

“Nurabulla Zhyrau School and its Descendants in Karakaplak Zhyrau Art”

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Annotation: Nurabulla's zhyrau performance, deepness of the voice is considered to be one of the most famous one in Karakalpak national zhyrau art. He was the one who contributed into the development and spreading of the zhyrau and was loved by the people.

Key words: zhyrau, gobiz, zhyrau school, “dastan”, cultural heritage.

Every nation has its own written and oral literature. And the Karakalpak nation has its own traditions, national songs, stories and poems. And all of these cultural heritage and courage of the spirit is being passed down by zhyrau. The zhyrau art is considered to be on the art from a long past, and it has been passed down from father-to-son, from teacher-to-student. Originally the art zhyrau started in the 14th century with Sopbasli zhyrau, and then there were other performers of this art such as Jien zhyrau, Jiemurat, Xalmurat, Duysenbay, Aytuwar, Dospanbet, Muyten, Shanqay, Kazakbay, Nurabilla, Esemurat, Ajimurat. Currently even if we wanted to find out more about them, lack of data in written sources prevents us from it and that is why we have to refer to their descendants or their students.

In this article, we will be discussing one of this zhyrau performers Nurabulla and his school, his students who are continuing his art.

The great zhyrau Nurabulla was born in 1862, in Esim boyi Nawpir - a place between the current Tahtakupir and Shimbay regions. His father, Karajan was a shoemaker and fixed and made shoe for living. The job of a zhyrau performer began with him. He started to show interest in zhyrau in the early childhood and used to listen to poems Koblan, Edige from such zhyrau performers as Kannazar, Kali and Turimbet. Then he follows Paleke from Shimbay and learns the poem Alpamis, after learns the poem Sharyar from Erman who lived in Shabat region, Shimbay. He didn't spend much time at Erman's home and followed trade caravan “Ak kiyiz” which was heading for Bukhara. He went there in order to learn a true way of performing zhyrau and to develop it. Having arrived at Bukhara he looks for a zhyrau performer named Kalmurat uli Kazakbay and spends 25 months at his house as a student. Nurabulla returned from Bukhara and became a prominent zhyrau performer of Khorezm and outskirts of Karakalpak. His collection of zhyrau performances consisted of Alpamis, Koblan, Shora, Sheryar, Edige, his own zhyrau Surjilan. And his favorite songs that he used while performing a poem were Sherbeyit, Ilgal, Tolgaw, Sibay, Yar-yar, Jan-Jan, Hay-yar, Shalkar, Tanatar, Yaglibahar, Erman, Nurabulla, Shankay, Aytihar and others. [1]

Along with being a great zhyrau performer, Nurabulla was a great teacher as well and he had twenty four students whom he taught secrets of true zhyrau. His students were: Abdirasuli (Abdir-Kalbala), Bekimbet Kazakov, Erpolat, Quat, Kulamet Ubbiev, Seytmurat, Allamurat, Sapar, Sapar, Berdakh, Doshniyaz, Begjan, Jaksimurat (Janabazar bolisi Karakalpak), Otebay, Matkurban, Kurbanbay, Jannazar and the other seven weren't good students and their names were forgotten soon.

Among Karakalpak zhyrau performers Nurabulla is considered as one of the greatest one because of his talent and his high voice. He was the one who made zhyrau well-known and people loved him. He also taught zhyrau to his son Esemurat and at the age of 64 in 1927 passed away.

Nurabulla had three sons: Aytmurat, Esemurat and Otemurat and among them Esemurat followed in the footsteps of his father and spent 16 years of his life beside him learning the art.

Esemurat Nurabullaev was born in 1883 and at the age of 16 he started to follow his father and study such kind of poems as Koblan, Edige, Alpamis, Sharyar, Shora [2]. After death of his father he travels a lot to his motherland for a long time, defining the art of zhyrau as his purpose.

Esemurat and his contemporaries Ogiz, Erpolat, Kiyas took part in Olympiads that took place in Turtkul and won the highest prizes there. In 1931 in Moscow he and the most talented representatives of the republic- Ogiz, Kiyas, Karajan, Japak, Ayimkhan Shamuratova showed with perfect talent and performance that Karakalpak music was rich and unique. And they spent there 18 days, recording Yar-Yar, Hawjar, Sherbeyt, Sibay, Ilgal, Nurabulla poems and others and sending them to radio.

Esemurat had also a talent in rewriting Karakalpak national poems “dastan”. People respected him and his works. When he was travelling, people used to tell not as “Esemurat has come”, but “Nurabulla’s son has come” and this let people not forget about his father Nurabulla. [3] He was awarded with ASRR’s High certificates of merit. He taught a lot of students basing on old zhyrau school. Among them was also his son Ajimurat who was born in 1924. Esemurat helped him to become a zhyrau performer and at the age of 86 passed away.

Ajimurat was Esemurat’s school descendant, which in turn originated from Nurabulla school. He also started being interested in zhyrau art in his early childhood. At an early age he learns to play ghobiz, Karakalpak national instrument, from his father and performs simple poems at first. Later, he accompanies his father at celebrations and weddings and starts to become a great performer. Soon, people start to recognize him by the name “zhyrau boy” and even celebrations in neighboring villages always include “father -and-son’s zhyrau”.

When Ajimurat was dreaming about studying in a big city as everyone else, he received bad news about the beginning of the war. He was also summoned to join the military forces and before setting off he said goodbye to his father’s heritage – his father’s ghobiz. After coming back as the war ended he worked at Ahunbabaev Council. In 1950 he became a member of Kungrad theatre and offered his artistic services to people.

While Ajimurat was performing the “Koblan” dastan at weddings, people used to listen to him till dawn, once smiling and then crying. Khafiz of Uzbekistan Jumabay Bazarov’s words: “When Ajimurat performed “Koblan”, he would always make people cry” prove the uniqueness and impressiveness of his voice and talent.

It goes without saying that a zhyrau performer with unique style and rich repertoire is considered as talented. Except for dozens of short poems, Ajimurat knew from memory and performed such great poems as “Koblan”, “Alpamis”, “Sharyar”, “Yer Shora”, “Edige”, “Yerziywar”, “Kirikkiz” which were a sign of humanity, courage and love.

Nurabulla school’s descendants were not only Esemurat and Ajimurat, but Nurabulla’s first child’s son Atamurat also continued his grandfather’s heritage, teaching his own son Turganbay. Besides, Esemurat’s daughter’s son Ibrayim Nurjanov was brought up at his grandfather’s and also learned the art of zhyrau and became a famous zhyrau performer. And Atamurat’s son Turganbay worked at children’s musical school named after Esemurat in Kungrad and taught the passed down Nurabulla-Esemurat-Ajimuart-Atamurat art of zhyrau to a younger generation.

We can say with no doubt that Nurabulla zhyrau was one of the fathers of zhyrau art and place him after Jien jiraw and we are sure that all the poems he wrote and performed, all the great students he taught will be in people’s memories for a very long time.

References:

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