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MUSICAL INSTRUMENT AND THE SYNCRETIC UNITY OF THE WORD IN THE PERFORMANCE OF BAKHSHI AND JIRAU (BASED ON UZBEK AND KARAKALPAK DASTAN TRADITIONS)

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Abstract. The article analyses the unity of the musical instrument (dombra, dutar, qobiz; Karakalpak "duwtar" and "qobız") and the word in the performance of Uzbek and Karakalpak dastans. It considers the syncretic nature of dastan performance, the link between the type of performer and the instrument, the role of the instrument in transmitting tradition, the address to the instrument in the order of performance ("dombra tontarmoq") and the image of the bakhshi-hero in the dastans of the "ashiq" cycle. The study is based on published educational and scholarly sources; its conclusions are presented as hypotheses that require separate verification against field recordings.

Keywords: folklore performance, dastan, bakhshi, jirau, syncretism, dutar, dombra, qobiz, duwtar.

INTRODUCTION

In the epic tradition of the Turkic peoples, the text of a dastan, its melody and the person who performs it lose their real nature when they are studied separately. Even when a dastan is published as a written text, in its own life it was a work that was sung and heard to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. For this reason the study of dastan performance requires the question "what does the word say" to be asked together with the question "on which instrument and by whom is it sung".

The ancient syncretic character of folklore has been stressed many times in the scholarly literature: at first word, music, movement and ritual lived as a single whole, and only later did this unity divide into separate kinds [3, p. 4; 4, p. 6]. However, how this general rule applies to dastan tradition, that is, whether the musical instrument is only an "external accompaniment" of the dastan or its constituent part, is described in educational literature mostly in general terms. The aim of this article is to examine the question on the material of Uzbek and Karakalpak dastan tradition, on the basis of available published sources, and to single out hypotheses that can be tested in later field research.

METHODS

Descriptive and comparative-typological methods were used. The material consists of educational and methodological sources published by the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture [3; 6], a master's dissertation on the dastans of the "ashiq" cycle [2], a textbook of Karakalpak literature [4], a collection of lectures on Karakalpak bakhshi-jiraus [5] and an educational manual on duwtar melodies [1]. Only passages actually found in these sources are cited. An important limitation is that the analysis rests not on field notes or audio and video recordings, but on published descriptions. Therefore the passages marked "in our view" should be read not as proven conclusions but as hypotheses that need further verification.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Why dastan performance is a syncretic phenomenon. Relying on the folklorist M. Saidov, A. Sunnatillayev lists five conditions for a work to be a dastan: a definite literary text; music suited to the text; a performer with a pleasant voice; the performer's ability to play at least one musical instrument; and poetic talent combined with a strong memory. On this basis dastans are assessed as a "syncretic, composite genre" [6, p. 129]. Three items of this list (singing, playing, poetic creation) are assigned to one person: the bakhshi at the same time speaks the word, performs the melody and sometimes creates the text. J. Eshonqulov, describing musical folklore in general, notes that many of its examples are syncretic forms in which melody is united with the word (song, terma), dance and spectacle [3, p. 38]. He also writes that ancient syncretism weakened as the art of the word came to lead, and survived most clearly in folk songs, in the dastan art sung with the dombra, and in some ritual and children's folklore [3, p. 4].

The Karakalpak source expresses the same idea: ancient folklore was not divided into kinds, it included elements of music, choreography and theatre, and meant a single artistic practice [4, p. 6]. Thus, in both traditions the unity of instrument and word in the dastan is not a separate rule but a continuation of ancient syncretism in dastan performance.

Instrument and type of performer in the Uzbek and Karakalpak traditions. The sources show that the choice of instrument is not accidental. In Uzbek dastan tradition bakhshis sing dastans mostly with the dombra, in some places with the qobiz or dutar; Khorezm bakhshis perform mainly with the dutar and tor, accompanied by players of the ghijjak and balaman [6, p. 130]. Another type of performer of epic works or their parts in Khorezm is the xalfa, and xalfa performance is spread mainly among women [6, p. 130]. In the Karakalpak literature textbook the division of roles is clearly defined: heroic dastans were performed by jiraus on the bowed qobız, while ashiq (lyro-epic) dastans were performed by baqsıs on the duwtar [4, p. 9]. The same textbook records that the dastans of Turkic peoples are performed with the help of musical instruments (qobız, duwtar, dombıra), and that performers are called jirau and baqsı among the Karakalpaks, bakhshi among the Uzbeks and Turkmens, and aqın or jırshı among the Kazakhs [4, p. 32]. These data are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Performer, instrument and type of dastan in Uzbek and Karakalpak tradition

Feature	**Uzbek tradition [6, p. 130]**	**Karakalpak tradition [4, pp. 9, 32]**
Performer's name	bakhshi, jirau, xalfa and others	jırav, baqsı
Main instrument	dombra; qobiz, dutar; in Khorezm dutar, tor	qobız (jırav), duwtar (baqsı)
Accompaniment	in Khorezm ghijjak, balaman	not indicated in the source
Type of dastan performed	dastans in general; xalfas mostly "ashiq" and other dastans	jırav: heroic; baqsı: ashiq (lyro-epic)

The table shows that in the Karakalpak tradition the instrument, the type of dastan and the name of the performer form a connected set: qobız–jırav–heroic dastan, duwtar–baqsı–ashiq dastan. The Uzbek source gives no such strict correspondence, and the instrument appears to depend more on region and school (dombra, qobiz, and dutar and tor in Khorezm). In our view this difference can be

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put forward as a preliminary hypothesis: in the Karakalpak tradition the instrument points to the character of the dastan, in the Uzbek tradition more to the school and region. The hypothesis must be tested separately on written and audio materials of the two traditions, because both the textbook and the manual give generalised descriptions and do not list the repertoire of each bakhshi individually.

An example from the Karakalpak source also shows the link between the instrument and the identity of the performer. In his lecture collection B. Qalmenov writes that Bukhara baqsıs performed dastans not on the Karakalpak qobız but on an instrument called “Lakay” (now called dombıra), which resembles the duwtar given to small children, is fretless and has two strings; he also notes that what distinguished the jırav Shankot from other jıravs of that area was that he performed not with the “Lakay” but with the Karakalpak qobız [5, pp. 18, 21]. Here the instrument is named as a sign of the tradition to which the performer belongs. This information is a statement in a lecture collection and has not been independently verified.

The instrument as a means of transmitting tradition. In some cases the instrument is directly linked with the creative legacy of the singer and bakhshi. Speaking of the bakhshi activity of the Karakalpak poet Berdaq, B. Qalmenov writes that almost all Karakalpak poets were also musicians, that most of them spread their poems among the people by singing them to the duwtar, and that for this reason poets were called “baqsı” [5, p. 3]. The author proves that Berdaq was a baqsı by his song “Tari” and by the fact that his duwtar passed to his daughter Hürliman and from her to his grandson Qarajan baqsı; the contemporary poet Otesh also describes Berdaq as a baqsı “embracing the duwtar” [5, pp. 3–4]. Hürliman sang the songs and dastans of her father Berdaq, taught her son Qarajan to play the duwtar from the age of five or six and brought him to the rank of a famous baqsı [5, p. 4]. Thus the chain of teacher and pupil (Berdaq – Hürliman – Qarajan – Aytjan Xojalepesov) continues through the instrument and the repertoire; here the instrument is not just an object but a material sign of the heritage. Aytjan baqsı Xojalepesov was a pupil of Qarajan; his melodies are assessed as having continued the path of Berdaq baqsı and as having conveyed to us the well-known melodies performed by the baqsıs of the nineteenth century, and they have also been set down in musical notation [1, p. 4; 5, p. 4].

The manner of playing and its adaptation to the content of the text. D. Allanazarov’s manual on duwtar melodies rarely addresses the relation between music and word directly, but it gives important information on duwtar playing. According to the author, every sound on the duwtar is produced mainly by a stroke on the string (called “das” in the manual); the tempo, rhythm and metre of a melody and the kinds of rhythmic figures depend on correct execution of these strokes. The author also stresses that whether a stroke is made harder or softer, quicker or heavier derives from the content of the melody [1, p. 8]. Because the scanned copy of the manual is of poor quality, only the general sense is given here. Even so, this description shows that in performance the instrument is used not as an “accompaniment” but as a means of expression that adapts to content. In our view it is exactly here that the unity of word and music is noticeable: the strokes on the instrument are subordinated to the content of the melody, and the bakhshi’s word acquires its full meaning together with the melody.

The preface of the manual contains one more valuable idea: the main author of folk melodies is the people themselves, and their performers are baqsıs and singers [1, p. 4]. Hence the melody, like the word, lives and is renewed in oral tradition through the performer.

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The instrument in the order of performance: "dombra tontarmoq". The traditional order of dastan performance in Uzbek tradition is described by A. Sunnatillayev as follows: dastan evenings were held from late autumn to early spring; once the listeners had gathered, the bakhshi sat in the place of honour; after a small meal the bakhshi first sang one or several termas, often addressing the audience with the terma "Nima aytay?" ("Doston terish"), and then, at the wish of the listeners or by the bakhshi's own choice, a dastan was performed [6, pp. 130–131]. The author writes that large dastans were sung over several nights and that at the most exciting point a break was announced at midnight. This break is called by bakhshis "dombra tontarmoq": the bakhshi composes a few inserted lines addressed to the listeners or to his own dombra and stops the performance [6, p. 131].

This term shows that the instrument has a special place in the structure of performance. First, the name of the instrument enters the expression for the interruption of the performance, that is, the instrument serves as a marker of the structure of performance (the source does not explain the literal meaning of the word "tontarmoq"). Second, the bakhshi composes the inserted lines as an "address to his dombra"; the instrument thus becomes a participant who is mentioned within the text and enters into direct relation with the word. The source does not quote the text of these inserted lines, so no firm conclusion about their content can be drawn. But the order of performance itself, that is, the opening terma, the dastan, the break and the address to the instrument, shows that performance is a scene formed jointly by word, melody and instrument.

The bakhshi-hero and his instrument in the dastans of the "ashiq" cycle. The unity of instrument and word is reflected also in the content of the dastans. G. Djamalxodjayeva sees the distinctive feature of the "ashiq" cycle in the fact that the main hero is a bakhshi who sings and plays. The author calls Gharib in the dastan "Ashiq Gharib and Shahsanam" a famous bakhshi ("ashug") who sings to the dutar, writes that in "Ashiq Alband" Albandjon is depicted as a mature pupil of ashiq Oydin, that is, as a bakhshi, and that the same image occurs in the dastans "Ashiq Najab" and "Ashiq Mahmud" [2, p. 17]. In the passage quoted from "Ashiq Najab", a bakhshi who sees the dutar on the back of Najab, who has set out on his way, questions him [2, p. 38]. In this episode the dutar serves as a sign that makes the hero's profession and status known to another bakhshi.

Relying on P. Afandiyev, the dissertation holds that ancient ashiq-bakhshis combined the qualities of poet, singer, composer, musician, dancer and actor; the author herself then concludes that the functions of shaman, healer and priest also belonged to this person, and explains it by the syncretic nature of ancient folklore performance [2, pp. 22–23]. Thus both the content of the dastans and the historical views on the performer's personality confirm the idea of syncretism from two complementary sides: the dastan itself shows the hero as a bakhshi, while researchers describe the historical bakhshi as a person with many functions. In our view, the depiction of the hero "with an instrument" may have led performers to link their own profession with the epic hero; for this hypothesis to be well founded, performers' variants of the "ashiq" dastans must be compared on the basis of field materials.

Three types of bakhshi and the instrument's relation to creative freedom. Relying on T. Mirzayev, J. Eshonqulov divides bakhshis into three groups: bakhshi-performers, bakhshi-improvisers and bakhshi-poets; not every bakhshi can rise from performer and improviser to poet, and this peak was reached by bakhshis such as Fozil Yo'ldosh, Ergash Jumanbulbul and Po'lkan [3, p. 8]. The author also stresses that the variant and version character of folklore works arises because every creator introduces changes with his own artistic taste and skill [3, p. 5]. These views illuminate the

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relation between instrument and word from another side: in our view, the difference among the three groups appears not only in the degree to which the text is creatively changed, but also in how independently text and melody are created together. The sources do not analyse this difference in connection with playing the instrument, so this remains a hypothesis.

The present state of syncretism: the instrument changes, the unity remains. A. Sunnatillayev writes that from the 1930s Khorezm bakhshis began to sing dastans mainly with the tor and rubab, and that epic works or their parts are sometimes performed on the garmon [6, p. 130]. This change shows that even when the instrument changed, the bakhshi continued to sing his word, that is, the unity of melody and word itself was preserved.

At the same time Sunnatillayev notes that by the twentieth century the use of bakhshis' services in cities had disappeared, while in villages these traditions have survived until today [6, p. 131]. Eshonqulov notes that the survival of living performance and of bakhshi schools today is a great opportunity, and that various editions of living performance variants are appearing [3, p. 13]. In our view the present danger to syncretism lies precisely in the gap between the published text and the performance: in a publication only the word is preserved, while the participation of the melody and the instrument, and the bakhshi's voice and manner of playing, are lost unless they are recorded. For this reason it is advisable that publications should give audio-video and notation together with the text. The setting down of duwtar melodies in notation [1, p. 4] is a step in this direction.

Conclusion. On the basis of the analysed sources the following can be said. First, in Uzbek and Karakalpak dastan tradition the musical instrument is described not as an external accompaniment of the dastan but as a component of its performance; this is indicated as one of the conditions for a work to be a dastan [6, p. 129]. Second, in the Karakalpak tradition the instrument, the name of the performer and the type of dastan are interconnected (qobız–jırav–heroic, duwtar–baqsı–ashiq), while in the Uzbek tradition the instrument appears to be linked more to region and school. Third, the instrument takes part as a heritage passed from generation to generation (in the example of Berdaq – Hürliman – Qarajan), and in the order of performance there are forms of address to the instrument such as "dombra tontarmoq". Fourth, in the "ashiq" dastans the hero himself is depicted as a bakhshi and musician. The results rest on published sources; the hypotheses must be verified on the basis of field recordings and conversations with bakhshis.

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