

A FASCINATING MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

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AMONG THE EASTERN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, THE UD HAS A VERY INTERESTING HISTORY OF MANY CENTURIES, WHICH IS PROVED BY ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND MANUSCRIPTS. THUS, ACCORDING TO TERRA COTTAS (9-10-CM FIRED STATUETTES WITH A FLAT BACK AND EMBOSSED FACE, MOST OF WHICH DATE BACK TO THE FIRST CENTURY BC – THIRD CENTURY AD) OF THE CITY OF AFRASIYAB - ANCIENT SAMARKAND, THE FAVORITE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF ANCIENT SOGDIANA HAD A GREAT BODY THAT TURNED INTO A SHORT NECK AND ENDED WITH A HEAD BENT BACKWARDS [1], I.E. IT WAS VERY SIMILAR TO THE MODERN UD.

Major theorists of early medieval music - **Yahya ibn al-Munajjim (855-917)** in his «*Risala fil-Musiqa*» («*Treatise on Music*») and **Abu Nasr Muhammad al-Farabi (870-950)** in his book «*Kitab al-Musiqi al-Kabir*» («*The Big Book of Music*») - describe a four-stringed (triple - *bam*, double - *maslas*, *masna* and *zir*) ud, at the appropriate levels (frets) of which a particular sound was produced. The open string was called *mutlag*. In order to symbolize the frets, the names of the fingers were used (index finger - *sabbaba*, long finger - *vosta*, ring

finger - *binsir* and little finger - *hinsir*). But it should be noted that in order to get a perfect scale, singer and musician **Ziryab** (died in 845, his real name was **Ali ibn Nafa**), long before **Farabi**, added a fifth string «*hadd*» (sharp), which sounded a fourth higher than the fourth, and to make the sound more subtle and lighter, he replaced the wooden mediator with an eagle feather [2]. In the 8th century, **Mansur Zalzal** added a new fret to the scale of the ud, which became known as «*vosta zalzal*», and invented a special form of the ud [3]. But **in the time of Farabi and until the 13th century,**

the ud was largely four-stringed, while the five-stringed ud was not yet widespread.

According to contemporaries, the Azerbaijani musicologist **Safiaddin Urmavi (1216/1217-1294)** was **not only an outstanding music theorist and creator of the perfect musical notation in the form of a table, but a consummate ud performer.** The 7th chapter of his famous work «*Kitab ul-Adwar*» («*The Book of Circles*»), which was specifically devoted to the ud, examines the theoretical and practical aspects of music on the example of this instrument:

the nature of the sound, the system of the frets and scales, intervals, rhythms, songs and performing skills. The manuscript of this treatise, dated 1333-1334 (Oxford, Bodleian Library), includes an image of the instrument with five double strings and seven frets on a short neck [4].

In another work by the musicologist - «**Risaleyi-sharafiya**» («**Book of the Nobility**») – the ud is described as one of the most advanced instruments. It stresses the quart tuning of the string of the instruments and positions on them.

The ud was a favorite musical instrument of medieval Azerbaijani poets, who often mentioned it in their works. Information about the appearance of the ud and characteristics of the sound of its silk strings can be obtained from the works of **Qatran Tabrizi (1010-1080) and Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209)**. In the poem «Khosrov and Shirin», Nizami emphasizes the mastery of singers and musicians Barbed and Nakis - the former perfectly played the ud and the latter - the chang.

The ud is also mentioned in the poems of other classics of Azerbaijani poetry - **Assar Tabrizi (1325-1390), Qazi Burhaneddin (1344-1398), Imadeddin Nasimi (1369-1417) and Jahanshah Haqiqi (1405-1467)**.

The instruments that existed in the second half of the 15th - early 16th centuries can be judged by the heritage of prominent representatives of Azerbaijani poetry **Habibi and Kishvari**, who also describe the ud. It is noteworthy that in one of Habibi's poems, the ud is mentioned along with other stringed instruments - *sheshtay, chang and barbat*. From this, it follows that the names «ud» and «barbat» meant different instruments at the end of the 15th century. We emphasize this on the grounds that with reference to medieval sources,



modern scholars stress that the barbat, ud and rud are different names for one and the same instrument [1]. On the other hand, there is a deep-seated opinion in scientific literature that the barbat is a precursor of the ud or «one of the varieties of a lute-like instrument close to the ud» [5].

Indeed, the fact that the term «barbat», which meant «a duck's breast» (bar – breast and bat - duck, it was given this name because of the external similarity between the instrument and a duck, if you look at it from the side), is synonymous with the word «ud» was mentioned by the

outstanding Central Asian scholar al-Khwarizmi in the 10th century [6]. We read the same in the dictionary «**Sihah al-Fars**» («**The Perfection of the Persian Language**»), compiled in 1328 by Muhammad Hindushah Nakhchivani [7].

The following facts are equally important for clarifying this issue. In his treatise on music [2] included in his encyclopedic work «Kitab al-Shafa» («Book of Healing»), the great Central Asian scholar and philosopher, Abu Ali ibn Sina (980-1037), uses the term «barbat» to describe a lute, although this work was written in Arabic.



Fakhraddin al-Razi (1150-1210), who also lived in Azerbaijan, wrote about four strings of the barbat, which exactly matched the name of ud strings [1]. According to the theorist from Herat, al-Huseyni (15th century) [1], after a fifth string was added to the lute, it was called an ud (in Arabic - «tree»). It is possible that this is also due to the replacement of the leather sounding board of the lute with a wooden one. Prominent poet

Khaqani Shirvani (1120-1199), like Ferdowsi (940-1020/1030) in the epic «Shahnameh», never mentions the ud, despite the popularity of the Arab name for the lute in his time like in the previous century. Khaqani wrote about eight (four two-choir) strings of the barbat. This suggests that in the times of Khaqani and Nizami, three- and four-stringed barbats were the most popular.

The famous Azerbaijani musicolo-

gist, **Abdulqadir Maraghi (1353-1434/35)**, also considered the ud the most perfect musical instrument and recorded that in its time, there were two varieties of the ud: the old (qadim) ud had four, and the perfect ud (kamil) had five twin strings. Apparently, talking about the old ud (udi qadim), Maraghi meant the barbat.

The great Azerbaijani poet Mohammed Fuzuli called the ud «the treasurer of the treasury of secrets», and admiring its sound, asked who taught the «fiery song» to the ud, wishing to know the reason for its «briskness toward new tunes». In response, the ud says:

From the earliest days when I was ready, There was a voice placed in my soul, and he sings, I never knew what they did to me, Why and how they made me. Of course, these cries of love are not from me, You'd better ask the craftsman, he will explain my excitation [8].

Thus implying that the «groans» coming from its strings depend on people. The poet means that man can use a musical instrument at his discretion and perform hilarious and sad melodies. The whole «conversation» between the poet and the ud shows that **this instrument was still one of the perfect ones.**

Embroidery (Budapest Museum of Decorative Arts), made in Tabriz, depicting scenes of dancing and singing accompanied by the ud, chang, kamancha, ney, and daf, is a noteworthy story [9].

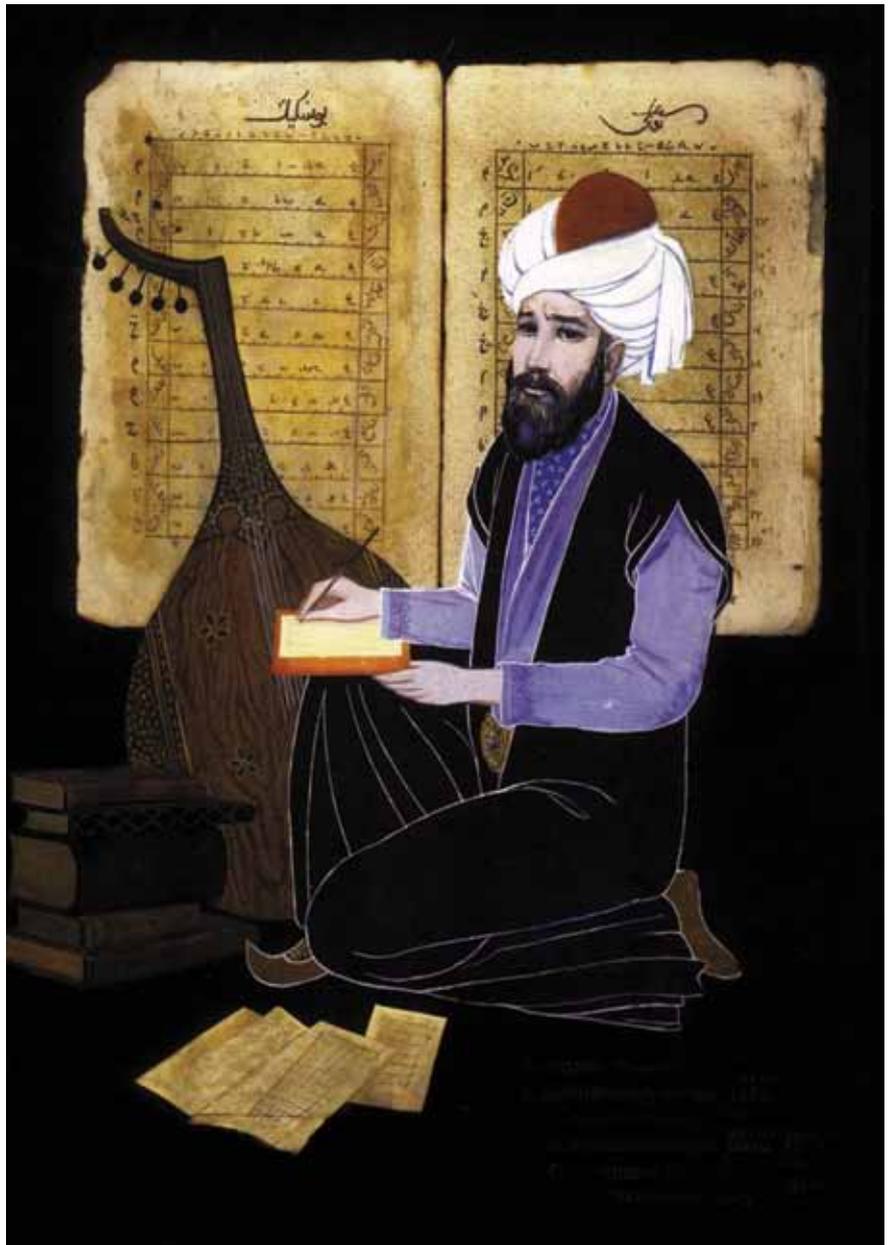
According to the book miniatures of Azerbaijani artists, **Sultan Muhammad (1470-1555)**, **Mirza Ali (16th century)** and others, the body of the ud was pear-shaped or round. On the head bent backwards, 10-11 pegs are clearly visible, corresponding to the number of strings, and there are also three pegs on one side of the head. On the sounding board, there are sound holes

decorated with carved rosettes. The ud, especially the neck, was richly decorated with ornaments. While playing, it was held on the knees with its head slightly bowed down. The instrument was played with a plectrum probably made from the cornea of an eagle feather. None of the works by artists shows the frets on the neck. Their absence in modern uds common in Arab countries, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, as well as terra cottas of Afrasiyab and Iranian silver vessels dating to the 7th-9th centuries suggests [1] that the frets on the ud indicated in the diagrams and drawings by Farabi, Urmavi and others likely served to illustrate the theoretical provisions of music and sounds of different pitches.

The following fact is also noteworthy. Usually, there are no frets in stringed instruments with a short neck; they are available on instruments with a long neck, because their absence makes it difficult to produce relevant sounds correctly.

Judging by medieval poetic works and miniatures, **the ud was most often played in palaces during feasts.** In «Risaleyi Musiqi» by the Central Asian musicologist Dervish Ali [10], which describes the musical art of the second half of the 16th - early 17th centuries, the **ud is described as the king of musical instruments, because due to its timbre of sounds and the volume of its range, it was the best of all the stringed instruments of the time;** it already had six silk strings tuned in pairs (*hadd, zir, masna, maslas, bam, and mukhtalif*), and the range of the instrument expanded toward lower sounds.

German scientist and traveler **Adam Oleari (1603-1671)** recorded that during receptions in the palace of the Shamakhi khan, musicians in turbans and colorful striped coats accompanied the dancers and played stringed instruments like zithers (it

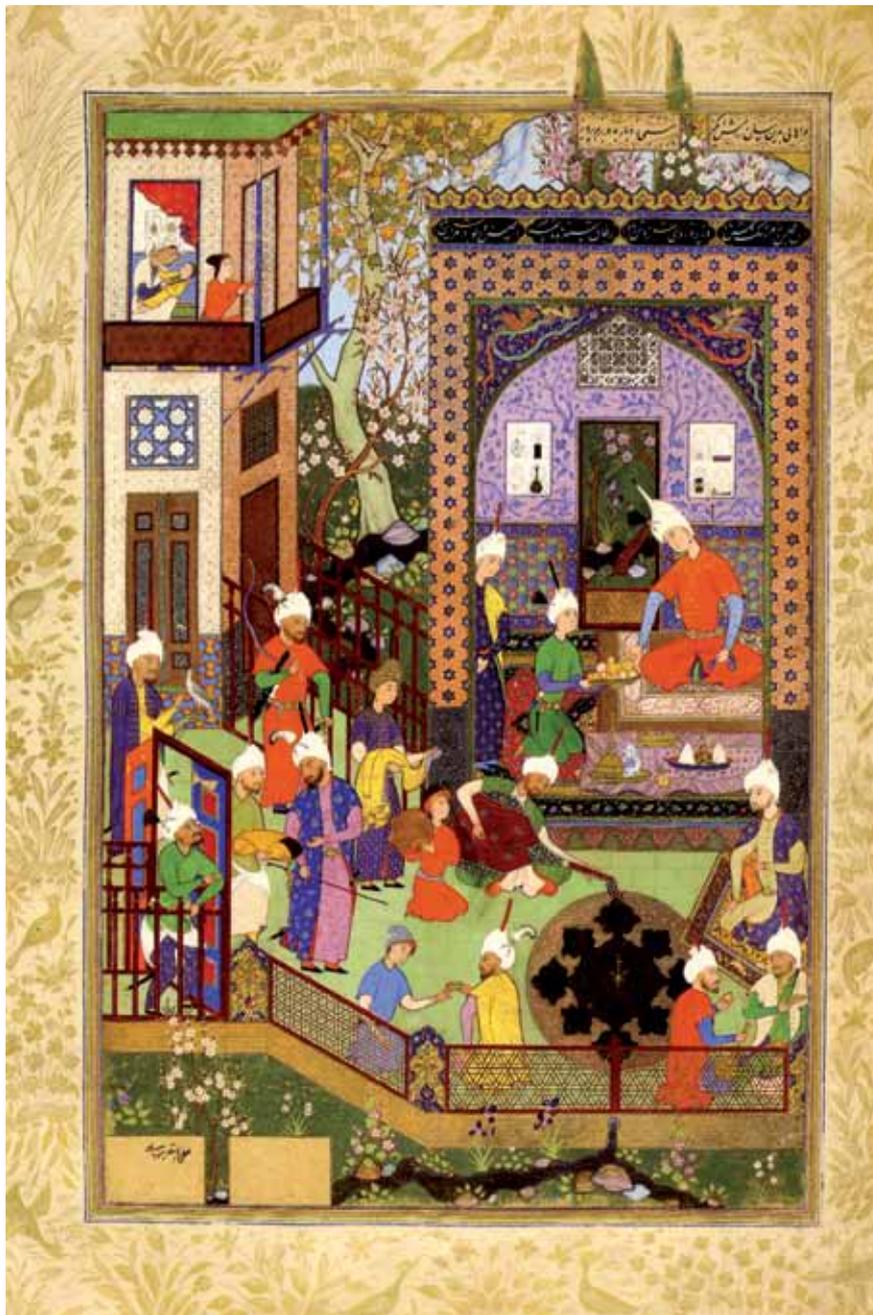


was probably kanun, chang or santur), and when female dancers took the floor – they played the daf, balaban, nagara and ud [11].

The fifth section of the treatise «Adwar» («Circles») by an anonymous Azerbaijani author, which characterizes the level of musical theory in the second half of the 18th century [12], considers the tuning of instruments. For example, it is recommended that the strings of the ud be tuned to the following modes: the first - *chahargah*, the second - *rast*, the third -

isfahan, the fourth - *dugah*, and the fifth - *huseyni*.

Imported to Europe by the Arabs during the conquest of Spain, the ud is now recognized as a precursor of the European lute. In the new place, the ud underwent changes in constructive terms. The short-necked ud, i.e. in original form, gained widespread popularity in the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia. Today **the ud (in two varieties - arabi and sharqi) is the leading stringed instrument among Arabs and is also**



common in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The short-necked lute is called «pipa» in China. According to Chinese chronicles, this instrument is foreign and came to China from the western world.

Thus, the main parts of the ud are a convex, pear-shaped body, a short neck and a head with pegs bent backwards. The overall length of the instrument is 850 mm. The length

of the body reaches 480-500 mm, width - 350-360 mm, depth - 180-200 mm, neck length - 195-200 mm, and head - 215-230 mm. The body is held together with 5mm-thick rivets (20), the upper ends of which are attached to the butt. On the sides, the upper rivets are further attached to small blocks of wood on the sounding board from the inside. A wide neck with a width of 35-50 mm and a height of 22-30 mm is attached

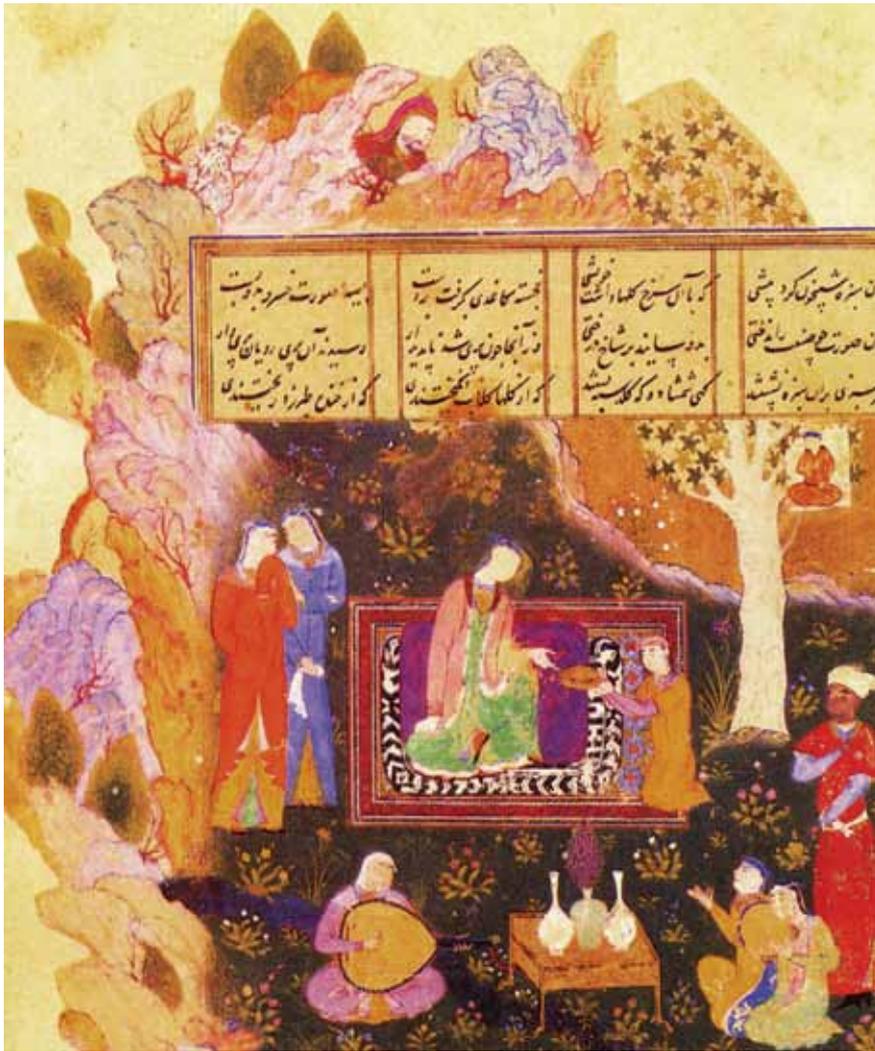
to the 70-80 mm long butt, and the head is attached to its upper end. On the upper side of the head, there are 6 pegs and at the bottom - 5. The wooden sounding board with a thickness of 5 mm has from one to three sound holes with inserted carved rosettes. At the bottom of the sounding board, there is a shell and a wooden stand – a holder of strings with a length of 130 and a height of 7 mm.

The wooden parts of the instrument, except for the sounding board, are made of walnut, pear and sandalwood. The flat sounding board is made of spruce or pine.

The ud typically has five pairs of strings. In the recent period, an additional single string is pulled on the instrument. The first and second pairs are made from veins, and the rest from metal. As was noted, there are no frets on the sounding board. Sounds are extracted with a plectrum in the form of a stylus with a bone tip. When playing, the ud is pressed to the chest, while the side of the body touches the bent knee of a seated performer. The artist plays it with four fingers of his left hand.

Music for the instrument is composed in treble clef and sounds an octave lower than written. The range of the ud is from the big «E» to «F» in the first octave. The strings are tuned in the range of second-quarter. The ud can take passages, tremolo, glissando and melodic phrases.

In orchestras and ensembles of folk instruments, the ud is used primarily as an accompanying instrument. Together with other instruments, its sound is enhanced significantly, reaching timbre diversity. While repeating the melodic line, due to sharp differences in timbre from other stringed instruments, the ud creates a kind of harmony. This feature is clearly seen in the poem for the kanun, the orchestra of



folk instruments and «Song Without Words No 14» by the composer Suleyman Alasgarov. The soft, velvety sound of the ud allows it to be used for the solo performance of mugams and lyrical folk tunes.

The great tar player Ehsan Dadaşov (1924-1976) played a major role in popularizing the ud in Azerbaijan. The audience still remembers him playing the Shur mugam and the song «My beloved with a black mole» on the ud. Nowadays, performances by Yasaf Eyvazov, Mirjavad Jafarov and Asgar Alakbarov make a lasting impression. ❀

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