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THE PERFORMANCE STYLES AND METHODS IN THE ART OF BAKHSHI IN KASHKADARYA

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Abstract

In ancient times, the word “bakhshi” referred to a healer who treated patients using folk methods, performing rituals with a drum or other instruments to drive away evil spirits from the sick body (as preserved in current rituals like “kuch,” “qaytarma,” and “jahr”)—a shaman-bakhshi or shaman-folbinchi. In some regions, it also conveyed meanings related to “master”.
Keywords: *bakhshi, epic, dombra (a traditional instrument), performer, composer, performance, practice, rhythm*

In performance styles, the art of the bakhshi varies in expressing the content of the epic depending on its level and mastery, using performance tools (articulation, dynamics, tempo, melody, rhythm, agogics, and others) for different expressions. When creating an epic, the events, era, and environment hold significant importance for the bard’s performance and improvisation. In folk music performance, performers primarily rely on their inner feelings, practical experience, and memory. The traditions of musical performance are preserved and developed through the master-disciple relationship, while the bard adheres to specific (such as aruz, dombra performance, and improvisational skills) knowledge and rules. Thinkers and musicologists of the Muslim East (like Farabi, Ibn Sina, Isfahani, Urmavi, Jami, Navoi, Babur, Kaukabi, Darvishali Changi, and others) have written treatises on issues related to music performance.

The Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions are also distinguished by their performances, each having its own unique repertoire of epics.

Typically, the bakhshi embodies a number of internal characteristics related to “performance”—the interpretation of musical examples. These characteristics and qualities include talent, knowledge, a well-rounded voice, the art of playing an instrument, improvisational skills, a creative approach, proper articulation, exploration, and constant practice.

The “Gharibnoma” of the Kashkadarya bakhshies is a piece that has been interpreted differently by various bakhshies. I analyzed the version of “Gharibnoma” as interpreted by Qodir bakhshi. This piece is performed during very difficult times for the epic heroes, or when they have become “gharib” (lost) after being separated from their people or homeland.

Figure 1. Musical example. *G'aribnoma*



The second piece is called “**Quvnoqnomma**”. This piece has been performed by the Uzbek folk bakhshies Kodir Rakhimov and Abdumurod Rakhimov, who are brothers. In the past, it was believed that there were 32 melodies for the dombra in the Kashkadarya region, but today the number of melodies has exceeded 200. Bakhshies with musical knowledge have created many pieces themselves, which has led to a significant increase in the number of pieces. For example, Qodir bakhshi alone has creat-

ed over 100 compositions. Alikhan, a dombra player, has around 50, Bekmurod has 15–20 pieces, and Abdumurod bakhshi has created more than 20. Kahhor Rakhimov has also created about 10 pieces. These efforts contribute to the development of the art of barding.

Another piece is called “**Otni qamchilash**”. The reason for this name is that it is performed when the hero is about to enter battle, whipping the horse, pulling the reins, and urging it forward as they spur it on.

Figure 2. Musical example. *Otni qamchilash*



The piece titled “**Loqay Yig'lash**” is one of the very heavy and astonishingly emotional compositions, known as the “Loqay Jilash”. The reason for this name is that a tribe called Loqay rides into battle against their enemies, and when they are overwhelmed and suffer greatly, the great bakhshies, witnessing their plight, weep and create this piece.

The “**Ot Haydash**” piece describes the hero riding a horse to another country, capturing the galloping of the horse and its direction in relation to its sound.

The “**Qahhornoma**” is performed during the joyful moments of victory in the epic tales of Qahhor bard Rahimov.

The “**Alixannoma**” is performed during the elevated moods of the epic heroes.

Alikhan, the dombra player, has also created over 50 dombra melodies.

The piece “**Qodirnoma**” is performed by Qodir bakhshi and does not focus much on the events of the epic. Instead, it is played when the bakhshi is resting and requested by the listeners. This piece is particularly unique to the Kashkadarya bakhshi.

“**Omoniyoz**” is a famous piece created by the bakhshi Omoniyoz, known among the lo'lilar (a group within the community). His melodies are especially popular among the bakhshies of Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya, and younger bakhshies love to perform them.

“**Eslashnoma**” is a piece that bakhshies do not perform at weddings and celebrations. Its creation history comes from the bards

gathering together and performing it in remembrance of their mentors and ancestors.

“Lo’linoma” is named after the lo’lilar (referred to as ‘jo’gi’ in Kashkadarya). It is particularly popular among the lo’lilar, especially honoring the late Omoniyoz, and is performed by bards during their rest to keep the audience engaged.

“Bekmurodnoma” refers to Bekmurod Soatov, a dombra player from the Dekhkonobod district, alongside Alikhan. He was a highly skilled performer. This piece is also not performed in epics; it is played during moments of relaxation among the bakhshies.

“Cho’ponchertish” is one of the ancient pieces created by shepherds themselves. Since a shepherd-dombra player created this piece long ago, it has become very popular among bakhshies to this day.

“Qo’shshatar” is also known as “Qo’ziliqo’y”. This name came about when Abdimurod bard Rahimov performed it at a wedding, and an amateur bard, impressed by the piece, asked Abdimurod to teach it to him in exchange for a young lamb. Because of this story, the piece became known among the people as “Qo’ziliqo’y”. However, its original name is “Qo’shshatar”. The creation history of this piece is linked to a time when the bard was inspired by seeing the melodies played on the kobuz and other instruments during a visit to the Turkmen region.

The piece “**Kuvish Qaytarish**” was created by shepherd-dombra players in the past. When they would lead the sheep to graze in the morning and stop to rest, the sheep would chew their cud. At that moment, the shepherd played this melody, and today it is still loved and performed by our skilled dombra players.

“**Qodirnoma**” is a piece that has flourished particularly well in the realm of bakhshi in the republic. Currently, based on epic tales and songs, three individuals have created dombra melodies: Qodir bakhshi Rahimov, Alikhan the dombra player, and Abdimurod bakhshi. The “Qodirnoma” is performed when the audience requests the bakhshi to play his melodies, and it was created by Abdimurod bard in honor of his father.

“**Alixannoma**” is a melody created by Alikhan the dombra player, performed in the epic tales of Kashkadarya when the hero

experiences separation from his horse or his beloved.

“**Tong Shamoli**” is a melody by Abdimurod bakhshi. This piece is one of the famous melodies in Kashkadarya, created to uplift the mood during gatherings.

“**Qorako’z**” is a piece by Qodir bakhshi, featuring the lines ‘I loved you, Qorako’z, who did you love, Qorako’z?’ This melody is performed in the Yusuf Ahmad epic, where Yusuf and Ahmad go to Egypt and fall in love with a girl named Qorako’z.

“**Qurey Xayta**” is another piece created by Qodir bakhshi. During his time, this melody was very popular and beloved. It remains one of the well-loved pieces today, particularly depicted in the Alpomish epic when Alpomish’s horse, Boychibor, is urged to hurry as Oybarchin calls out for him to come quickly.

“**Ona Sen Yig’lama**” is one of Qodir bakhshi’s pieces that was very popular and cherished in its time. Even today, listeners often request this melody at gatherings. It is a piece performed by the bakhshi to comfort mothers weeping for their fallen fathers in war, assuring them not to cry. This piece is also known as “Qodirnoma”.

In Eastern musical treatises, it is said that sounds are only considered a melody when they are purposefully combined within a certain range. Historically, melodies have been expressed using Greek and Arabic terms, with the Arabic term primarily referring to “nag’omot”. Among the people, melodies are also used in the sense of tunes or songs, and their usage in this context is noted in many sources. One example is the book “The Musical History of Khorezm”, which mentions “the melodies of Feruz connected to makoms, the melodies of Rizo bakhshi, and the melodies of Suyav bakhshi linked to epic poetry”.

In the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions, bakhshi songs are referred to as “nag’ma”, while in Khorezm, they are called “nola”, and among the Kazakhs, they are known as “nomad”. All these terms refer to bakhshi songs. The most important aspect of epics is the singing of bakhshi melodies.

From this evidence, it can be understood that in the recent past, epic songs and tunes were also referred to as “nag’ma”. The Kashkadarya bakhshies also call their melodies ‘nag’ma’. The concept of “nomad” in Kazakh

jirov compositions and the ancient Greek term “Nom’ (which forms the basis of melodies) share a similar meaning.

Conditional characteristics of Qodir bakhshi Rahimov’s repertoire:

- Melodies created by Qodir bakhshi himself;
- Melodies learned from his mentors;
- Lively melodies: (played during epic recitations at moments of joy or victory of the hero);

- Melancholic melodies: (played during moments of despair, when things are not going well, or when the hero seeks divine assistance).

As mentioned above, the repertoire of Kashkadarya differs from that of Surkhadarya. In conclusion, it is appropriate to state that this article provides an analysis of the style and musical language of the Kashkadarya epic schools, as well as the melodies from the repertoire of Qodir bakhshi Rahimov, his contemporaries, and his students.

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