



ČAHĀRTĀR

ČAHĀRTĀR (lit. four-strings), a musical instrument belonging to the family of long-necked lutes. It is a variant of the modern Persian *setār*, which spread to Tajikistan sometimes in the past. Like the Persian, four-stringed *setār* it has two strings plus a doubled bass string in the upper octave. The term *čārtār* signifying a musical instrument occurs as early as the 8th/14th century in a poem by Salmān Sāvajī (Dehḡodā, s.v. *cārtār*), and *Borhān-e qāṭe'* (ed. Mo'in, II, p. 609) defines *čartār/čārtāra* as a four-stringed *tanbūr* or *robāb*. The literal meaning and the present uses (see below) of the term *čahārtār* suggest that it may originally have denoted any type of instrument with four strings (cf. *Borhān-e qāṭe'*, s.v. *čārtāra*).

Today the term *čahārtār* is in use only among the Uzbeks and Tajiks of the plains (*Grove's Dictionary*, pp. 417f.), where it is said to be applied to a variant of the five-stringed instrument called *tanbūr* by the Uzbeks and Uighurs, *setār*, sometimes also *panjtār*, by the Tajiks and the Hunzas of Karakoram. All these instruments are undoubtedly derived from the originally three-stringed Persian *setār* often depicted in miniatures. They vary somewhat in shape and dimensions: The *čahārtār*, like the Central Asian *tanbūr*, is longer than the Persian *setār* (Vertkov, fig. 631), and its mulberry-wood body is usually narrower and smaller. Its broad, high frets (*parda*) facilitate vibrato effects. It is played by plucking with the nail of the right forefinger, which is sometimes protected with a metal thimble.

In Afghanistan the term *čahārtār* is applied to the six-stringed (formerly five-stringed) Persian *tār* (q.v.), which belongs to a quite different family of lutes.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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