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## **ON THE FACTORS RELATED TO THE CREATION OF “O’LAN”**

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### **Abstract**

It is difficult to imagine the genre of o’lan without reference to various ceremonies in our people’s tradition. From nearly all of them, the scent of the ceremonies long observed by our people is wafting. “If one refers to any ceremony, one notices choreographic, or dramatic, or musical, or artistic-verbal elements.”[3,11] The majority of o’lans were created in connection with a wedding ceremony, while a portion appear to have emerged under the influence of seasonal ceremonies. Accordingly — by examining the terminology and concepts used in the texts of o’lans, and based on their essence, it is possible to determine the genetic roots of each o’lan specimen. From this perspective, o’lans can be systematised as follows:

1. o’lans created in connection with seasonal ceremonies;
2. o’lans created in connection with family ceremonies;
3. o’lans created in connection with other situations.

### **1. O’lans Created in Connection with Seasonal Ceremonies**

Among the seasonal ceremonies traditionally celebrated by our people, one can include Navroz, Gul-sayli (flower festival), Qovun-sayli (melon festival), Mehrjon, the Feast of Ramadan and the Feast of Sacrifice. In the following creative samples there is reference to the “Qizquvdi” ceremony, which used to take place during various festival gatherings. Alongside games such as “Kopkari”, “Poyga”, the “Qizquvdi” ceremony was held and is directly related to the horse. Historically shaped in connection with selecting a girl, in this ceremony the girl was mounted on a spirited horse and the horse was whipped and sent off at a distance. Young men on horseback began to chase the girl at the order of the leader. As the girl rode the horse fleeing, she simultaneously whipped the youth who approached her, defending herself. The youth who reached the girl and managed to place her on his own horse was considered the winner. The first o’lan example below is spoken from the



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perspective of the girl participating in this ceremony; she wishes that the youth who is ready to chase her be splashed in the eyes with water by her friends, that the paths be muddy and the horse falls, and in the next o'lan she states her intention to take part in the “Qizquvdi” ceremony on the day of the Feast of Sacrifice. Folklorist M. Jo'rayev notes: “...according to the tradition, at the Feast of Sacrifice girls would go out with their young men to the neighbourhood festival-place. The youths would send sweets and gifts to their betrothed girls by means of young children. This o'lan speaks about such festival gatherings.”

“Hay daganim five goats, all are little,  
The girls appear as flowers if their waist shows.  
Splash water in the eyes of my rival,  
Let the horse stumble if he chases the girl.” (26.22)

“They call it o'lan when I'm a young woman of one waist,  
I wash the face with butterfly's milk.

I ride the mare of the quail,  
On the day of the Sacrifice feast I will chase the girl.” (26.291)

In the o'lan specimen below the line “On that great holiday you did not go out” refers to the “great day” — the holiday of the feast, while in the next creative sample the phrase “Soon will be the harvest festival, there will be a wedding” alludes to Mehrjon — the harvest festival:

“When you say ‘your kerchief’—my kerchief,  
That great holiday day you did not go out.  
It had been many months since I didn't see you,  
I asked ‘Did you grow weary?’ but you did not answer.” (26.267)

In the o'lan whose opening line repeats the word “kerchief” denoting the headdress worn by women, the youth reproaches his beloved for not placing a new kerchief on her head. Logically it is clear that the youth himself may have given that kerchief as a gift to his beloved.

“From the chest rises a sound so sweet,  
It suits the lad from the village. Put aside your adornment, women-girls,  
The harvest festival is near, there will be a wedding.” (26.189)



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For the nomadic people the primary information exchange medium was ritual, i.e., weddings, circumcision feasts, and various seasonal ceremonies. Therefore the people, especially young people, prepared particularly for such ceremonies. Girls paid attention to their outward appearance, new clothing, adornment, and at the same time made efforts to enrich the “o’lan bag” for the o’lan recitation. The influence of such seasonal ceremonies is also felt in the genesis of the o’lan specimen presented above.

## **2. O’lans Created in Connection with Family Ceremonies**

“The antiquity of the lyricism of our people is confirmed by its connection with ceremonies”.[4,21] A large part of o’lans were created in relation to family ceremonies, especially the wedding ceremony. The main reason is that one of the initial stages of the wedding ceremony is the recitation of an o’lan, and weddings could not pass without an o’lan. The o’lan specimen presented below arises in direct connection with the “bet’ochar” ritual connected with the wedding. According to tradition, the bet’ochar ritual is held the day after the wedding of the bride’s face-opening ceremony. During this, elders place a branch of a fruit-bearing tree or a twig in the hand of a young boy (or sometimes a stick of a fruit tree wrapped with white cotton). The boy uses this branch to lift the special covering kerchief on the bride’s head and open her face. After that the branch is given to the boy whose face the bride opened. The use of the fruit-tree twig in the ritual symbolises the wish that the bride may be fertile.

“From the table of the feast I ran to that table,

I have given my sheep to open the face. When the face-opening there is no oxun to recite, In your dwelling is there a girl to be taken?” (26.170)

In the o’lan below the hardness of the jiyda (willow) tree is paralleled with the parents’ tough dowry for their daughter. Giving one’s grown-up daughter in marriage is a special position among family ceremonies. The line “He sold his daughter like a mare” directly refers to the wedding ceremony and indicates that the o’lan was created in direct connection with this ceremony.

“How hard in this world is the willow-tree,

Its fruit is maybe sweet honey.

Your father and your mother’s dowry is hard,



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He sold his daughter like a mare.” (26.35)

“We go migrating to our settlement Inay-ko‘l,

I myself have since my youth been foolish.

If you recite an o’lan with us at this wedding,

Until judgement-day may you never die.” (26.45)

“When clouds appear in the sky the moon is uncertain to be seen.” This natural phenomenon parallels the next line in the o’lan, i.e., “Will your so-said o’lan turn into butter (or blaze)?” The uncertainty of the moon is likened to the uncertain situation of the bride’s future: will the groom’s recitation (oxun) follow her, will there be a place for her in his house? This o’lan was composed during the o’lan recitation at the wedding.

“When the air gets cloudy will the moon become visible?

Will your spoken o’lan become butter?

After the wedding if I walk that road,

Will the bride’s house have a place for her?” (26.45)

In the yor-yor (bride’s friends) recitations one also observes the following o’lan lines whose content clearly shows they are directly connected with the wedding ceremony. The appeals to the weeping bride, the dowry given to the bride, and the item called chimildiq (a particular local cultural object) in the lines directly link to the wedding ceremony:

“Don’t cry our new sister, the wedding is yours,

The house with the chimidlik is yours.” (26.28)

“From the garden of the chimidlik a mouse escaped,

On this wedding my stomach got hungry.” (26.187)

### **3. O’lans Created in Connection with Other Situations**

Aside from family and seasonal ceremonies, o’lan recitation may take place in other situations too. The reciters (o’lanchi) are such creative performers that, regardless of space or time, they can engage in witty exchanges. In an interview with the baxshi (folk singer) Abdurazzoq Erkayev of Chetsuv village, Ohangaron district, we discovered information about an o’lan exchange that occurred in a situation like the following. According to the baxshi, a young shepherd driving his sheep through the



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mountains and passing by a village was intercepted by two witty girls from that village who said:

“Are you some shepherd walking straight on the road?

If you don’t say it you are not going to a wedding?

My ancestor said ‘Look at colour, ask the condition’,

Are you a shepherd dragging your flock?”

The shepherd responded in equal measure:

“Don’t pet me so casually, don’t pick lint from the broken comb on your head,

Don’t call me shepherd-shepherd and laugh at me,

If someone doesn’t take you for his sheep, don’t take a dog instead.”

O’lans continue to survive in various forms to this day; owing to this aspect they can also be grouped as follows:

1. o’lans preserved in live performance;

2. o’lans preserved in folkloric archive and the personal archives of scholars and amateur collectors;

3. o’lans preserved within other genres of folk oral creativity.

The o’lans in live performance continue thanks to the work of o’lan performers of Ohangaron district’s Chetsuv village — Abdurazzoq Baxshi Erkayev and other o’lan-performers: Turdiali Pardayev, Kimyoxon Qosimxonova. In addition, in the Yangi Namangan district the “Iftixor” children’s folklore club leader Yoqutxon Raxmatullayeva, the staff of Namangan city’s culture department — Sohibjon Qozixonov and Fotima Akbarova — perform staged renditions of o’lan at state events and festivals. Also, the o’lans are preserved in the folk archive of the Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature and Folkloristics of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in the archives of higher-education institutions’ philology departments, and in personal archives of amateur collectors and folklorists, and in books based on archival materials. The examples of o’lans continue to live within other folk genres. In particular, in the epic Alp Omish there is a scene of o’lan recitation — you can witness o’lan between Alp Omish in the guise of Qultoy and Bodom Bikach and Barchin.



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