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Instrumental and Accompaniment Characteristics of the Ghijjak in the Karakalpak Bakhshi Tradition

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Abstract

This article provides a scientific analysis of the role, instrumental functions, and accompaniment characteristics of the ghijjak within the polytextural system of Karakalpak traditional epic storytelling and bakhshi performance art, evaluated from organological and ethnomusicological perspectives. The study assesses the ghijjak as a leading musical subject that forms and dynamically develops epic dramaturgy. The instrumental capabilities of the instrument are comprehensively demonstrated through substantial musical introductions, inter-sectional solo episodes, and dramatic climaxes, supported by scientific sources and practical performance examples. Its accompaniment characteristics are revealed through creating heterophonic and polyphonic layers alongside the bakhshi's vocal line, providing a bourdon support via sustained bow articulation, and forming a complex modal-timbral synthesis and equilibrium with the texture of the plucked alamoynaq dutar. Furthermore, the fretless neck structure and bowed acoustic nature of the ghijjak fully define its key performance advantages in expressing subtle microtonal inflections, traditional ornaments, and expressive vibratos as a continuous acoustic continuum inherent to the bakhshi art. These scientific conclusions serve to thoroughly substantiate the position of the ghijjak in Karakalpak traditional musicology and organology at a new academic level, both theoretically and practically.

Keywords: Karakalpak bakhshi art, epic storytelling, ghijjak, alamoynaq dutar, accompaniment, instrumental episode, heterophony, bourdon, microtonality.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada qoraqalpoq an'anaviy dostonchilik va baqsichilik san'atining polifakturaviy tizimida girjek cholg'usining tutgan o'rni, uning instrumental hamda jo'rnavozlik vazifalari organologik hamda etnomusiqashunoslik nuqtai nazaridan ilmiy tahlil etiladi. Tadqiqotda girjek doston dramaturgiyasini shakllantiruvchi hamda dinamik rivojlantiruvchi yetakchi musiqiy subyekt sifatida

baholanadi. Cholg‘uning instrumental imkoniyatlari doston kuylarining salmoqli musiqiy muqaddimalarida, bo‘limlararo solistik epizodlarda hamda dramatik avjlarda namoyon bo‘lishi ilmiy manbalar va amaliy ijrochilik namunalari asosida atroflicha ko‘rsatib beriladi. Jo‘rnavozlik xususiyatlari esa baqsi vokal partiyasiga geterofonik hamda polifonik qatlam hosil qilish, uzoq davom etuvchi kamon artikulatsiyasi orqali burdonli tayanch berish va chertma alamoynaq duwtar fakturasi bilan murakkab ladiy-tembral sintez hamda tembral muvozanat yaratishida ochib beriladi. Shuningdek, girjekning pardasiz dasta tuzilishi hamda kamonli sado berish tabiati baqsichilik san’atiga xos bo‘lgan nozik mikrotonal og‘ishlarni, milliy nolishlar va ekspressiv tebranishlarni uzluksiz akustik kontinuum shaklida ifodalashdagi ustunliklari hamda muhim ijroviy afzalliklarini to‘liq belgilaydi. Ushbu ilmiy xulosalar qoraqalpoq an’anaviy musiqashunosligida va cholg‘ushunoslik sohasida girjek cholg‘usining o‘rnini yangi akademik bosqichda nazariy va amaliy jihatdan har tomonlama chuqur asoslab berishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: qoraqalpoq baqsichilik san’ati, dostonchilik, girjek, alamoynaq duwtar, jo‘rnavozlik, instrumental epizod, geterofoniya, burdon, mikrotonallik.

Аннотация

В данной статье с органологической и этномузыковедческой точек зрения научно анализируется роль гыджака, его инструментальные и аккомпанирующие функции в полифактурной системе каракалпакского традиционного сказания и искусства бакши. В исследовании гыджак оценивается как ведущий музыкальный субъект, формирующий и динамически развивающий драматургию дастана. Инструментальные возможности гыджака детально раскрываются на примере весомых музыкальных вступлений, межраздельных сольных эпизодов и драматических кульминаций на основе научных источников и практических исполнительских образцов. Исполнительско-аккомпанирующие особенности проявляются в создании гетерофонного и полифонического пластов для вокальной партии бакши, обеспечении бурдонной опоры благодаря протяжной смычковой артикуляции, а также в создании сложного ладо-тембрового синтеза и баланса с фактурой щипкового дутара Аламойнок. Кроме того, безладовая конструкция грифа и смычковая природа звукоизвлечения гыджака полностью определяют его важные исполнительские преимущества при передаче тонких микротональных отклонений, национальных «нолиш» и экспрессивных вибраций в виде непрерывного акустического континуума, присущих искусству бакши. Данные научные выводы служат всестороннему глубокому обоснованию места гыджака в каракалпакском традиционном музыковедении и инструментоведении на новом академическом уровне как в теоретическом, так и в практическом аспектах.

Ключевые слова: каракалпакское искусство бакши, дастанное сказание, гыджак, дутар Аламойнок, аккомпанемент, инструментальный эпизод, гетерофония, бурдон, микротональность.

The traditional Karakalpak epic and bakhshi art is distinguished by its unique, polytextural, and multi-layered musical-textural structure. In this traditional performance system, the ghijjak instrument functions not merely as a secondary accompaniment tool that acoustically supplements the singer's (bakhshi) vocal line, but as a leading musical subject that shapes and dynamically develops the poetic and musical dramaturgy of the epic. The instrumental-solistic characteristics of the ghijjak are clearly manifested in the substantial musical introductions of the epic tunes, in the dynamic inter-sectional solistic episodes, and at the dramatic climactic points of the storyline. Furthermore, its accompanimental (acoustic-textural) features are reflected in forming heterophonic and polyphonic layers alongside the vocal line, providing a sustained bourdon-acoustic support through prolonged bow articulation, and creating a complex modal-timbral synthesis as well as a timbral balance with the plucked-strummed texture of the alamoynaq dutar. The fretless neck structure and bowed sound-producing nature of the instrument serve to flawlessly, elastically, and continuously express the microtonal deviations, national vocal embellishments , and emotional oscillations (vibrato, glissando, portamento) characteristic of the bakhshi art within an unbroken acoustic continuum, thereby fully revealing the harmonic-timbral richness of the work.

The traditional Karakalpak epic and bakhshi art is distinguished by its multi-layered musical-textural structure and its unique acoustic-performance system. The instrumental ensemble formed within this traditional performance environment is not merely a secondary device that accompanies the vocal part, but rather an integral musical organism that develops the dramaturgy of the epic and maintains its emotional and modal-timbral framework. Although in its early stages bakhshi

performance was primarily manifested with the accompaniment of the alamoynaq dutar, the expansion of the artistic-dramatic scope and performance capabilities of the epic art led to a deep ethnomusicological and acoustic need for the ghijjak instrument within the ensemble [1, p. 10]. The integration of the ghijjak into the bakhshi ensemble and its emergence as a leading musical subject is justified by several interconnected theoretical and practical factors. First and foremost, the sound-producing nature of the plucked-strummed alamoynaq dutar is characterized by a rapid decay of sound—that is, impulsiveness. In the complex and energy-intensive vocal performance of the bakhshi, which lasts for hours, a continuous and unfading acoustic layer was required to provide constant intonational and modal support. [2, p. 70]. The bowed sound-producing nature of the ghijjak fully satisfied this need for an uninterrupted acoustic continuum and bourdon support. Through bow articulation, the ghijjak imparted a smooth and elastic accompaniment to the vocal line, functioning as an acoustic “protector” that prevented the bakhshi's voice from tiring and preserved its pitch balance.

Furthermore, the fretless neck structure of the ghijjak plays a pivotal role in expressing the subtle microtonal oscillations, national vocal embellishments, and expressive-emotional states that constitute the core of Karakalpak bakhshi art. Complex performance techniques present in the bakhshi's vocal line—such as delicate microtonal deviations, glissando, vibrato, and portamento—find their perfect acoustic reflection in the ghijjak. Within the ensemble texture, a unique polytextural and modal-timbral synthesis emerges between the ghijjak and the alamoynaq dutar: while the dutar establishes the primary framework of the modal structure and the plucked-strummed dotted rhythm, the ghijjak, through its sustained bowing breath, creates heterophonic and polyphonic layers, enriching the overall soundscape with timbral depth and richness.

In the musical introductions of the epic tunes, inter-sectional solistic episodes, and dramatic climaxes, the ghijjak fully demonstrates its instrumental-solistic characteristics. [4, p. 17]. Continuing the musical episodes following the bakhshi's vocal sections and accurately conveying the poetic time and mood of the epic to the listener, the ghijjak acts as a primary emotional catalyst. In conclusion, the ethnomusicological need for the ghijjak instrument in Karakalpak bakhshi art is not merely an expansion of the ensemble composition, but rather the logical and historical outcome of the evolution of epic art toward musical-textural, acoustic, and dramaturgical maturity.

Organological comparison demonstrates that the plucked-strummed dutar and the bowed ghijjak instruments of Uzbek traditional organology are classified under the terms alamoynaq dutar and girjek, respectively, within Karakalpak musical ethnography and linguacultural system. This terminological differentiation is not merely a phonetic variation, but is scientifically justified by the unique structural design and acoustic-dynamic nature of Karakalpak folk instruments. The neck of the alamoynaq dutar, inlaid with white bone and shimmering mother-of-pearl plates—creating a striped “mottled neck” (alamoynaq) appearance—serves as a distinctive visual feature that immediately sets Karakalpak traditional instruments apart. Meanwhile, the girjek possesses an open, resonant, and archaic phonics that distinguishes it from the traditional ghijjak, owing to its wider resonator body, neck structure, and highly tensioned strings [3, p. 16]. Furthermore, in the Karakalpak epic and bakhshi art, the harmonious duet of these two instruments laid the foundation for their emergence as independent instruments with unique nomenclature within the national performance culture. In Karakalpak traditional instrumental culture, the alamoynaq dutar and girjek are not merely two distinct musical instruments, but rather represent an integral, mutually complementary harmony in both modal-acoustic and cultural dimensions. In the Karakalpak epic

tradition, the accompanimental function of the ghijjak is not merely limited to mechanically duplicating the vocal melody, but rather encompasses several complex acoustic and stylistic layers. First and foremost, the ghijjak creates a heterophonic and polyphonic layer parallel to the bakhshi's vocal line. By freely and elastically enriching the main melodic contour performed by the singer, it fosters a vibrant dialogue between the vocal and instrumental parts through national vocal embellishments, playful melismas, and responsive phrases. This imparts depth, volume, and polyphonic richness to the overall musical texture of the epic performance. Furthermore, the bowed sound-producing nature of the instrument and its continuous bow articulation provide a solid bourdon-acoustic support for the vocal line. The sustained and even movement of the bow across the strings creates a constant intonational and modal framework for the bakhshi, preserving the pitch balance of the singer's voice and preventing vocal fatigue during long, demanding epic renditions. As a result, a unique modal-timbral synthesis emerges within the ensemble environment between the ghijjak and the plucked-strummed alamoynaq dutar. While the dutar maintains the rhythmic pattern (usul) and modal framework through its sharp dotted rhythms and impulsive strokes, the ghijjak fills the acoustic space between these strikes with its sustained bowing breath. This timbral balance and synthesis between the plucked-strummed and bowed sound-producing methods define the unique and holistic musical time of Karakalpak bakhshi art.

Today, the pedagogical system for teaching the ghijjak instrument in Karakalpakstan is implemented systematically, adhering to the principle of continuity. The foundational stage of this process is established in children's music and art schools, where ghijjak lessons are taught from scratch as a specialized subject through individual (one-on-one) instruction. At this primary level, primary focus is placed on properly forming the student's performing apparatus, mastering the techniques of holding the instrument and bow, and developing the skill to perceive

pure tone and intonation within a fretless neck environment. In accordance with the young musician's finger technique and capabilities, initial exercises and simple etudes are integrated alongside compact Karakalpak folk tunes that nurture national musical thinking. [5, p. 22].

The subsequent professional stage of education is pursued in an advanced manner within specialized schools of culture and art as well as colleges. At this level, ghijjak instruction is enriched with the performance styles of traditional Karakalpak epic and bakhshi art, parallel to academic performance. Depending on the students' age, technical preparation, and artistic perception, they are taught large-scale, complex bakhshi melodies such as “Qara dali”, “Qara jorǵa”, and “Qarakóz”, alongside epic musical introductions. During lessons, by effectively utilizing the capabilities of the instrument's fretless neck, students refine their mastery in accurately executing subtle ornaments such as national vocal embellishments, vibrato, and glissando, as well as applying diverse bow strokes. [6, p. 56]. Thus, the foundation initiated from scratch in children's music schools is elevated to a professional academic and ethnomusicological level in specialized educational institutions through the thorough mastery of traditional bakhshi melodies of varying scales.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ethnomusicological and organological analyses conducted demonstrate that the role of the ghijjak instrument in traditional Karakalpak epic and bakhshi art is not merely limited to an accompanimental function. The bowed sound-producing nature of the instrument, its fretless neck structure, and its ability to create a continuous acoustic continuum provided a solid modal-timbral and bourdon support for both the alamoynaq dutar and the bakhshi's vocal line. In the musical introductions, solistic episodes, and dramatic climaxes within the dramaturgy of the epic, the ghijjak fully manifested its status as a leading musical subject. At the same

time, in the contemporary period, the ghijjak has solidified its position as a specialized subject across educational levels ranging from children's music and art schools to specialized institutions, and has elevated to the level of independent solistic and concert performance, as evidenced by the first Republic "Adıńnan" competition named after Karimbay Tınıbayev.

However, a certain systemic disconnect is currently observed in Karakalpak ghijjak education. Although ghijjak lessons are taught as a specialized subject in children's music and art schools as well as specialized schools of culture and art, a dedicated curriculum and specialization in traditional Karakalpak ghijjak performance does not exist as an independent study program in higher education institutions. Nevertheless, establishing such courses at the higher education level would mark a crucial turning point in training highly qualified ghijjak specialists with deep scientific and performance knowledge [7, p. 211].

To resolve this practical issue and further develop the academic foundation of the art of ghijjak performance among the Karakalpaks, it is expedient to implement a series of strategic recommendations. First and foremost, within the existing “Art of Bakhshi” or “Traditional Performance” departments and degree programs at higher education institutions, introducing a specialization in instrumental performance and traditional ghijjak art, as well as incorporating it into academic curricula as a distinct major subject, would be most desirable. Furthermore, it is essential to prepare comprehensive academic transcriptions of traditional bakhshi melodies such as “Adıńnan”, “Qara dali”, and “Ilg‘al”, and to develop educational-methodological complexes tailored for various educational levels. In addition, holding the Republic “Adıńnan” competition dedicated to the memory of Karimbay Tınıbayev on a regular basis and digitizing the performance heritage of older-generation ghijjak masters will serve to elevate Karakalpak ethnomusicology to a new academic level.

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