The History of the Art of Kobyz in Kazakhstan

Dana Zhumabekova
Faculty of Musicology
Kazakh National University of Arts
Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan
E-mail: danazhumabekova@mail.ru

Toizhan Yeginbaeva
Faculty of Musicology
Kazakh National University of Arts
Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

Abstract—This article investigates and describes the history of development of the Kazakh folk bow-instrument kobyz, based on the works of scientists-ethnographers. A description of the main varieties of the instrument and its performance capabilities is given along with the information on technical capabilities of the instrument and methods of sound-producing. Considerable efforts are being made regarding its improvement by Kazakhstani masters. Kobyz is used in the orchestra, where it has a solo part.

Keywords—history; people; music; kobyz; kylkobyz; string

I. INTRODUCTION

The Kazakh people had a rich history in the past, unique culture, expressed in various areas of spiritual heritage. Traditional art — oral-poetic, musical (song and instrumental) and prosaic passed down from generation to generation, persisting for centuries and developing, mainly in oral form (the so-called schools of oral tradition).

Some experts, who investigated the history of the East, pointed out that Central Asia and Kazakhstan were the birthplace of many musical instruments. A German music historian V. Bachmann suggested the above-mentioned fact as well as V. Vinogradov, a famous researcher of national cultures.

For many centuries the musical culture of Central Asia and Kazakhstan existed mainly in terms of oral tradition. Outstanding thinkers of Central Asia had done a great work on studying the art of music in the middle ages. According to T. Vyzgo [1] since the 9th and 10th centuries and for many centuries the science of music, developed by Central Asian, Iranian and Arab theorists, has been evolving in the Middle East.

Significant influence on the scientific and cultural life of the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan have been made by medieval thinkers, such as Al-Farabi (870-950), Ibn Sina (980-1037), Al-Khorezmi (10th century) and others. There is no branch of knowledge in which they have not left a deep mark. Thus, Al-Farabi's musical-theoretical work "Great treatise on music" ("Kitab al-musik al-Kabir") was one of the proofs of the long-time existence of bow instruments in Central Asia. According to B. Sarybayev [2], researcher of the Kazakh folk instruments, Al-Farabi in his treatise highlights the description and ways of improvement of many musical instruments and among them he mentions the "two-stringed kylkobyz, drawing attention to the bulbous type of the instrument. It is noteworthy that for Farabi "Natural instruments are throat, uvula and all that in the throat, then the nose, artificial instruments are, for example, the flute, the lute and others [3]."
of those instruments that gained the greatest popularity in a given period. So, increased references in oral poetry of the 19th and 20th centuries made to kylkobyz, sybyzgy and others.

The interest of Russian scientists in studying the history and way of life of the people increases markedly, especially after the accession of Kazakhs to Russia, in connection with which the Russian Geographical Society and the Academy of Sciences undertake a number of scientific expeditions. So, A. Eichhorn is one of the first specialists who left a scientific description of folk instruments, including kylkobyz. This work (collecting instruments, recording melodies) fascinated him during his stay in Central Asia (1870–1883). He wrote that Kylkobyz is "an ordinary instrument of wandering Kyrgyz rhapsods, which they used to accompany themselves, performing ballads, legends, epic songs about folk heroes" [4].

While traveling, some researchers had a chance to see an interesting copy of the folding kylkobyz design. References to three-stringed kylkobyz with a different original device can be found in the works of A. Divaev, I. Zavalishin, A. Levshin, who had been among the Kazakhs in the 1820s and Sh. Ualikhanov (1835–1865) the first Kazakh scientist, an outstanding educator-democrat, the greatest representative of social thinkers in the second half of the 19th century. His articles "On the forms of Kazakh folk poetry", "Traces of shamanism among the krygz" and others contain valuable information about dombyra, sybyzgy and other instruments.

In the works of Sh. Ualikhanov we can find a number of answers from the history of folk music of Kazakhs of the past. Among the phenomena that have almost disappeared from the memory of the people we can mention about healing ceremonies of the bakshy (shamans) associated with music. In this regard, the work of Sh. Ualikhanov, "Rituals of Shamanism among the Kyrgyz," is of great value, which has important information regarding the art of bakshy, is of great value. In connection with the penetration of Islam into the Kazakh steppes, the persecution of shamans began everywhere. Therefore, shamans, due to the decline of their role in the people, persecuted by the religion, have almost completely disappeared. Bakshy could talk to the spirits, he was a kind of medicine man, a magician, and at the same time a talented actor and musician.

Sh. Ualikhanov vividly and colorfully describes the art of shamans: "They were revered as people protected by heaven and spirits. Shaman is a man gifted with magic and knowledge, better than others, he is a poet, musician, soothsayer and at the same time a doctor" [5]. Among the bakshy shamans, the Kylkobyz remained a cult instrument, which they used during ritual spells and healing from diseases. The word bakshy means a doctor, a shaman, a sorcerer, etc. Shamans could be found at the patient’s bed (treatment usually took place at night), and at wedding feasts.

The shaman, singing his melody, which was accompanied by playing the instrument, wailed and called upon the gins:

"What happened to you, my voice, 
Why do not you sing along my kobby?
I picked up a pine kobyz
And like a water snake I meander.
After all, my kobyz does not break,
It does not put my soul at peace" [6].

At the same time, he screamed in a loud and wild voice, grimacing, this lasted until he lost the ability to make at least one sound: the convulsions became so strong that he could hardly control himself.

Songs and spells of Kazakh shamans were accompanied by the sounds of trinkets, rattles and rings hung on the kylkobyz. Various metal plates, mirrors, pebbles were attached to the kylkobyz case. "As soon as you take it in your hands, the bells start ringing, the iron starts tinkling and make such a noise that even a healthy person will get hurt" [7].

The instrument was made in the handicraft way from a various kind of wood, different shapes and sizes. The head of the instrument was hung with small iron trinkets, rings, or patterns to enhance the effect during performance. Sometimes, instead of trinkets, forty pebbles were placed in the resonant shell of a kobby. The performer explained this by the fact that the sound would begin to "wheeze", which means that he achieved a beautiful sound. Apparently, this was due to the approach to the guttural sounds of the voice. Some kobyz players have achieved the best timbre of the instrument, thinning the walls of the body.

In some cases, bakshy used kobyz instead of a percussion instrument. At the same time, the bridge was removed and the leather part of the kylkobyz was tapped. Shamans, using the nasal timbre of the instrument in combination with the sounds of various trinkets would instill fear and terror with their bowing. As Sh. Ualikhanov wrote "A shaman is a person gifted with magic and knowledge, who is better than other people, he is a poet, musician, soothsayer and at the same time a doctor" [5]. According to him kobyz remained the property of the bakshy, and B. Sarybaev pointed out that the kylkobyz in the earlier period mainly belonged to Zhyrshi and Kyushi, that is, folk tales and musicians. Later A. Zataevich wrote that bakshy and all rituals, including musical ones associated with them, are remnants of the past and condemned to extinction.

In the second half of the 19th century the struggle against various religious remnants intensified, which in general had a positive impact on the development of kobyz instrumental music and thus opened up new opportunities for the spread of kobyz among folk musicians. A.V. Zataevich, a collector of Kazakh musical heritage was very sorry that such sorcerous music remained uncommitted. He managed to record only a small part of shamanistic chants.
Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 368

Due to the fact that kobyz was an object of worship, the two-stringed folk instrument kylkobyz was considered to have a huge role in the development of folk instrumental art. Before, such as rings, a mirror, pebbles were already absent here. Kylkobyz with various ornaments, patterns and extra items was a tool of shamans. Folk musicians decorated the head of kylkobyz to improve, and this is directly reflected in the fact that the talented dombra players, thanks to which dombra kui began to be known as the most popular instrument. Dombra is gaining more and more attention from listeners at all levels of culture and becoming the most popular instrument.

Improvement and modification of the design of the kylkobyz had a positive impact on the purity and richness of the sound.

For one group of people, as already noted, the form of kobyz was like a swan, for others it was like a Kyrgyz kiyak (Kyrgyz string instrument). Sh. Ualikhanov gives the following definition: "Kobyz is a kind of two-stringed viola, strings are made of horsehair and played with a bow. Kobyz is different from our string instruments in that it does not have a top deck, the body has a round shape, the handle is so bent that you can't press the string against it, and different tones are taken with a flagolet. In general, this is a very difficult and enjoyable instrument, although it is not very sonorous" [5].

So, kobyz is a bow instrument, its nasal sound is associated with the timbre of the bassoon or viola. For strings and a bow horse hair was used, which had a bow-shaped shape, and the hair for the bow was used twice as much as for strings. The hair of the bow, which was captured using the little finger, was roasted with wood resin (sagyz). The size of the bow was about 50 to 65 cm. Instead of the pads, the performers used a rag wrapper and a bundle of hair was tied to the ends of the bow. The bow was taken from below by turning the palm. Now modern kobyz players use the violin bow, which was reflected in the setting of the right hand.

The body and neck of the kobyz are made from one solid piece of wood in the form of a huge bucket. A deck is a piece of camel leather covering only the bottom of the body. The lower part is used to attach the ends of two or three strings. The other end of the string is pulled over the pegs. The tuning of strings is in fourth or fifth.

The sound of the strings was close in timbre and emotionally expressive qualities to the human voice. Until recently, the kylkobyz player would sit taking cross-legged position on the floor, and for convenience put the instrument on his left bent leg, slightly tilting it to the left or pressing it to the left temple.

Modern musicians perform compositions sitting on a chair, and the lower edge of the instrument is clamped between his knees. The fingers of the left hand are placed by the base of the nail on the left side of the string. Voice was regarded as amulet. Most of the people would hang it at the entrance of the yurt to protect the home from evil spirits. The prevalence of the instrument was bound to lead to its secular use. And so it happened. In the figurative definition of A. K. Zhubanov Yhlas Dukenov, a great folk composer and performer tore this instrument from the hands of a bakshy and handed it to the people.

Thanks to Yhlas, this instrument sounded completely different. He introduced new positions, expanded the range, embellished the melodic line, brought variety into the metro rhythm, enhanced the sound of the instrument. Bakshy used mostly low instrument registers during his session, trying to bring his listeners into a state of fear. Folk performers, on the contrary, played mainly in the upper registers, which led to a brighter sound. The instrument in the hands of folk musicians was characterized by a soft and pleasant timbre. Improvement and modification of the design of the kylkobyz had a positive impact on the purity and richness of the sound.

For one group of people, as already noted, the form of kobyz was like a swan, for others it was like a Kyrgyz kiyak (Kyrgyz string instrument). Sh. Ualikhanov gives the following definition: "Kobyz is a kind of two-stringed viola, strings are made of horsehair and played with a bow. Kobyz is different from our string instruments in that it does not have a top deck, the body has a round shape, the handle is so bent that you can’t press the string against it, and different tones are taken with a flagolet. In general, this is a very difficult and enjoyable instrument, although it is not very sonorous" [5].

So, kobyz is a bow instrument, its nasal sound is associated with the timbre of the bassoon or viola. For strings and a bow horse hair was used, which had a bow-shaped shape, and the hair for the bow was used twice as much as for strings. The hair of the bow, which was captured using the little finger, was roasted with wood resin (sagyz). The size of the bow was about 50 to 65 cm. Instead of the pads, the performers used a rag wrapper and a bundle of hair was tied to the ends of the bow. The bow was taken from below by turning the palm. Now modern kobyz players use the violin bow, which was reflected in the setting of the right hand.

The body and neck of the kobyz are made from one solid piece of wood in the form of a huge bucket. A deck is a piece of camel leather covering only the bottom of the body. The lower part is used to attach the ends of two or three strings. The other end of the string is pulled over the pegs. The tuning of strings is in fourth or fifth.

The sound of the strings was close in timbre and emotionally expressive qualities to the human voice. Until recently, the kylkobyz player would sit taking cross-legged position on the floor, and for convenience put the instrument on his left bent leg, slightly tilting it to the left or pressing it to the left temple.

Modern musicians perform compositions sitting on a chair, and the lower edge of the instrument is clamped between his knees. The fingers of the left hand are placed by the base of the nail on the left side of the string. Voice was regarded as amulet. Most of the people would hang it at the entrance of the yurt to protect the home from evil spirits. The prevalence of the instrument was bound to lead to its secular use. And so it happened. In the figurative definition of A. K. Zhubanov Yhlas Dukenov, a great folk composer and performer tore this instrument from the hands of a bakshy and handed it to the people.
leading in parallel fourth and fifth is typical for Kazakh instrumental music. (Quite rare technique in European performing practice). To do this, one note is hit with a nail and the other finger pad.

Easily retrievable whistling flageolet-tone or double flageolet can be played in different places of the fingerboard. As Sarybayev wrote "If the flageolet is hit with a fourth finger, then dividing it in a rhythmic pattern is performed by softly hitting the same string with first and second finger. This technique is relevant for the kobyz instrumental music" [9].

Previously, folk performers mainly used two positions, that is, the first and fourth. Kylkobyz had a limited sound range. Now it has expanded almost twice and enriched with chromatic scale.

While playing the kobyz, such techniques as tremolo, glissando (especially at the end of phrases), pizzicato, performed on open strings with the "index finger of the left hand and trillos hit with wrist movement are used for artistic expressiveness."

According to B. Sarybayev folk musicians, playing the lower or upper positions (long-drawn melody), sometimes increase the sound by a semitone, without moving to another position, and pulling the string to the right side with the finger of the left hand, thus forming glissando movement by a semitone [9].

Performers often use expressive fermata. Due to the lack of a fretboard and frets, such spectacular tricks as portamento up and down are used. Thus, for example, the effect of a shot from a bow or howling wolves can be achieved, in this regard, you can refer to the kyui "Kaskyrdyn Ulygany" ("Howl of wolves"). Sometimes musicians sought to imitate the singing of various birds in their works. The sounds and tricks of the playing by their nature are not always amenable to accurate recording (this applies to a variety of sound-imaginative means).

Folk performers also use ornamental passages, trillos with a flier of overtones at the moment of a hit with a finger pad and grace notes to decorate the melody. A. Zataevich wrote that in Kazakh music they use "mordentes that split a note into a fast triol, and grace notes performed on a strong part of the rhythm, that is using the following note, not the previous one. Grace notes are characteristic of wide-spreading, super-long melodies" [10].

An interesting fact, in our opinion, is that "in the pre-revolutionary time, only men played the kobyz, now women play it too" [11].

Kazakhs did not know ensemble combinations for different musical instruments at all, only solo sound dominated. Nowadays, it has become possible to use this instrument in an orchestra, where kobyz is often assigned a solo part, due to the fact that the sound of modern kobyz is cast with a soft, expressive, noble timbre.

IV. VARIETIES OF THE STRING-BOW GROUP OF KAZAKH INSTRUMENTS

Masters of Kazakhstan have been doing a great work to improve kylkobyz. A whole group of kobyz players has been created, that reflect the strong influence of the violin family. New instruments such as kobyz-prima, kobyz-viola and kobyz-bass were developed. These tools differ from their predecessor kylkobyz in that they have a fingerboard, the number of strings that are played with violin and double bass bows has increased, and the strings are made of gut and metal.

Kobyz-prima, both three-stringed and four-stringed, is notated in a treble clef. Kobyz-viola is notated in viola. The tuning of this kobyz is in fifth. Kobyz-bass mainly performs harmonic support. The same applies to kobyz double bass. Performers play it standing up, as well as double bass players. The tuning of this instrument, unlike others, is in fourth, similar to double bass. Provided the specific nature of the instrument, its national characteristics are maintained, it would seem appropriate to achieve the improvement of kobyz, as the quality of their sound and timbre improves and the techniques of playing develop.

The sketches O. Khaimuldin restored four-stringed bowed instrument sazgen with bulbous bow. It was made of hard wood, without frets and has a top deck. There are two types of sazgen — two and three-complex. According to some reports, sazgen existed in the late 7th and early 8th centuries, for example, Abushakir Abuseit Zhamaluly performed his kyuis playing the sazgen.

There had also been a four-stringed bowed instrument among the Kazakh people (according to folk legends) which was called bozanshy. The length of the reconstructed instrument is one meter twenty cm, the lower part of its body is similar to a rounded scoop with a thin tetrahedral neck and a movable fret. The head of the instrument is made in the form of a horse's head. In comparison with other bowed instrument the azanshy, which was used to inform about the joyful days of the Kazakh people, the bozanshy in ancient times was a messenger of misfortunes haanging over the people's fate.

According to the assumptions of O. Khaimuldin, the first types of musical instruments in the era of B.C. were single-stringed, then they were perfected into double-stringed ones. The names of some instruments occured depending on the use of strings different in material and quality.

As has already been mentioned, horse hair strings were used on kylkobyz; an instrument with leather strings was called narkobys, those with metal strings were called zhekobyz. Each of them was different in its weight. If the weight of kylkobyz could reach 3 kg, the narkobys weighed 4 kg, and the zhekobyz weighed 6 kg. The abovementioned instruments were made of the core of black oak, without a top deck. The bridge was carved from the horns of wild goats, the hitch-pin of the instrument was made from the shrub "mespilus". The entire body of the instrument was rubbed with the milk of a white camel. The tool was stored
in leather cases that did not let in the rays of the sun and moisture.

V. CONCLUSION

Traditions of the art of playing bowed instruments in Kazakhstan are closely connected with folk origins. Folk music has influenced the development of forms and genres of professional music, many techniques of playing the kobyz were used and implemented by Kazakh composers in their works. Playing the kylkobyz, in particular, is interconnected with the ancient improvisational art, embodied in song, lyric, epic kyui with free ornamentation. These features, combined with the intonation structure of the Kazakh folklore, undoubtedly, to a certain extent reflected in the development of all the string-bow music of composers of Kazakhstan.

REFERENCES

[1] T. S. Vyzgo, Musical instruments of Central Asia. Historical essay. M.: Music, 1980. P.74.
[2] B. Sh. Sarybayev, Folk musical instruments of pre-revolutionary Kazakhstan. Dissertation work of a candidate of Arts. Alma-Ata, 1970. P.15.
[3] A.N.M. Al-Farabi, Science of music. Philosophical treatise. Alma-Ata: Science, 1970. P. 157.
[4] A. F. Eichhorn, Complete collection of musical instruments of the peoples of Central Asia of A.F.Eichhorn (former military capellmeister in Tashkent): Catalogue. St.Petersburg: Printing-house of U. Shtauf, (I. Fishon), 1885. P. 5.
[5] Shokan Ualikhanov, Collected works. Alma-Ata: Printing-house of the Kazakh SSR, 1961. P. 777.
[6] A. Divayev, About Kyrgyz beliefs. Kazan, printing house. Imp. UN- TA, 1989. P.15.
[7] D.I.Timkovsky, Our country. Pictures of nature and life of Russian people. M.: Type. T-VA I.D.Sytina. 1908. P. 314.
[8] I.B.Kogan, From the history of violin playing in Kazakhstan. Alma-Ata: Institute "Knowledge", 1980. P.4.
[9] B.S.Sarybayev, Kazakh musical instruments. Alma-Ata: Zhalyyn, 1978. P.173.
[10] A.V.Zataevich, 1000 songs of the Kazakh people. M.: Muzgiz, 1963. P. 15.
[11] K. A. Vertkov, Atlas of musical instruments of the peoples of the USSR. M.: Music, 1975. P. 181.