



Oghlan Bakhshi

Journey Across the Steppes

Musical traditions of Central Asia - Turkmenistan



Journey Across the Steppes contains *Türkmen halk aýdym-sazlary* (Turkmen traditional songs and instrumental pieces) performed by the young Turkmen bard and *dutar* virtuoso Oghlan Bakhshi. The word *halk* means people. Songs that gain popularity among people and have a long history are considered as *halk aýdym*. This term is also used to refer to songs or instrumental pieces whose composers/poets are unknown. Therefore, *halk aýdym-sazlary* are repertoires consisting of traditional songs and instrumental pieces understood to belong to the people. These repertoires have been transmitted orally to disciples.

The *Bagşy*

A *bagşy* is an epic bard. The earlier meaning of the *bagşy* denoted both shaman and bard, and both meanings are present in the contemporary context. *Bagşy* performances are accompanied by two instruments, *dutar*, and *gyjak*. In order to become a *bagşy*, in addition to learning *dutar* and mastering a traditional song repertory, it is vital that *pata* be received from a *halypa* (master). *Pata* is a ritual act in which *halypa* blesses their disciples and permits them to embark on their path as an individual *bagşy* or *sazanda* (a person who only plays *dutar*). Under the auspices of this blessing, disciples are expected to develop a performance tradition as a master and preserve the tradition.

Turkmen *bagşy* performances are divided into several *yol*, which means style and road. Each of these *yols* includes a special repertoire as well as guttural embellishment (*Jukguldy*). According to Turkmen music masters, *Jukguldy* is utilized in some parts of the song where the poem is not enough to describe the intensity of the story behind the epos.

The *Dutar*

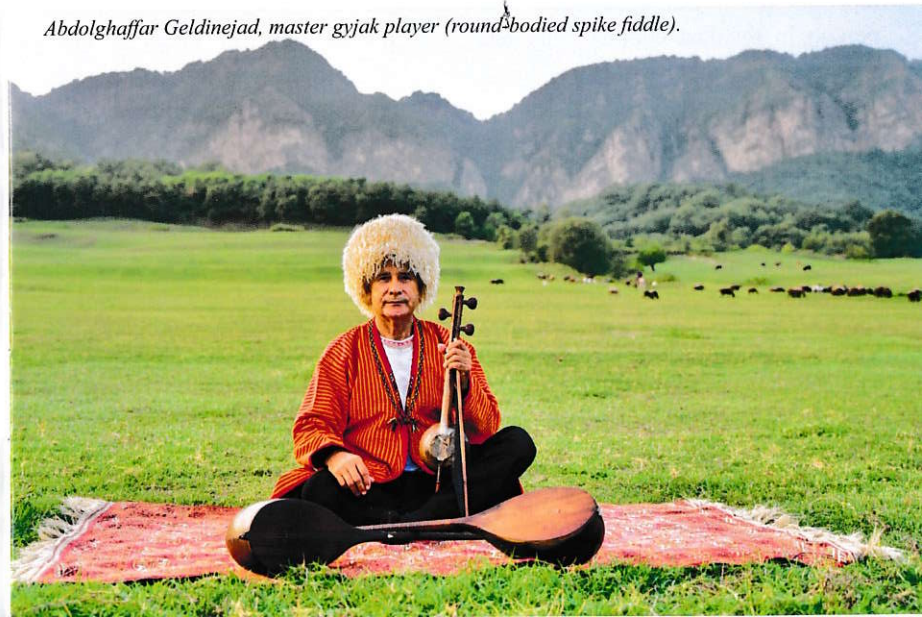
The Turkmen *dutar* is a long neck, two-stringed lute. Today, the *dutar* is played as a main musical instrument by Turkmen living in Turkmenistan, the northeastern

provinces of Iran, as well as northern Afghanistan. The *dutar* is also well-suited to solo, virtuosic performances of instrumental pieces called *saz*.

The *Gyjak*

Gyjak (spike fiddle) is another musical instrument that accompanies a *bagşy*. The person who plays *gyjak* is called *gyjakçy*. Like the *dutar*, *gyjak* has its own repertoire that is performed in the form of solo instrumental pieces.

Abdolghaffar Geldinejad, master gyjak player (round-bodied spike fiddle).



Oghlan Bakhshi

Mohammad Geldi Geldi Nejad, known by the title Oghlan Bakhshi was born in 1993 in the Turkmen region of Iran. He started learning *dutar* from his father, *gyjak* master Abdolghaffar Geldinejad. When he was 9 years old, due to his exceptional talent and skill, a council of Turkmen music masters granted him the honorific title Oghlan Bakhshi, meaning a person who has mastered the art of playing *dutar* and singing at a young age. He is the second person in the last century who has been granted this title after the great master Sahy Jepbarow (1905-1977), one of the foremost virtuosos of *bagşy* performance school. He has learned Turkmen music from masters such as Çary Sähetmyradow, Osman Gūjimow, and Akmyrat Çaryýew.

He has been performing Turkmen traditional music since childhood, appearing at many concerts and prestigious music festivals in Iran, Turkmenistan, and Turkey as well as in European countries such as France, Spain, and the Czech Republic.

Oghlan Bakhshi graduated from the Turkmen National Conservatory in Turkmenistan and is currently doing graduate work in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University in the USA.

Abdolghaffar Geldinejad

Master *Gyjak* player, Abdolghaffar Geldinejad was born in 1957 in Gonbad-e Kavous, one of the main cities of the Turkmen Sahra region of northeast Iran.

He learned Turkmen music in Iran from masters Arazmohammad Kalte and Nazarli Mahjubi. In the year 1984, he went to Turkmenistan to learn from virtuosos such as Ata Ablyýew, Saparguly Işangulyýew, Hydyr Meretniýazow, Annageldi Julgaýew, and Akmyrat Çaryýew.

In 1988, he established the Magtymguly Pyragy ensemble. This ensemble was one of the first Turkmen music ensembles to play an important role in preserving and promoting Turkmen traditional music after the Islamic revolution in Iran. Additionally, the Magtymguly Pyragy ensemble went on to win various awards such as the Fajr International Music Festival Best Ensemble Award each year from 1988 to 1994.

In the year 2001, he founded his family ensemble, Oghlan Bakhshi, which includes his two sons Jeyhun and Oghlan Bakhshi. This ensemble was one of the first family ensembles in the northeast of Iran. In 2005, he founded the first Turkmen music school, Oghlan Bakhshi, where he has been teaching Turkmen traditional music. He has performed at many concerts and festivals in Iran, Turkmenistan, and various European countries.

Tracks

1. **Babajyklar:** Vocal, *dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi
Accompanied by: *Gyjak* - Abdolghaffar Geldinejad
A traditional song based on a love poem by Mämmetweli Kemine (1770-1840).
2. **Ýagma bulut:** Vocal, *dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi
Accompanied by: *Gyjak* - Arslan Baýlyýew
Based on a love poem by Saýly Şahyr.
3. **Şalyk bilen:** Vocal, *dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi
Accompanied by: *Gyjak* - Arslan Baýlyýew
A traditional song based on a mystical poem by Magtymguly Pyragy (1724-1807?).
4. **Älemgoşar:** *Dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi, *gyjak* - Arslan Baýlyýew
Improvisation based on instrumental pieces and *mukams*.
5. **Garrylar gerek:** Vocal, *dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi
Accompanied by: *Gyjak* - Saparmyrat Annamyradow
Dutar - Altymyrat Pürmämmedow
Composed by Ata Ablyýew and based on a poem by Magtymguly Myşşyýew.
6. **Boý bibi:** Vocal, *dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi
Accompanied by: *Gyjak* - Abdolghaffar Geldinejad
The poet is unknown.

7. **Zyba gözel:** Vocal, *dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi
Accompanied by: *Gyjak* - Abdolghaffar Geldinejad
A traditional song based on a love poem by Durdymyrat Berdiýew, who is known by the name Umyt bakhshi.
8. **Humarala:** Solo *dutar* - Oghlan Bakhshi
One of the most complex instrumental pieces in the Turkmen *dutar* repertoire, requiring special virtuosity to perform.



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