki se maši planinama. (II, No. 24:41-42)	Like a rabbit he crossed the plain, Like a wolf he ranged over the mountains.
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It seems preferable to keep such couplets in a class by themselves and not to call them formulas, reserving that term for the components of a single verse (Lord 1960: 57).

Thematic patterning

According to Parry and Lord a theme is a “group of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song” (Lord 1960: 68).

This term corresponds basically to what German scholars call *typische Szene* (type-scene) or *Erzählsschablone* (narrative template), although the emphasis is somewhat different within different scholarly traditions.⁷ Lord begins his discussion of themes in Serbian and Croatian epic poetry with the opening scene in the *Song of Bagdad*, a council at the sultan's court in Istanbul, and draws attention to the similar council scene at the beginning of the *Chanson de Roland* (Lord 1960: 68).⁸ The Uzbek version of the heroic epic *Alpāmiš* in Fāzil Yoldāš-og̃li's variant also begins with this theme (Zhirmunsky 1960; Reichl 2001).⁹ When Bāysari is told that he has to pay an alms-tax (*zakāt*) to his brother, Bāybori, the ruler of Qoᅅgirāt, he summons his tribesmen to a *madžlis* (council) to deliberate what to do. Bāysari opens the council with the following words:¹⁰

- Āh urganda kozdan āqar selāb yāš,
 maslahat ber, on miᅅ uyli qarindāš,
 Barčīnāyim boy yetgandır qalamqāš,
 zālim bilan hargiz bolmaᅅlar yoldāš.
 5 Qoᅅgirāt eldan mālgā zakāt kelibdi,
 maslahat ber, on miᅅ uyli qarindāš!
 Qursin Hakimbegi, mulla bolibdi,
 bezakāt māllarni harām bilibdi,
 Qoᅅgirāt eldan mālgā zakāt kelibdi,
 10 maslahat ber, on miᅅ uyli qarindāš.
 Dardli qul dardimni kimga yāraman,
 ayrāliq otiga baᅅri pāraman,
 muna elda siᅅindi boᅅ turaman,
 oz akamga qanday zakāt beraman?!
 15 Maslahat ber, on miᅅ uyli qarindāš!
 Xazān bolib bāᅅda gullar solibdi,
 šum falak bāšimga sawdā sālibdi,
 Bāyboridan mālgā zakāt kelibdi,
 maslahat ber, on miᅅ uyli qarindāš!
 Amid sighs, tears flow from (my) eyes like a stream,
 give advice, tribal companions (relations) of the ten thousand yurts!
 My Barčīn-āy with black eyebrows has come of age.
 Don't ever associate with a tyrant!
 5 From Qoᅅgirāt came (a demand for) tax on (our) cattle (property).

⁷ The phrase *typische Szene* is associated in particular with Arend 1933; compare Parry's review, reprinted in Parry 1971: 404–407.

⁸ The *Song of Bagdad* is No. 1 in Parry and Lord, eds. 1953–54.

⁹ On *Alpāmiš*, see Zhirmunsky 1960; for a German translation of an Uzbek version of the epic, see Reichl 2001.

¹⁰ T. Mirzaev and M. Abduraximov, eds. and trans., *Alpamiš. Uzbeᅅskij narodnyj geroičeskij épos* [Alpāmiš. An Uzbek heroic folk-epic] (Tashkent 1999: 72).

- Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!
 May Hakimbeg (Alpāmiš) be cursed! He has become a mullah.¹¹
 According to his knowledge cattle without tax is against the law;
 from Qoŋirāt came a demand for tax on our cattle.
- 10 Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!
 As a sorrowful slave (of God), to whom can I tell my grief?
 My heart is burning in the fire of separation,
 among this people I have become a stranger (poor relation).
 How should I pay tax to my older brother?
- 15 Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!
 When autumn comes, the roses wither in the garden.
 Cruel destiny has brought woe upon my head.
 From Bāybori came a demand for tax on our cattle:
 Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!

The passage continues for another 34 lines in the edited text. It is in lines of 11 syllables with a fairly loose sequence of rhymes. As can be seen, the passage is punctuated by the line “Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!” A wise old man (*āq sāqāl*), called Yartibāy, replies to Bāysari (in a passage comprising 50 lines in the printed edition), repeating twice the couplet:¹²

Maslahat bermaymiz Bāysaribiyga, āsilmaymiz Bāyboriniŋ dāriġa...	We will not give advice to Bāysari-biy, we will not hang on Bāybori's gallows...
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and adding the four times repeated line:

Maslahatni, šāhim, oziŋ bilasan.	You yourself, my shah, know the advice.
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Bāysari then suggests (in a passage of 64 lines) that they migrate to the land of Kalmucks, to which proposal Yartibāy (in a passage of 64 lines) agrees. There is a second type of repeated line in this passage:

Xazān bolib bāġda gullar solibdi	When autumn comes, the roses wither in the garden.
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This line is repeated in the other speeches, with slight variations such as:

Xazān bolsa bāġda gullar solmaymi	When autumn comes, do not then the roses wither in the garden?
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Such stock lines are very common in Uzbek oral epic poetry; they are of the same type as the cliché-couplets discussed above in relation to Kazakh epic poetry. These cliché-lines emphasize a certain tone and, by evoking natural phenomena, underline the mood of a passage. This particu-

¹¹ I.e. “he has become proficient in reading and writing”. Alpāmiš suggested that such a tax be levied, as this is part of Muslim tradition.

¹² Mirzaev and Abduraximov 1999: 73–74.

lar verse is often used in contexts that suggest distress, unhappiness, or grief, just as the corresponding line occurs in situations of joy and happiness:¹³

Yana bahār bolsa ācılar gullar	When spring comes again, the roses open up.
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The council scene consists of four verse-passages, distributed over two speakers and connected by prose-passages. It is highly patterned, but it is not stereotyped to the same degree as the council scene in the *Song of Baghdad*. The receiving and sending of letters as in the *Song of Baghdad* is one of the most common ways of beginning a heroic song; about 30% of the songs collected by Vuk Karadžić begin with this theme (Kravcov 1985: 260ff). In Turkic epic poetry, on the other hand, council scenes like the one opening Fāzil's variant of *Alpamiš* occur with far lower frequency and are furthermore, despite their patterning, far more closely linked to the matter of deliberation. There are, however, typical scenes in Turkic oral epic poetry which show a high degree of formulaic patterning both on the level of expression and that of content.

To conclude I will give a brief example of one such theme, namely the arming of the hero before he sets out on a war-like expedition or a journey. This theme is one of the invariant elements of Turkic heroic epic poetry. A very short version of this theme, combined with the theme of the hero's ride, is found in one of the Kazakh variants of the *Alpamiš*-story:¹⁴

725 Saymandarın saylanıp, altınnan kemer baylanıp, abzilanday tolğanıp, qızıl nayza qolğa alıp Şubarga qarğıp minedi,	725 He prepared his gear, bound his golden belt round his waist, turned about like a water snake, took his red spear into his hand, jumped onto Šubar,
730 qudaydan medet tiledi qarğıp minip žas bala ašuwı kernep žönedi. Läšker tartıp keledi, awızdıqpen alıšıp,	730 asked God for his help; the young man jumped up, rode along, filled with wrath. He went to war, pulling his reins tight,
735 ušqan quspen žarıšıp, key žerde bala šoqıtıp, key žerde basın tögedi. Bir kün šapsa Šubar at aylıq žer alıp beredi.	735 racing with the flying birds, where the young man was galloping, where he was heading for. When the horse Šubar had galloped for one day, he had covered the distance of a monthly journey.

In lines 725–729 (–732) the preparation of the hero for his journey is briefly described, while the journey itself is the subject of the following

¹³ Mirzaev, Abduraximov 1999: 79 and *passim*.

¹⁴ M. O. Auezov and N. S. Smirnova, eds., *Alpamiš-batır* [The hero Alpamiš] (Alma-Ata 1961: 23).

lines. Just two or three strokes suffice to paint the hero's arming: he fastens his golden belt round his waist (726), speedily swings himself round (727), and takes his red spear into his hand (728). His psychological state is no more than alluded to when his anger is mentioned in line 732. The hero asks God for his help (730), swings himself on his horse (731), rides along as fast (or faster) than a bird (735), and covers the space of a monthly journey in one day (739). All these motifs and images belong to the inventory of the theme of the hero's arming and ride. In *Qambar* the hero's preparation-and-parting is slightly more elaborate, consisting of the same basic motifs: the donning of his armor, the invocation of God's help, the hero's anger, and his ride on his horse, galloping as fast as a flying bird:¹⁵

	Badana köz berik sawit basa üstine kiyedi,		He pulled the strong coat of mail with its fine mesh over his head,
1550	žaw žarağın asinip žürmekke dayar boladi. Qurama bolat duwliğa šekesine qoyadi. Ordasında otirip	1550	took his deadly weapons and was ready to depart. He put the helmet of wrought steel over his temples. Sitting in his <i>orda</i> (yurt),
1555	šarapqa äbden toyadi. Awmın dep qol žayip, bir qudayğa tapsirip žurtınan žawap suradi. Qoš aytisip Qambarğa	1555	he had drunk a lot of wine. Saying: "Amen!" he extended his arms, commended himself to the One God and took leave of his people. Saying: "Farewell!" to Qambar,
1560	toqsan üyli tobir me alpis üyli arigi amandasip žiladi. Arıstan aman kelgey dep bäri de duğa qiladi.	1560	the Tobir of the ninety yurts and the Argin of the sixty yurts cried when they said good-bye. Saying: "May the lion come back safely!" they all fell down in prayer.
1565	Bastirip qattı qadamın qara qasqa tulpardı qaharlanip uradi; qustay ušip asuwmen tezde žetip baradi.	1565	Urging on its vigorous steps, he whipped the black horse with the white markangrily. Flying like a bird, full of wrath, he arrived in no time.

The type-scene of the hero's preparation for combat and his departure is clearly one of the universals of heroic poetry. It is not only found in the different traditions of Turkic oral epic poetry, but also in a wide variety of poetic traditions. A. B. Lord compares this theme as it is represented in Serbian and Croatian heroic song to the arming of Basil in *Digenis Akritas* and that of Achilles and Patroclus in the *Iliad* (Lord 1960: 89ff). A number of medieval parallels could be cited here, in particular from the Old French

¹⁵ Auezov and Smirnova 1961: 71.

chanson de geste.¹⁶ This is not the place to embark on a comparative analysis of this theme, however attractive a task. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that formulaic diction on the level of verse line and formulaic patterning in the composition of scenes are closely related and must be studied together. Their analysis takes us to the core of the singer's art.

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¹⁶ On the theme of the hero's putting on his armour in the *chanson de geste*, see Rychner 1955: 128 and 132 ff. For a more detailed analysis of formulaic diction in Uzbek oral epics, see Reichl 1989b: 94–120.

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