



ČOGŪR

ČOGŪR (also *čoḡor*, *čoḡūr*, more commonly called *sāz* in former Soviet Azerbaijan), is the typical pyriform lute of the *‘āšeḡ*, the professional minstrel of Azerbaijan. The ancestor of this instrument was probably the *ṭanbūr* of Šīrvān, described by ‘Abd-al-Qāder b. Ġaybī Marāḡī (p. 200) in 809/1405, which was very popular in Tabrīz. It was pear-shaped and had two strings tuned a second apart (as are the lowest and highest strings of the *čoḡūr*). With the passage of time these strings were probably doubled and tripled.

The overall length of the most common form of this instrument is about 105 cm, but there are two other, less common types, with lengths respectively of about 130 and about 70 cm (Rahmatov, pp. 20-21; Albright-Farr, pp. 29-30). The pyriform sound box is shaped from two strips of mulberry wood glued together and closed by a soundboard, also of mulberry wood; the neck, of walnut (often hollowed out), has room for ten to fourteen frets, each with a specific name (Eldarova, p. 42).

Traditionally, as the student learns from his master to play the instrument, he simultaneously learns to manufacture it according to tested and unvarying procedures (cf. Albright-Farr, pp. 33-34). He often decorates both the neck and the soundbox with shell inlays.

The *‘āšeḡ* suspends the *čoḡūr* around his neck by means of a strap fastened to the instrument, for he generally plays standing up and sometimes even while walking. The style of playing the *čoḡūr* is characterized both by the extreme mobility with which the plectrum is manipulated, according to a number of



rhythmic and ornamental formulas, and by exploitation of the polyphonic possibilities inherent in the instrument without departing from the monodic line, a style typical of the playing of Turkish lutes in general. Although the form of *čogūr* generally found in Azarbaijan is unique both for its sonority and for the technique by which it is played, it does closely resemble the *sāz* (or *bağlama*) of the *‘āšeqs* of Turkey, and it was probably the prototype for the latter instrument. Although the *čogūr* is in principle intended to accompany singing, some skilled musicians have raised it to the level of a solo instrument.

The *čogūr* normally consists of three triple strings of steel. They are tuned in different ways, depending on the mode: Usually the first rank of strings (the melodic strings) is always tuned to D and the third to C; the second rank can be tuned to G (Qārāčī tuning for the Šūr mode), C (Orfānī [‘Erfānī] system for *Rāst moqām*), or E (Delgam tuning for the Segāh mode; Eldarova, p. 39). In the instrument as played in the style of Urmia the tuning of the two outer sets of triple strings is reversed, to C and D respectively; among relatively uncommon tunings are C-A-D and C-C-D. The pitches given here are relative and can be lowered (to C instead of D). Furthermore, the central rank of strings can be tuned either higher than the others or an octave lower.

The arrangement of frets on the *čogūr* can be traced to a Pythagorean scale of twelve half-tones, in which certain intervals are slightly modified, for example, the E (leading tone of F), which is raised about two commas (Albright-Farr, p. 32; Eldarova, p. 38).

Many pieces are in the Rāst or Māhūr modes, on a scale corresponding to the major diatonic scale (in F). By taking the third tone of the scale of C as the tonic, it is possible to obtain two important and very typical modes in the Azeri tradition: Segāh and Šekasta-ye Fārs. In Segāh the tonic E is heavily emphasized, and the modulation is G-A_b -B-C. In Šekasta-ye Fārs C is the final note of the descending scale G-F-E-C. Šūr, on the tonic D, is based on the scale C-D-E_b , -F-G-A-B_b (During, 1988, pp. 70-104).

The term *čongar* is sometimes applied to the *dotār* of the Turkmen, a pyriform lute with a sound box made from a single piece of mulberry wood, with a long neck accommodating thirteen metal frets and two steel strings fastened to bronze pegs. These frets yield a chromatic scale, and the two strings (with a vibrating length of ca. 65 cm) span an octave and a fifth. The *čongar* is the typical accompaniment of the [Baķši](#) minstrels of Central Asia, who also play it as a solo instrument; the strings are shortened and plucked with the fingers of



the right hand, following well-established rhythmic and gestural patterns.

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