

GENDER ASPECTS OF DAYRA PERFORMANCE IN THE MASTER-APPRENTICE TRADITION

Ismoil Rustamov

Teacher, Department of Vocal and Instrumental
Performance, Fergana State University, Fergana, Uzbekistan

Abstract

This article explores the gender aspects of dayra (frame drum) performance in the context of traditional Uzbek music art. It specifically analyzes the unique role and achievements of female dayra players in modern musical performance. The study highlights the interrelation between the master-apprentice tradition and gender dynamics, providing a gender-based analysis of renowned dayra performers and their schools in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, it discusses the issues of gender equality and innovative approaches based on scholarly and methodological sources. The article also addresses gender challenges in dayra performance art, the position of female performers, and the interplay between traditional and contemporary styles.

Keywords: Gender aspects in dayra performance, dayra performance art, performance skills, percussion instruments ensemble, stage culture.

Introduction

The art of Uzbek national music, particularly the tradition of *dayra* (frame drum) performance, has been enriched over centuries through strong cultural heritage and is transmitted from generation to generation via the master-apprentice model. These pedagogical traditions play a significant role in preserving *dayra* performance, with female *dayra* players also occupying a distinct place within this system. From a gender perspective, women have achieved considerable success in the development of *dayra* performance and remain actively involved in the contemporary music scene.

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed to investigate gender aspects in Uzbek *dayra* performance. The analysis includes scholarly articles, textbooks, and academic literature on master-apprentice schools. Interviews were conducted with prominent *dayra* players and their students. In addition, statistical data and contemporary trends in *dayra* performance were analyzed. To highlight gender equality and the accomplishments of female performers in modern music, innovative analytical approaches were applied.

By tracing the activities of female *dayra* players from historical times to the present, the research evaluates their contribution within the local musical traditions of Uzbekistan. In the Fergana–Tashkent school, women have preserved performance practices associated with the *yalla* genre. In the Bukhara–Samarkand school, female *dayra* playing is found in the context of *maqom* performance. In the Khorezm school, women's roles are observed in the art of *xalfa* performers. Currently, a professor at the Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture has formed an ensemble of talented female *dayra* players, organizing successful concert programs that showcase their skills.



The findings indicate that gender aspects play a crucial role in the development of *dayra* performance within the national musical art of Uzbekistan. Female *dayra* players enrich this tradition with their technical mastery and performance styles. While traditional *dayra* techniques were mainly developed by male performers, women are increasingly asserting their place in this field in the modern era. Furthermore, the principles of gender equality are enhancing the professional training and recognition of female performers. The master-apprentice tradition has played a decisive role in the advancement of *dayra* performance and has made a significant contribution to performance culture from a gendered perspective.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the gender dimension of *dayra* performance in Uzbek national music is of vital importance. It reveals the unique role of female performers in the evolution of this art and shows how their modern techniques harmonize with traditional forms. The principles of gender equality, as shaped through the master-apprentice tradition, are instrumental in developing high levels of professionalism and skill in *dayra* performance.

Literature Review

Studies on Uzbek musical traditions have increasingly acknowledged the importance of gender in shaping performance practices. While much of the earlier scholarship focused on male *dayra* players and their contributions to folk ensembles and *maqom* orchestras, recent research emphasizes the rising prominence of female performers within the same tradition (Mamatov, 2019; Sharipova, 2022).

Ethnomusicological works by scholars such as Theodore Levin and Donna Buchanan have highlighted the socio-cultural meanings embedded in Central Asian music-making, noting that instruments like the *dayra* serve both musical and ritual purposes. However, the specific experiences of female *dayra* players remain underrepresented in the global literature.

Within Uzbekistan, institutional sources, such as the Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture, have begun documenting the role of women in traditional ensembles, recognizing their technical achievements and pedagogical contributions. The intersection of *ustoz-shogird* mentoring and gender roles in percussion performance is emerging as a distinct academic concern, yet there remains a gap in comparative, field-based research addressing regional styles and generational change.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data. Primary sources include:

- Semi-structured interviews with 12 recognized *dayra* performers (7 female, 5 male), including both teachers and students, conducted in Fergana, Tashkent, Bukhara, and Khorezm.
- Archival recordings and concert footage from the 1980s to the present day.
- Analysis of curricula and internal reports from the Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture (2015–2023).

Quantitative data were obtained by coding references to gender in academic publications and institutional documents, and by counting female-led *dayra* ensembles registered at regional cultural centers.



A comparative framework was used to distinguish between performance styles in different regional schools (e.g., Tashkent-Fergana, Bukhara-Samarkand, Khorezm), particularly focusing on female-led interpretations of traditional repertoires.

Results and Discussion

In the Tashkent-Fergana style, the *yalla* genre continues to be performed by both male and female artists, with women often leading ensemble performances in weddings and festive events. In contrast, the Bukhara-Samarkand school integrates *dayra* into the *maqom* tradition, where female performers have begun to reinterpret historically male-dominated compositions. In the Khorezm region, *dayra* performance among *xalfa* women is part of a larger spiritual and ritual practice, showcasing a unique fusion of rhythm and voice.

The *ustoz-shogird* tradition has been pivotal in the preservation of technical skills and performance etiquette. Female mentors, once rare, are now increasingly taking on apprentices, thus breaking gender norms in music pedagogy. Many interviewees described the influence of female teachers as more emotionally supportive and community-oriented, contrasting with the often formal instruction given by male mentors.

Despite growing acceptance, female *dayra* players face challenges such as restricted access to professional stages, limited media representation, and societal expectations regarding marriage and family roles. Nevertheless, successful initiatives, such as the formation of all-female ensembles, and participation in international festivals, have significantly elevated the status of women in this field.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study confirms that gender aspects play a pivotal role in the art of *dayra* performance within Uzbekistan's national music tradition. Female *dayra* players contribute significantly to both the preservation and innovation of rhythmic techniques, stylistic expression, and performance culture. The traditional *ustoz-shogird* (master-apprentice) system remains a key mechanism through which knowledge and skills are transmitted, now increasingly accessible and inclusive to women.

Despite historical limitations, the rising presence of female performers in various regional schools—such as Tashkent-Fergana, Bukhara-Samarkand, and Khorezm—demonstrates the ongoing transformation of gender norms within this musical art form. Institutional support, academic documentation, and public recognition of women's contributions are essential to further elevate their role.

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Promote the public image of female *dayra* performers through extensive use of media platforms and public broadcasting to highlight their achievements and encourage broader societal recognition.
2. Strengthen the relationships between female masters and apprentices by expanding the *ustoz-shogird* mentoring tradition and facilitating networking opportunities among women in the field of percussion performance.



3. Integrate modern technologies into *dayra*-related teaching materials, including video tutorials, digital notation systems, and virtual classrooms to support inclusive and gender-equal learning environments.

4. Establish dedicated grant schemes and incentive programs for female *dayra* performers to encourage their artistic growth, participation in international festivals, and professional development.

Through the implementation of these strategies, Uzbekistan's rich musical heritage can become more inclusive, empowering women not only as cultural bearers but also as innovators and leaders in the art of *dayra* performance.

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