THE ROLE OF THE GIRJEK INSTRUMENT AND PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS IN KARAKALPAK NATIONAL MUSIC CULTURE

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Abstract: This article explores the historical roots, organological characteristics, and performance traditions of the *girjek* (gijjak), a traditional bowed string instrument that holds a unique place in Karakalpak national music culture. The study analyzes the historical stages of the instrument's development dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries, references in medieval musicological sources, and its functional role in the art of *bakhshi* (epic storytelling) within the master-apprentice tradition. Furthermore, the anatomical structure, acoustic properties, bowing techniques, and methods for overcoming performance challenges arising from the fretless neck of the girjek are scientifically substantiated.

Keywords: Karakalpak national music, girjek, gijjak, organology, bakhshi art, alamoynaq dutor, bow (tartqish), master-apprentice, traditional performance, musical lineage.

Just as every nation stands out with its unique spiritual identity, rich history, and cultural heritage, the Karakalpak people are also distinguished by their national identity and deep-rooted history. In particular, within Karakalpak national music culture, traditional folk tunes stand out with their unique ornamentation, pleasantness, and beauty compared to the tunes of other nations. The *girjek* has long been one of the favorite instruments of our people. The emergence of the instrument dates back to the 10th and 11th centuries.[1] According to medieval music treatises,

when Al-Farabi was in Ray with Sahib ibn Abbad, he performed various melodies on an instrument he himself invented during a banquet held in honor of the vizier; at that time, this instrument aroused great interest among everyone, and it was known by the name "gipchak." In the middle ages, famous musicians such as Alijon Gidjakiy and Khoja Uzbek Gidjakiy became well-known.[2] According to legends, musical instruments are considered one of the great things bestowed upon mortals by Allah.

Among the Karakalpaks, the most widespread folk tunes are bakhshi (epic) melodies. The reason why bakhshi melodies have survived to the present day is that this art has been formed and developed through oral transmission from father to son and master-apprentice traditions. Just as the violin holds significant importance in European culture, the girjek holds a similar significance as our native instrument in Central Asia. The Karakalpak national girjek is played as an accompanying, secondary instrument to the dutor and is tuned to a fourth. It has three strings, which are known as the mi, lya, and re strings. To play the Karakalpak girjek skillfully, one must first be a master at playing the alamoynaq dutor.

STRUCTURE OF THE GIRJEK MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

The structure of the girjek musical instrument consists of the following parts:

1. Upper part (head): Located at the top head section are the tuning pegs designed to hold and tune the three strings.
2. Small bridge (shaytan tiyek): Located to hold the strings in proper proportion.[3]
3. Neck (daste): The section where the strings are pressed down with fingers to produce musical sound. It is mainly made of apricot or cottonwood and connected to the body.

4. First string (re string): The thinnest string, tuned to the second octave note *re*.

5. Second string (lya string): Tuned to the first octave note *lya*.

6. Third string (mi string): Tuned to the first octave note *mi*.

7. Connection zone: The section extending from the end of the neck to the bridge where the bow moves freely.

8. Main bridge (tiyek): Located to hold the three strings evenly over the skin.

9. Soundbox body (kese): The body is covered with fish skin, mostly catfish skin.

10. Tailpins: Located at the lower part of the body to hold the three strings in place.

11. Metal support: A metal device attached to hold the girjek comfortably between the legs while playing.

The girjek is considered one of the most ancient musical instruments. Its parts and names vary like those of other instruments. The girjek is played with a bow.

THE BOW (TARTQISH) AND PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUE

The main part of the bow is made of hard wood, with a length ranging from 50 to 70 centimeters, while Karakalpak girjeks mostly use bows of 50 or 60 centimeters. A hair bundle made from horse tail (mane) is placed between the half-hook at the top of the bow and the adhesive attachment at the bottom of the bow.[4] When playing technically demanding melodies, it is convenient to play by pulling the lower hair section. After 4–5 hours of practice, applying rosin to the bow string ensures a clear sound.

Students face many difficulties when learning to play the girjek instrument. Compared to playing the alamoynaq dutor, playing the girjek poses extreme

difficulties. Because the girjek has no frets tied on its neck, difficulties arise in finding the correct fret while playing. Of course, everything depends on the individual. If a student's auditory perception is well-developed, no matter what musical instrument they choose to learn, they will be able to master it in a short time.

At present, great attention is paid to our youth by our leadership. Our youth are comprehensively supported so that they can achieve results in whichever field of interest they choose. Along with this, in the field of culture, our youth participate in numerous competitions, become winners, raise our country's flag high to the skies, and serve in the development of our state.

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