



## Duwtar: A Cultural and Historical Gem of Karakalpakstan

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12196824>

### ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 6-iyun 2024 yil  
Ma'qullandi: 9-iyun 2024 yil  
Nashr qilindi: 20-iyun 2024 yil

#### KEY WORDS

*Karakalpakstan, Traditional music, Duwtar, Cultural heritage, Two-stringed lute, Karakalpak people, Musical instrument, Historical roots, Construction methods, Cultural significance*

### ABSTRACT

*The duwtar, a traditional musical instrument, holds a significant place in the cultural heritage of Karakalpakstan, an autonomous republic in Uzbekistan. This article explores the history, construction, and cultural importance of the duwtar in Karakalpak society. By delving into its origins, evolution, and role in traditional music and rituals, we aim to highlight the instrument's unique contribution to the region's rich cultural tapestry.*

Karakalpakstan, an autonomous republic located in the northwest of Uzbekistan, is renowned for its unique cultural heritage and rich traditions. This region, with its diverse historical influences and resilient nomadic roots, boasts a distinctive cultural identity that has been meticulously preserved over centuries. One of the most significant aspects of Karakalpak culture is its traditional music, which plays a central role in community life, rituals, and celebrations. At the heart of this musical tradition is the duwtar, a long-necked, two-stringed lute that has been integral to the Karakalpak people for generations.

The duwtar, with its resonant tones and versatile playing techniques, is not merely a musical instrument; it is a vessel of cultural expression and historical storytelling. Used extensively in traditional Karakalpak music, the duwtar accompanies folk songs, dances, and epic poetry, creating a sonic tapestry that reflects the life, struggles, and joys of the Karakalpak people. The instrument's design, construction, and playing style are deeply rooted in the cultural practices and artistic sensibilities of the region, making it a symbol of Karakalpak identity and artistic heritage. [1.89]

This article delves into the duwtar's rich history, exploring its origins and evolution over time. We will examine the intricate craftsmanship involved in its construction, highlighting the materials and techniques passed down through generations of artisans. Furthermore, we will discuss the duwtar's enduring significance in Karakalpak society, emphasizing its role in traditional ceremonies, social gatherings, and spiritual practices. By tracing the journey of the

duwtar from its ancient roots to its present-day relevance, we aim to shed light on the profound cultural legacy embodied in this remarkable instrument.

**Historical Background:** The duwtar's history is deeply intertwined with the history of the Karakalpak people. The origins of the duwtar can be traced back to ancient times, with similar instruments being used by nomadic tribes in Central Asia. The Karakalpaks, originally a nomadic people, adopted the duwtar as a means of storytelling and cultural expression. Over time, the duwtar became an integral part of Karakalpak music, often accompanying traditional songs and dances.

**Construction of the Duwtar:** The construction of a duwtar is a meticulous process that requires skilled craftsmanship. Traditionally, the body of the duwtar is carved from a single piece of mulberry or apricot wood, which provides a resonant sound quality. The neck is long and slender, with two strings made from gut or silk, although modern versions may use nylon or metal strings. The frets are movable, allowing the player to adjust the pitch and tuning of the instrument. The soundboard is typically made from animal skin, which is stretched over the body to create a resonant surface. [2.118]

**Cultural Significance:** The duwtar holds a special place in Karakalpak culture. It is more than just a musical instrument; it is a symbol of cultural identity and continuity. The duwtar is often played during important cultural events such as weddings, festivals, and traditional ceremonies. It is also used in the performance of epic poetry, known as "zhyrau," where the instrument accompanies the recitation of heroic tales and historical narratives.

In addition to its role in entertainment, the duwtar is also associated with spiritual practices. It is believed to have protective and healing properties, and its music is used in various rituals to ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune. The duwtar's music is deeply embedded in the oral traditions of the Karakalpak people, serving as a medium for passing down stories, values, and history from generation to generation.

**Evolution and Modern Day:** While the duwtar has retained its traditional form and playing techniques, it has also adapted to modern influences. Contemporary musicians in Karakalpakstan and beyond are experimenting with the duwtar, incorporating it into various musical genres and fusion projects. This adaptability has helped to keep the duwtar relevant in the modern musical landscape, while still preserving its traditional essence. [3.48]

Efforts to preserve and promote the duwtar are ongoing. Cultural institutions and musicians in Karakalpakstan are dedicated to teaching the next generation the art of duwtar playing. Festivals and competitions featuring the duwtar are regularly held, showcasing the instrument's versatility and the skill of its players.

The duwtar is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Karakalpakstan. Its history, construction, and cultural significance reflect the deep connection between the Karakalpak people and their traditional music. As a symbol of cultural identity, the duwtar continues to play a vital role in the lives of the Karakalpak people, bridging the past and the present, and ensuring the continuity of their unique cultural traditions.

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