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“ARIRANG” MELODY-A PRECIOUS SOURCE OF THE MUSICAL CULTURE OF KOREANS IN UZBEKISTAN

*Lyudmila Gennadyevna Kan*¹

¹ State Canservatory of Uzbekistan

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Abctract

This article explores the famous traditional Korean melody “Arirang,” its historical function and dissemination in Uzbekistan. The song is studied from a holistic perspective using an integrated research methodology based on historical, ethnographic, poetic, cultural, and sociological analysis. The presented study allows the identification of specific, typological, and emotionally expressive features of Korean vocal art as a unique and artistically valuable layer of musical culture functioning in modern Uzbekistan.

Keywords: *traditional Korean folk song, musical folklore, style, rhythm, poetics*

The melody “Arirang” symbolizes the essence of Korean culture. Transmitted from generation to generation, it is an important part of the national heritage and an unofficial anthem that unites ethnic Koreans across the world. For every Korean, hearing “Arirang” is a reminder of their roots, traditions, and unity. The melody is so simple yet distinct and memorable that it is easily recognized by people of various nationalities living in Uzbekistan and other countries worldwide.

In the context of Uzbekistan’s cultural enrichment and exchange, music plays a critically important role. “Arirang” has attracted the attention of many Uzbek composers, which is reflected in works such as *Three Miniatures on Korean Themes* for string quartet and *Fourth Concerto on the Theme “Arirang”* for piano and orchestra by Rustam Abdullaev; *Fantasy for Uzbek Folk Instru-*

ment Orchestra – “Arirang” and *Arirang Jozibolari Variations* by Khabibulla Rakhi-mov; and *Rhapsody “Arirang”* for piano by Akmal Safarov for alto dutar.

The word “Arirang” (Korean: 아리랑) refers to a fictional mountain pass that must be crossed to reach a summit of the same name. The pass symbolizes the challenging path that Koreans must overcome to attain happiness, prosperity, and freedom. The song’s history spans over 600 years and is tied to the legend of two lovers, Sonbu and Riran. Conveying longing, the struggle for justice, and the desire for happiness, the song has evolved into dozens of versions. Depending on the region of the Korean Peninsula, there are various types of “Arirang,” the most well-known being: 정선 아리랑 (Jeongseon Arirang), 밀양 아리랑 (Miryang Arirang), 강원도 아리랑 (Gangwon-do Arirang), 상주 아

리랑 (Sangju Arirang), 해주 아리랑 (Haeju Arirang), and 진도 아리랑 (Jindo Arirang). Another widely recognized version is 경기 아리랑 (Gyeonggi Arirang), also known as 구아리랑 (Gu Arirang), which gained popularity after the release of the silent film.

Arirang in 1926.

Among Koreans in Uzbekistan, this version is considered the most classical and authentic, as it does not reference a specific region in its title. It was this particular version that was brought to Uzbekistan by the 1937 Korean resettlers. Having endured the hardships of survival in a new land, this song became a symbol of the national spirit of the Korean people. Transmitted orally from older to younger generations, it was traditionally sung during labor and continues to be performed at three of the most important Korean life events: 결혼식 (Kyeolhonsik – wedding), 아스안디 (Asyandi – a child's first birthday), and 한가비 (Hangabi – the 60th anniversary of one's parents).

The main refrain “Arirang, Arirang, Arariyo” does not carry a literal meaning, which makes the song especially open to creative interpretation. Nevertheless, its theme generally reflects sorrow, parting, reunion, and love. As seen in the sheet music, the melody of “Arirang” is lyrical and flowing, composed in a calm tempo and built upon the tones of the major pentatonic scale. The song is typically performed in a 3/4 meter (*semachi*), with a dotted quarter note and triplet eighths, and a stepwise motion of quarter notes that creates a sense of smoothness and lament. The melodic line usually spans within one octave, which is characteristic of folk music and aids memorability. Its opening three-note motif (D–E–G) has historically become a true musical genetic code for Koreans worldwide. In Uzbekistan, this motif has become a part of the broader musical culture of the Uzbek people. As ethnic Koreans have become an integral part of Uzbek society, Korean culture has, over the past decades, significantly influenced the collective consciousness. Today,

the public is familiar with Korean cuisine, customs, and especially musical culture. In musical art, when “Arirang” is played, the Uzbek people immediately recognize its origin and are drawn to it. Its Eastern uniqueness attracts listeners – particularly the Uzbek audience – who respond intuitively to the melody's spirit.

Based on the analysis of the Korean traditional folk song “Arirang,” it can be concluded that, despite the deep cultural integration between Koreans and Uzbeks, the Korean people in Uzbekistan have successfully preserved the originality of their traditional musical heritage. The unique features of their musical language are reflected in the following:

1. The concise and expressive melodic structure;
2. Use of pentatonic scale organization;
3. Dominant rhythms in 3/4 time or triplet-based 6/8 time, alternating long and short durations;
4. A uniform, calm tempo;
5. Repetition and cyclical phrasing;
6. Lyrical content based on Korean legends, in the Korean language.

Today, thanks to the state's support for the Association of Korean Cultural Centers, the traditional folk song “Arirang” continues to thrive through the Korean choral movement, which occupies a unique place in the cultural life of Uzbekistan. This movement contributes significantly to the preservation and development of Korean national culture and art. In solo vocal performance, “Arirang” continues to be promoted by winners of national and international competitions such as Irina Nam, Magdalena Kim, and Honored Artist of Uzbekistan – Galina Shin. For bearers of Korean culture, singing this song is more than performance – it is a living dialogue with the past, from which strength and ancestral wisdom are drawn. Meanwhile, Uzbeks are increasingly receptive to the distinct melodies that echo the spirit of the Far East, the philosophy of Confucianism, and the inner world of Buddhism.

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Contact: mila.kan.92@mail.ru