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FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENT TERMINOLOGY IN UZBEK MUSICAL CULTURE

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Abstract: *This article explores the historical formation and evolutionary dynamics of the terminology associated with musical instruments in Uzbek musical culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. The research is grounded in a comparative analysis of archaeological evidence (notably the Afrasiyab terracotta artifacts), rock engravings, miniature paintings, and specimens of applied art, alongside treatises by Eastern scholars and the musicological legacy of the Jadid period.*

This study serves as a methodological model for examining Uzbek musical terminology within the broader framework of global ethnomusicology and terminology theory.

Keywords: *musical terminology, Uzbek traditional musical instruments, Afrasiyab terracottas, terminological lexicography, lexicography, chang instrument.*

One of the important directions of musical culture is its vocabulary, particularly its terminology. The system of terms serves not only to define musical concepts but also as a primary source for studying the cultural heritage of a people. Ancient information related to the musical culture of our ancestors is reflected in various archaeological findings, rock carvings, and illustrations in printed publications and miniatures.

For example, terracotta artifacts discovered in the ruins of Afrosiyob in Samarkand indicate the high level of development of musical culture in ancient times. These findings depict instruments such as the oud, harp, and wind instruments, including flute-like devices, demonstrating that they were an integral part of Sogdian musical life. In addition, the terracottas feature depictions of tanbur-like instruments as well as percussion instruments (drums, cymbals). These artifacts reflect not only the role of music in social life but also the diversity of musical instrument terminology of that period.

Archaeological evidence from Afrosiyob proves that the oud and harp were among the favorite instruments of the Sogdians. This suggests that ancient musical traditions in Central Asia later served as important sources in the formation of Uzbek musical terminology.

Describing musical instruments only through words often creates a limited perception. However, their representation in visual sources—such as images, sculptures, or miniatures—enriches and complements this understanding. Therefore, archaeological expeditions conducted in recent years, which have uncovered various objects, plastic artifacts, and wall paintings, provide more comprehensive information about the musical culture of our ancestors, particularly musical instruments.



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The culture of musical instruments in the territory of Uzbekistan is distinguished by its antiquity and richness. Archaeological findings show that the origin of early musical instruments dates back to very ancient times. For instance, one of the oldest national instruments discovered in Uzbekistan is a long wind instrument—the wooden flute—estimated to be about 3,500 years old.

Furthermore, archaeological excavations in ancient cultural centers have revealed monuments depicting various musical instruments, including stone carvings, large and small plastic artifacts, examples of applied art, and wall manuscripts. These sources identify regions such as Sogdiana (Maroqanda, present-day Samarkand), Khorezm along the Amu Darya, and ancient Bactria as central hubs of musical culture in Central Asia.

These archaeological and visual materials are crucial for reconstructing the history, form, and structure of musical instruments. At the same time, they make it possible to scientifically analyze the formation and development of musical terminology.

It is well known that the quality and resonance of musical instruments largely depend on the materials used in their construction. In ancient times, natural resources such as animal skins (from cattle, fish, snakes, and others) were widely used as key materials for producing vibrations. The combination of these materials ensured the richness and natural quality of the sound.

In early stages, instruments—especially string instruments—were made almost entirely from solid wood, with hollowed bodies. Over time, with technological and cultural advancements, instrument-making techniques gradually improved. As a result, different parts of instruments—such as the neck, pegs, body, and bridge—began to be crafted from specific types of wood according to their properties.

The strings of instruments also underwent evolutionary development. Initially, gut strings were used, which were later replaced by silk, silver, copper, and steel strings. This significantly improved sound quality and expanded performance capabilities [3].

Thus, the historical evolution of musical instrument construction influenced not only their physical appearance and technical features but also their terminology and cultural significance.

Uzbek national musical instruments have evolved over centuries and have become an integral part of our rich cultural heritage. Their history is reflected not only in archaeological findings but also in written sources. In literary works, famous poets mentioned musical instruments, highlighting their role in social life. At the same time, the works of music scholars hold particular importance.

As noted by Gulchekhra Ergasheva in her monograph, historical documents often contain only brief references to musical instruments. This is because recording technologies did not exist in those periods, making it impossible to capture their sound characteristics accurately.

Nevertheless, medieval scholarly treatises and literary works mention musical instruments and provide information about their context and social significance. However,



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detailed descriptions of their construction, acoustic properties, or artistic performance are rarely found.

This situation highlights the need to supplement written sources with archaeological, ethnographic, and art historical evidence. Integrating these disciplines is a key methodological principle in studying the history of musical instruments.

Eastern miniature art and poetry from the 14th–17th centuries also provide general information about the musical instruments used in Uzbekistan during that period.

During the 9th–11th centuries, great Central Asian scholars such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Khwarizmi developed advanced theories of music. At that time, music was considered a branch of mathematics. Their works contain valuable information about musical instruments.

The collection, standardization, and documentation of musical terms are studied within lexicography, specifically in terminological dictionary-making. Its main goal is to systematically record terms, provide scientific definitions, distinguish synonyms, and establish normative forms. This ensures consistency in both national and international scientific communication [1, p. 45].

Terminological dictionaries serve not only specialists but also the wider academic community. They clarify scientific concepts, define the scope of terms, and highlight their differences, thereby improving the effectiveness of scholarly communication.

The development and spread of musical instruments were also greatly influenced by court musicians. For example, the instrument “chang” originally referred not to the modern hammered dulcimer but to a type of Central Asian harp. Due to its curved structure, it was called “chang,” which in Persian means “bent” or “hooked.”

Musical instruments also play an important role in Uzbek literature as symbolic and aesthetic elements. Writers such as Fitrat and Cholpon used them to express emotional and cultural meanings. For instance, in Cholpon’s poetry, the nay symbolizes sorrow, while the tanbur represents harmony.

Research shows that musical instrument terminology plays a significant role in the development of Uzbek musical culture. Archaeological findings, written sources, and literary works confirm the ancient roots and importance of these terms.

The process of collecting, organizing, and documenting musical terms enriches the national vocabulary, enhances scientific communication, and contributes to the academic study and preservation of Uzbek musical heritage.

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