



SCIENTIFIC AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ORGANIZING AND LEADING FOLKLORE-ETHNOGRAPHIC ENSEMBLES

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Abstract. *This article examines the scientific and methodological foundations of organizing and leading folklore-ethnographic ensembles, which represent one of the most important links in preserving and developing the traditional folklore heritage of the Karakalpak people. The article discusses the professional responsibilities of an ensemble leader, the stages of forming an ensemble, the principles of individual and collective work with performers, the issue of repertoire selection, as well as the challenges currently facing folklore-ethnographic ensembles and their prospects for development. The results of this study are intended to improve the practical activity of ensemble leaders and to enrich the methodology of teaching the relevant subjects in higher education institutions.*

Keywords: *folklore-ethnographic ensemble, ensemble leader, organization, repertoire, pedagogical methodology, national heritage, continuity of tradition.*

INTRODUCTION

In the present era, the preservation and transmission of national cultural heritage to future generations is one of the most important directions of state policy. The centuries-old tradition of Karakalpak baqsi-jiraw art, folk songs, epic (dastan) performance, and other folklore genres is one of the fundamental factors shaping national identity. This rich heritage is preserved and passed on to new generations, in practice, largely through folklore-ethnographic ensembles.

A folklore-ethnographic ensemble is understood as a group of people organized within a particular region for the purpose of studying, preserving, and teaching traditional performance culture, folk songs, and epic art to new generations, engaged in joint creative activity. The successful functioning of such ensembles largely depends on the professional training of their leader and on that leader's pedagogical, organizational, and creative abilities.

The purpose of this article is to study the scientific and methodological foundations of organizing and leading folklore-ethnographic ensembles, to define the professional responsibilities of the leader, and to analyze the pressing issues in this field under present-day conditions.



1. THE FOLKLORE-ETHNOGRAPHIC ENSEMBLE: CONCEPT AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL FUNCTION

A folklore-ethnographic ensemble is regarded not merely as a creative association but as a social institution that preserves and develops national culture. The socio-cultural function of such ensembles is realized in several directions: first, they keep traditional folklore models (epics, termes, folk songs) alive through direct performance; second, they give the younger generation the opportunity to become acquainted with national culture directly, through emotional and sensory experience; third, they fulfil the function of providing artistic and aesthetic education to the public.

As Sunnatillayev points out, the repertoire and activity of amateur ensembles have a direct impact on the cultural life of society, including the upbringing of the younger generation¹. This view is entirely applicable to Karakalpak folklore-ethnographic ensembles as well, since such ensembles often serve as the "face" of the cultural community of a given region, and through their activity the traditional values of the people are conveyed to the wider public.

In Karakalpakstan, the historical development of folklore-ethnographic ensembles has been closely connected with the baqsi-jıraw tradition, the art of qissaxanlıq (epic narration), and folk song culture.² This historical foundation continues to exert its influence on the repertoire choices and performance style of present-day ensembles.

2. THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ENSEMBLE LEADER

The successful functioning of a folklore-ethnographic ensemble depends, above all, on the professional preparation of its leader. The leader's professional responsibility can be considered from several aspects.

First, the leader functions as a pedagogue: he or she must take into account each performer's vocal capabilities, physiological characteristics, and psychological state, and must find an individualized approach to each one. This task is particularly evident in such practical areas as vocal training, diction, and the identification of voice types.

Second, the leader serves as a bearer of culture, and must be a knowledgeable representative of traditional performance culture, regional characteristics, and historical traditions. The leader must know the historical origins of epics and the peculiarities of regional versions, and must convey this knowledge to the performers.

¹ Sunnatillayev A., 2022, Tashkent, p. 68.

² Qalmenov B., 2012, Nukus, p. 9



Third, the leader acts as an organizer, carrying out such practical tasks as repertoire selection, planning rehearsals, preparing for stage performances, and resolving technical issues. This task requires the leader to possess a high level of organizational ability.

Fourth, the leader serves as an educator: particularly when working with young performers, the leader must instil not only vocal-technical knowledge but also values such as national spirit, respect for elders, and mutual assistance within the ensemble.³

In order to successfully fulfil this many-sided responsibility, the leader must continuously engage in self-study and improve his or her own knowledge. A modern leader should not limit himself or herself to the knowledge and skills acquired at one point in time, but should keep abreast of contemporary pedagogical literature and exchange experience with experienced leaders from other regions.

3. PRACTICAL STAGES OF ORGANIZING AN ENSEMBLE

Organizing a folklore-ethnographic ensemble is a process consisting of sequential stages. The first stage is attracting participants and testing their vocal and musical abilities. As Sunnatillayev points out, when accepting a new participant into an ensemble, "checking vocal and musical abilities" is the primary procedure⁴.

The second stage is classifying the performers' voice types and drawing up an initial training programme suited to them. At this stage, the leader must take into account each performer's age characteristics, vocal physiology, and level of experience.

The third stage is forming the ensemble's repertoire. The repertoire is the "mirror" reflecting the performance skill and artistic-aesthetic level of a folklore-ethnographic ensemble.⁵ In selecting the repertoire, the leader must choose works that are ideologically sound and artistically accomplished, cover a variety of genres, and take into account the capabilities of the participants.

The fourth stage is organizing a stable rehearsal process, during which systematic exercises are carried out in breathing technique, diction, vocal hygiene, and dynamic control. The quality of this stage largely determines the ensemble's subsequent achievements on stage.

The fifth stage is preparing for stage performances, during which practical matters such as drawing up the concert programme, ensuring stage-acoustic harmony, and planning the correct positioning of performers on stage are resolved.

³ Qalmenov B., 2012, Nukus, p. 9

⁴ Sunnatillayev A., 2022, Tashkent, p. 42

⁵ Sunnatillayev A., 2022, Tashkent, p. 68



4. REPERTOIRE SELECTION AND TAKING REGIONAL TRADITIONS INTO ACCOUNT

For Karakalpak folklore-ethnographic ensembles, knowledge of regional dialects and the particularities of local traditions is of special importance in repertoire selection. The traditional baqsı-jıraw art of the Karakalpak people developed historically as a result of the creative interaction among the Karakalpak, Uzbek, and Turkmen peoples who lived in the Khorezm oasis.⁶ For this reason, many epics exist in several linguistic versions, and the leader must know precisely which regional version of a given epic to select.

In forming the repertoire, it is also important to record the finest examples of folk creativity directly from local sources — elderly baqsıs, jıraw-singers, and epic narrators. This approach is the most reliable way of preserving the authentic essence of folklore material, since such performers often retain variants and intonational features that have not been fully preserved in written sources.

5. CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT UNDER PRESENT-DAY CONDITIONS

At present, Karakalpak folklore-ethnographic ensembles face a number of new opportunities as well as challenges. On the one hand, the state's policy of supporting national culture, the holding of folklore festivals and competitions, and the development of modern means of disseminating information (the internet, social networks) have increased the opportunity for ensembles to reach a wide audience.

On the other hand, a number of challenges remain: a decline in the younger generation's interest in traditional performance, a decrease in the number of experienced baqsı-jıraw performers, the risk that regional dialects and their associated performance characteristics may disappear, and the problem of financial and material support. Overcoming these challenges requires leaders, state institutions, and the public to act together.

As concrete steps in this direction, the following may be noted: expanding folklore-ethnographic clubs in schools and children's cultural centres in order to attract young performers; archiving the knowledge of experienced baqsı-jıraw performers in video and audio recordings; organizing festivals and seminars for the exchange of experience between regions; and continuing scientific research in this field, including the creation of textbooks and methodological manuals.

The role of educational institutions, particularly higher education institutions, in this process is likewise of no small importance. Including subjects such as "Folklore-Ethnographic Ensemble

⁶ Qalmenov B., 2012, Nukus, p. 9



Performance" in curricula, creating specialized textbooks in this field, and establishing opportunities for students to gain practical experience by working together with ensembles — these are the fundamental institutional mechanisms for training the next generation of leaders.

CONCLUSION

The research conducted shows that organizing and leading folklore-ethnographic ensembles is a complex professional activity requiring multifaceted pedagogical, organizational, and cultural knowledge. The leader's professional responsibility encompasses the roles of pedagogue, bearer of culture, organizer, and educator, and fulfilling these roles properly requires the leader's continuous professional growth.

The future of Karakalpak folklore-ethnographic ensembles depends, on the one hand, on faithfully preserving the heritage left by their ancestors, and, on the other, on the ability to adapt this heritage to contemporary conditions and present it to the new generation in an interesting and comprehensible way. These two tasks — preservation and renewal — are not opposed to one another but are two sides of a single process. The continuation of scientific and methodological research in this direction is a guarantee of the continuous development of Karakalpak folklore-ethnographic art.

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