THE GIRJEK INSTRUMENT IN KARAKALPAK NATIONAL MUSIC AND ITS CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIVES

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Abstract: This article examines the historical evolution, structural development, and contemporary performance practices of the girjek (gijjak) instrument in Karakalpak national music. The study traces the organological origins of the girjek back to the 10th–11th centuries, highlighting its transition from a two-stringed to a three-stringed instrument as recorded in medieval musicological treatises. Furthermore, it highlights the expanding role of women in this traditionally male-dominated art form, focusing on the pioneering work of Injigul Saburova, Gumisay Berdikhanova, and Aynura Niyazbaeva. The article demonstrates how these contemporary representatives preserve traditional bakhshi accompaniment, foster master-apprentice (ustoz-shogird) lineages, and promote Karakalpak musical heritage on international stages.

Keywords: Karakalpak national music, girjek instrument, organology, contemporary representatives, female girjek players, bakhshi art, master-apprentice, Injigul Saburova, Gumisay Berdikhanova, Aynura Niyazbaeva.

The emergence of the girjek musical instrument dates back to the 10th and 11th centuries.[1] There is a wealth of historical information regarding this topic. Initially, the girjek was a two-stringed instrument, but by the era of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, it acquired a three-stringed structure. As mentioned in the Baburnama, Qulmuhammed Udiy, a famous musician of his time, added a third string to the girjek and performed on it skillfully. According to Alisher Navoi's work Majolis un-Nafois, playing the girjek was a mandatory requirement for all court musicians. In the Middle Ages, musicians such as Alijon Gidjakiy and Khoja Uzbek Gidjakiy were widely recognized.[2] As public interest in musical instruments grew, the number of craftsmen making them also increased sharply. Initially, the girjek was played predominantly by men; however, over time, interest in this art form emerged among women and girls as well.

The First Female Girjek Players in Karakalpakstan and Their Activities

The very first professional female girjek player among the Karakalpaks is **Injigul Saburova**. She was born on July 5, 1962, in the village of "Juzimbog" in the Kegeyli

district. Her love for music began in early childhood, and she was distinguished by her active participation in various school cultural events. From 1979 to 1982, she studied at the Nukus Cultural-Educational Technical School, and in 1982, she was admitted to the Tashkent State Institute of Culture, graduating successfully in 1987. I. Saburova began her professional career in 1984 as a girjek player in the "Muxalles" ensemble of dutarists.[3]

In 1986, she married Burkit Piyazov and raised a close-knit family with four sons and two daughters: Jenisbek Piyazov, Aqilbek Piyazov, Nurlibek Piyazov, Janibek Piyazov, Bakhit Piyazova, and Aynura Piyazova, all of whom contribute significantly to the development of Karakalpak culture and art today.

As part of the "Muxalles" ensemble, Injigul Saburova participated in numerous national and international competitions and festivals, promoting Karakalpak culture on international stages:

- **1999:** Became a laureate of the competition dedicated to the 1000th anniversary of the Alpamysh epic in the Surkhandarya region.
- **1999:** Accompanied bakhshis at the "Sharq Taronalari" International Music Festival.
- **2002:** Performed Karakalpak folk melodies at the folklore festival "National Music Culture of Central Asian Peoples" held in France, Belgium, and Germany.
- **2004:** Participated in the "Along the Great Silk Road" folklore festivals held in England, Luxembourg, Norway, Italy, France, Germany, and the Netherlands.
- **2005:** Achieved high recognition at the "International Museum Day" festival held in Nancy, France.
- **2007:** Participated in the International Festival of National Music and Theater in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.
- **2011:** Awarded 2nd place at the 4th "Interfolk in Russia" International Competition in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

For her many years of fruitful work, I. Saburova was awarded the title of **"Honored Cultural Worker of the Republic of Karakalpakstan" in 2014**. Currently, she works as an Associate Professor at the Department of "Daston Performance" at the Yunus Rajabi Uzbek National Institute of Musical Arts, educating the young generation.

The Creative Path of Gumisay Berdikhanova

Gumisay Berdikhanova was born on August 9, 1998, in the Khojayli district into a working-class family. Her father, Marat Utemov, worked as a driver, and her mother, Aisulu Khojakulova, worked as a nurse. Her interest in music began when her older sister started attending a music school. Although initially enrolled in a piano class, her affinity for the Karakalpak national alamoynaq dutor prevailed, leading her to take lessons from the master bakhshi and girjek player Ajiniyaz Mambetnazarov.

Possessing a strong musical ear and memory, she studied the dutor for 5 years and subsequently studied the girjek for another year under her teacher's guidance.

Major achievements and activities:

- **2014:** Won 1st place in the Kari-Yakupov Competition in Karakalpakstan and secured 3rd place in the national stage in Tashkent.
- **2014–2017:** Studied at the Nukus College of Arts and Culture under G. Saburova and People's Bakhshi of Uzbekistan G. Utemuratov.
- **2017:** Admitted to the Nukus branch of the Tashkent Institute of Arts and Culture.
- **2018–2023:** Promoted national culture by participating in concert programs across the United States, France, Latvia, Germany, Finland, and Estonia within the framework of the "Qirq Qiz" and "Orol Ohanglari" projects.

Currently, she works as a girjek teacher at Children's Music and Art School No. 1 named after Esjan Bakhshi.

Conclusion. Today, broad opportunities are created in our country for women to find their place in every field, acquire deep knowledge, and preserve our national heritage. All master artists who work selflessly to educate the young generation and lay the foundation for the Third Renaissance enjoy great respect and recognition across the nation.

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