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Research Article

A musical and thematic analysis of Cahangir Cahangirov's music in the film Dəli Kür (1969)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the works "Bayatılar" and "Ana Kür" featured in the film Dəli Kür (1969) by Azerbaijani composer Cahangir Cahangirov from musicological and thematic perspectives. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study draws on document analysis, musicological analysis, and content analysis. The research materials consist of the published musical score of "Bayatılar" and the Azerbaijani lyrics of both works. The melodic structure, rhythm, tempo, and piano accompaniment of "Bayatılar" were examined through score analysis, while the lyrics of both works were subjected to thematic content analysis. The findings revealed that "Bayatılar" is a vocal composition with piano accompaniment, written in 4/4 time and marked Andante. Its lyrics reflect themes of exile, separation, longing, and attachment to a loved one. In contrast, the lyrics of "Ana Kür" emphasize patriotism, personification of nature, historical memory, cultural belonging, and continuity of life. In particular, the portrayal of the Kura River as a bride, a source of life, and a mirror reflecting the past and present demonstrates the integration of the natural environment with cultural identity. A comparison of the two works indicates that "Bayatılar" focuses on individual emotions, whereas "Ana Kür" emphasizes social and cultural values.

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Introduction

Film music plays a significant role in shaping the emotional, dramatic, and cultural meanings of visual narratives. Music in film is not merely an element accompanying scenes; it also serves as a narrative medium that reflects the psychological states of characters, the development of the narrative, and cultural identities (Gorbman, 1987; Chion, 1994; Cohen, 2001). Cahangir Cahangirov, an important figure in Azerbaijani musical culture, integrated traditional musical elements into various genres through his compositional approach (Ahmadova, 2015; Safarova, 2018). Directed by Huseyn Seyidzade, *Dəli Kür* (1969) is a significant cinematic work addressing the historical and cultural transformation of Azerbaijani society (Kazımzada, 2004). In the film, Cahangirov's music contributes to the development of the narrative, particularly through songs and dramatic musical elements. However, a systematic examination of the structural characteristics of these musical works alongside their narrative and emotional functions within film scenes would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the composer's approach to film music.

Conceptual Framework

Film music is not merely an auditory component of cinematic narrative but also an important narrative element that generates meaning through its interaction with visual imagery. While Gorbman (1987) explains the functions of film music in narrative continuity, dramatic emphasis, and character representation, Chion (1994) emphasizes the

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production of meaning arising from the reciprocal interaction between sound and image. Cohen (2001), meanwhile, highlights the potential of music to guide viewers' emotional responses and shape their perception of scenes. From these perspectives, the examination of film music requires an evaluation of its narrative and emotional functions alongside its musical characteristics.

The musical structure of film music can be examined through components such as melodic organization, makam (modal structure), rhythm, tempo, form, and instrumentation. Furthermore, the repetition of particular musical themes, their association with characters, and their accompaniment of dramatic events reveal the cinematic functions of music (Gorbman, 1987; Chion, 1994). In particular, the use of leitmotifs enables a musical theme to be associated with specific characters, events, or ideas within a narrative (Gorbman, 1987).

In Azerbaijani film music, reflections of traditional musical culture make the relationship between musical structure and cultural identity particularly significant. Song forms, melodic expression, and traditional musical elements occupy a prominent place in Cahangir Cahangirov's compositional approach (Ahmadova, 2015; Safarova, 2018). The music featured in *Dəli Kür* (1969) also provides suitable material for examining the cinematic representation of Azerbaijan's historical and cultural atmosphere (Kazımzada, 2004; Safarova, 2018).

The conceptual framework of this study is based on six dimensions: musical structure, narrative function, emotional function, character representation, cultural identity, and the relationship between music and image. Through these dimensions, both the compositional characteristics of Cahangirov's music in *Dəli Kür* and its functions within the cinematic narrative will be examined from a holistic perspective.

Cahangir Cahangirov's Life and Compositional Career

Cahangir Shirgasht oghlu Cahangirov, one of the prominent composers of Azerbaijani musical culture, was born on June 20, 1921, in the Balakhani settlement of Baku and died on March 25, 1992, in Baku. As a composer, choral conductor, and music educator, he established an important position in the history of Azerbaijani music (Qasımova, 1964; Quliyeva, 2014).

Cahangirov began his musical education in Baku, studying at the Asaf Zeynally Music School before continuing his education at the Azerbaijan State Conservatory. He benefited from Uzeyir Hajibeyli's studies on Azerbaijani folk music and completed his composition training in Boris Zeydman's class. During his professional career, he held leadership positions with the Azerbaijan Radio Choir and the Song and Dance Ensemble affiliated with the Azerbaijan State Philharmonic. He also served as a faculty member in choral conducting at the conservatory (Quliyeva, 2014; Azərbaycan Bəstəkarlar İttifaqı, n.d.).

Photographs of the composer from different periods of his life are presented in Photo1.



Photo 1. Photographs of Cahangir Cahangirov (Web 1, Web 2, Web 3)

Cahangirov's compositional output encompasses various genres, including opera, cantata, oratorio, choral music, songs, and film music. His major works include the vocal-symphonic poem *Arazın o tayında* (1949), the operas *Azad* (1957) and *Hanendenin taleyi* (1979), the cantatas *Füzuli* (1959) and *Nesimi* (1973), and the oratorio *Sabir*. His melodic expression in vocal music, along with his incorporation of folk music and mugham elements, constitutes some of the defining characteristics of his compositional style (Ahmadova, 2015; Safarova, 2018).



Video 1. Cahangirov's *Dəli Kür* Film (1969) (Web 4)

Among the composer's notable contributions to film music are *Koroğlu* (1960), *Yenilmez Batalyon* (1965), and *Dəli Kür* (1969). Directed by Huseyn Seyidzade, *Dəli Kür* is an adaptation of the novel of the same name by Ismayil Shikhli. Among the musical works composed by Cahangirov for the film, "Ana Kür" and "Bayatılar" are particularly noteworthy (Quliyeva, 2018; Safarova, 2018). The musical structures of these works, their relationships with dramatic expression, and their cultural representations within the film constitute the primary focus of the present study.

Research Gap

Previous studies on Cahangir Cahangirov's musical creativity have primarily focused on his song repertoire, stylistic characteristics, and relationship with traditional Azerbaijani music. While Qasımova (1964) examined the composer's life and creative output from a monographic perspective, Ahmadova (2015) analyzed Cahangirov's songs in terms of genre, themes, and musical characteristics, highlighting the significance of folk music and mugham traditions in his compositional approach. Quliyeva (2018) explored the composer's musical world and works, whereas Safarova (2018) examined Cahangirov's creative output within the context of Azerbaijani music history. In the field of film music, Gorbman (1987) explained the narrative functions of music; Chion (1994) examined the interaction between sound and image; and Cohen (2001) addressed the role of music in generating emotional meaning. Within the context of Azerbaijani cinema, Quliyeva (2014) investigated the relationships between visual imagery and music across different film genres, while Valiyeva (2014) examined the national characteristics of contemporary Azerbaijani film music. Kazımzada (2004) explored the historical development of Azerbaijani cinema, contributing to an understanding of the position of *Dəli Kür* within cinematic history.

Although the existing literature provides insights into Cahangirov's compositional characteristics and the general features of Azerbaijani film music, it appears limited in offering a systematic, scene-based analysis that simultaneously examines the musical structures and narrative, emotional, and cultural functions of the music in *Dəli Kür* (1969). Addressing this research gap, the present study aims to examine the melodic, modal, rhythmic, and formal characteristics of the film's music and to reveal how these characteristics relate to character representation, dramatic narrative, and cultural identity.

Research Aim and Problem

The aim of this study is to examine the melodic, modal, rhythmic, and formal characteristics of the music composed by Cahangir Cahangirov for the film *Dəli Kür* (1969) and to explore the relationships between these musical characteristics and the film's narrative, emotional, and cultural functions. Particular attention is given to the contributions of the music to character representation, the development of dramatic events, and the cinematic representation of Azerbaijani cultural identity.

The central research problem concerns how the structural characteristics of Cahangir Cahangirov's music in *Dəli Kür* (1969) acquire functions within the cinematic narrative. Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the melodic, modal, rhythmic, and formal characteristics of the music used in the film?
- How does the music contribute to the film's narrative development and dramatic structure?
- What functions does the music serve in character representation and the creation of an emotional atmosphere?

- How are traditional Azerbaijani musical elements incorporated into the film music, and how do they support the representation of cultural identity?
- How does the relationship between music and visual imagery shape the production of meaning in the film?

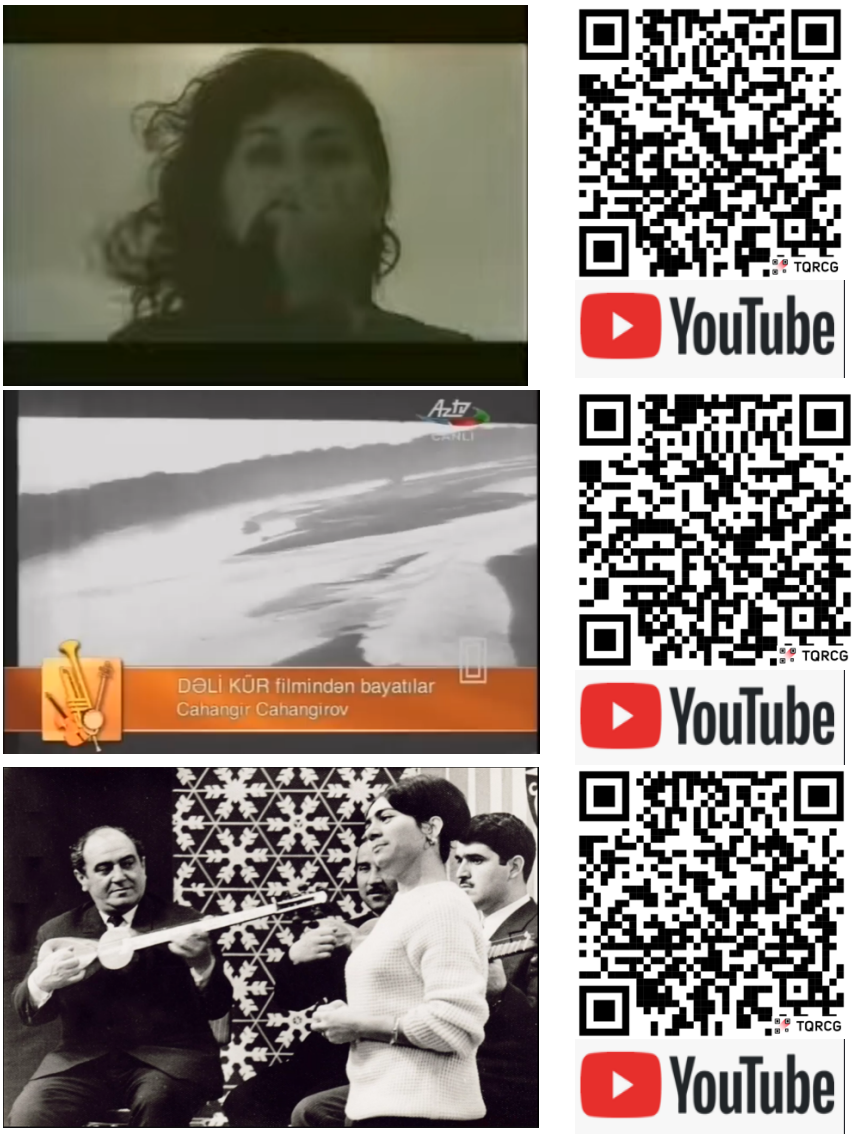
Method

Research Design

This study was designed within a qualitative research framework, employing document analysis and musicological analysis methods. The structural characteristics and cinematic functions of the music composed by Cahangir Cahangirov for the film Dəli Kür (1969) will be examined together. The theoretical approaches of Gorbman (1987), Chion (1994), and Cohen (2001) will be employed to analyze the relationships between music and visual imagery.

Research Materials

The primary research material of this study is the film *Dəli Kür* (1969), directed by Huseyn Seyidzade. The study will examine the vocal and instrumental music featured in the film, with particular emphasis on the works "Ana Kür" and "Bayatılar". Available musical scores, audio recordings, and academic sources related to the composer will be used as supplementary materials.



Video 2. "Ana Kür" song from the film *Dəli Kür* (top) (Web 5) and "Bayatılar" song (middle and bottom) (Web 6 and Web 7)

Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed in two stages. In the first stage, the melodic structure, rhythm, tempo, and piano accompaniment of "Bayatılar" will be examined through musicological analysis of the musical score. In the second stage, the song lyrics will be evaluated through content analysis to identify the main themes and their relationships with musical expression.

Findings

Musicological Analysis of "Bayatılar"

The musicological analysis of "Bayatılar," a work by Cahangir Cahangirov associated with the film *Dəli Kür* (1969), was conducted using the musical score published in the composer's 1971 song collection *Mahnılar*. The musical score of the work is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Musical score of "Bayatılar"

Examination of the musical score reveals that the composition is written in 4/4 time with an *Andante* tempo marking. The vocal melody is accompanied by piano. The melodic structure features short melodic phrases, repeated notes, and ascending and descending melodic movements. The piano accompaniment supports the harmonic structure of the melody. The composition's moderate tempo and melodic organization create a lyrical musical expression.

Song Lyrics of "Bayatılar"

The Azerbaijani lyrics of the composition are provided on page 30 of the published musical score. The legible sections of the lyrics and their English translations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Song Lyrics of "Bayatılar" and Their English Translations

Azerbaijani	English
Əzizim, səfa qazandım,	My dear, I found joy,
Xoş qazandım, səfa qazandım.	I found happiness and delight.
Nə mən ölüm qürbət eldə,	May I not die in a foreign land,
Nə sən mənsiz qalasan.	Nor may you be left without me.

The lyrics of "Bayatılar" were examined through content analysis. Four main themes were identified: exile, separation, longing, and attachment to a loved one. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Thematic Findings Regarding the Lyrics of "Bayatılar"

Theme	Corresponding Expression in the Lyrics	Interpretation
Exile	"qürbət eldə"	Being away from one's homeland and living in a foreign land
Separation	"mənsiz qalasan"	The prospect of being separated from a loved one
Longing	"Nə mən ölüm qürbət eldə"	Emotional distress associated with distance and the possibility of never being reunited
Attachment	"Nə sən mənsiz qalasan"	The desire to maintain togetherness with a loved one

As shown in Table 2, the central theme of the lyrics is the desire to preserve togetherness in the face of separation and exile. In particular, the expressions conveying the wish not to die in a foreign land and not to leave a loved one alone indicate that separation is represented not merely as physical distance but also as emotional loss. The *Andante* tempo and lyrical melodic structure of the composition create a musical expression consistent with the themes of longing and attachment identified in the lyrics.

Song Lyrics of "Ana Kür"

Since the musical score of "Ana Kür" could not be located, the analysis was limited to the song lyrics. The lyrics of "Ana Kür," composed by Cahangir Cahangirov for the film *Dəli Kür* (1969), with lyrics written by Rəfiq Zəka, were examined. The original Azerbaijani lyrics (Web 8) and their English translations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Song lyrics of "Ana Kür" and their english translations

Azerbaijani	English
Ana Kür,	Mother Kura,
Yaşa, Kür.	Live on, Kura.
hələ neçə ömür yaşadacaq könüllər səni	For how many more lifetimes will hearts keep you alive?
Bir gəlinsən yatağında,	You are a bride in your riverbed,
Təbiətin qucağında,	In the embrace of nature,
Nazənin Kür, gözəl Kür.	Graceful Kura, beautiful Kura.
Həyatına bağlısan bu vətənimin.	You are bound to the life of my homeland.
Sən nəfəsi, odusan can gülşənimin.	You are the breath and fire of my soul's garden.
Keçmişimin bu günümün aynasısan.	You are the mirror of my past and present.
Bu dünyada sən arzular dünyasısan.	In this world, you are a world of dreams.
Sənsən həyatım mənim,	You are my life,
Dərdim, dərmanım mənim.	My sorrow and my remedy.
Mavi dastan Kür.	Kura, the blue epic.
Sahilləri gülüstan Kür	Kura, whose shores are flower gardens.
Sənsən həyatım mənim,	You are my life,
Dərdim, dərmanım mənim.	My sorrow and my remedy.
Mavi dastan Kür.	Kura, the blue epic.
Sahilləri gülüstan Kür	Kura, whose shores are flower gardens.
Sənsən həyatım mənim,	You are my life,
Dərdim, dərmanım mənim.	My sorrow and my remedy.
Mavi dastan Kür.	Kura, the blue epic.
Sahilləri gülüstan Kür	Kura, whose shores are flower gardens.
Sahilləri gülüstan Kür	Kura, whose shores are flower gardens.

The lyrics of "Ana Kür" were examined through content analysis. Five main themes were identified: patriotism, personification of nature, historical memory, belonging, and continuity of life. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Thematic findings regarding the lyrics of "Ana Kür"

Theme	Corresponding Expression in the Lyrics	Interpretation
Patriotism	"Həyatına bağlısan bu vətənimin"	The integration of the Kura River with the life of the homeland
Personification of Nature	"Bir gəlinsən yatağında"	The attribution of human characteristics to the river through the image of a bride
Historical Memory	"Keçmişimin bu günümün aynasısan"	The river's representation of continuity between the past and present
Belonging	"Sənsən həyatım mənim"	The perception of the river as an inseparable part of individual life
Continuity of Life	"Yaşa, Kür"	The wish and expectation for the river's continued existence

As shown in Table 4, the lyrics primarily express patriotism, cultural belonging, and historical continuity through the symbolism of the Kura River. The portrayal of the river as a bride, a source of life, and a mirror reflecting the past and present demonstrates the association of nature with cultural identity. The repetition of the expression "Sənsən həyatım mənim" ("You are my life") in the refrain reinforces the sense of attachment to the river, while "Dərdim, dərmanım mənim" ("My sorrow and my remedy") associates the river with both emotional suffering and consolation. Thus, the composition presents the Kura River not merely as a geographical feature but as a symbol of the homeland, historical memory, and cultural belonging.

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