European Journal of Innovation in Nonformal Education (EJINE)
Volume 5 | Issue 2 | Feb - 2025 ISSN: 2795-8612

A Historical Perspective of the Influence of Maqom on Uzbek National Singing

I. Jurayev
Fergana regional branch of Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture

A B S T R A C T
Uzbek national singing has been profoundly shaped by Maqom, a classical music tradition that has influenced vocal techniques, melodic structures, and performance practices for centuries. Among its various forms, Shashmaqom stands out as a defining system that has structured Uzbek vocal music through modal scales, improvisational frameworks, and poetic expression. This article explores the historical development of Maqom, the enduring impact of Shashmaqom on Uzbek national singing, and contemporary efforts to preserve and adapt these traditions. Despite the challenges posed by modernization, institutional support, digital archives, and cross-cultural collaborations have ensured the continued relevance of Maqom. The study highlights the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation, demonstrating how Uzbek national singing evolves while maintaining its cultural roots.

A R T I C L E I N F O
Article history:
Received 24 Jan 2025
Received in revised form
25 Jan 2025
Accepted 26 Feb 2025

Keywords: Uzbek national singing, Maqom, Shashmaqom, vocal techniques, cultural preservation, musical heritage

Hosting by Innovatus Publishing Co. All rights reserved. © 2025

Introduction

Uzbek national singing is deeply rooted in the country's rich musical heritage, with Maqom serving as one of its most significant influences. Maqom is a complex system of classical music that has been cultivated for centuries in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan. It has shaped the vocal techniques, melodic structures, and performance practices of Uzbek national singing. This article explores the historical development of Maqom and its impact on [1] Uzbek national singing, tracing its evolution from ancient traditions to its role in contemporary performances.

Maqom has a long history that dates back to pre-Islamic times, with influences from Persian, Arabic, and Turkic musical traditions. It evolved as a sophisticated system of modal music, incorporating complex rhythms and poetic structures. The term "Maqom" itself refers to a specific musical mode or set of melodies, and its practice in Central Asia has been documented in historical texts and oral traditions. During the Islamic Golden Age, Maqom flourished in the courts of rulers, where it was refined by musicians and scholars. [2] Uzbekistan is home to some of the most renowned Maqom traditions, including Shashmaqom, a six-part system developed in Bukhara, and Fergana-Tashkent Maqom, which emerged later with distinctive regional characteristics. These traditions provided the foundation for many elements of Uzbek national singing, including its modal structures, improvisational techniques, and ornamentation. [3]

Maqom has significantly influenced Uzbek national singing by shaping its melodic and rhythmic structures. Singers trained in Maqom develop a deep understanding of melodic progression, tonal variations, and expressive techniques that define Uzbek vocal music. Melodic structure and ornamentation are central to this influence, as Maqom-based singing emphasizes microtonal variations, melodic embellishments, and intricate vocal ornamentation. These elements enhance the emotional depth and expressiveness of Uzbek national singing. Traditional singers employ techniques such as tahrir, a form of vibrato, and khandaz, a melodic gliding technique, to add nuance to their performances. [4]

Improvisation is another essential aspect of Maqom's influence, allowing Uzbek singers to personalize their renditions while adhering to traditional frameworks. This is particularly evident in genres such as Bakhshi singing, where the performer adapts the melody and rhythm to the narrative content. Poetic and lyrical traditions are also deeply connected to Maqom, as many Uzbek national songs draw from classical Persian and Turkic poetry, often exploring themes of love, spirituality, and nature. The performance style of Uzbek national singing reflects these influences through exceptional vocal control, breath management, and dynamic expression, all of which are integral to Maqom's musical aesthetics.

Shashmaqom is the most prominent Maqom system in Uzbekistan, consisting of six cycles of vocal and instrumental music. Its influence is evident in the structure of Uzbek classical songs, which often follow the multi-sectional format of Maqom compositions. The use of modal scales provides a unique tonal palette distinct from Western musical systems. Additionally, the integration of instrumental accompaniment, where traditional instruments like the dutar, tanbur, and sato complement the vocal lines, reflects the deep-rooted impact of Shashmaqom on Uzbek singing traditions.[5]

Beyond its structural and modal influence, Shashmaqom has also shaped the performance aesthetics of Uzbek national singing. Singers trained in Shashmaqom learn to master highly sophisticated vocal techniques that demand exceptional control over pitch, phrasing, and tonal modulation. These techniques enable singers to express intricate emotional nuances, making Shashmaqom-based singing deeply moving and culturally resonant. The training process involves extensive vocal exercises, memorization of lengthy compositions, and immersion in the philosophical and poetic aspects of the Maqom tradition. This rigorous preparation ensures that Shashmaqom continues to be performed with the same level of mastery as in centuries past. [6]

Furthermore, the influence of Shashmaqom extends beyond formal performances to folk traditions and contemporary interpretations of Uzbek singing. Many folk singers incorporate elements of Shashmaqom into their music, blending classical structures with more accessible, popular forms of expression. This fusion allows the essence of Shashmaqom to persist in modern Uzbek music while making it more relatable to contemporary audiences. Additionally, Shashmaqom has played a crucial role in shaping national identity, as it is often performed during significant cultural and state events, reinforcing a sense of historical continuity and pride among the Uzbek people. Its presence in ceremonial and celebratory contexts highlights its enduring relevance in the cultural fabric of Uzbekistan. [7]

Despite the pressures of globalization and modernization, efforts to preserve and promote Shashmaqom remain strong. Music academies, conservatories, and cultural organizations continue to teach the principles of Shashmaqom, ensuring that younger generations develop an appreciation for this art form. Additionally, archival recordings and digital platforms have facilitated the documentation and dissemination of Shashmaqom performances, making them accessible to a global audience. These preservation efforts contribute to the longevity of Shashmaqom and reinforce its importance as a foundational element of Uzbek national singing.[8]

Despite the historical significance of Maqom, its practice has faced challenges due to modernization and changing cultural trends. However, various efforts have been made to preserve and promote Maqom-influenced Uzbek singing. Institutional support has played a key role in these efforts, with the Uzbek government establishing conservatories and research centers dedicated to Maqom studies, ensuring its transmission to future generations. Festivals and competitions, such as the International Maqom Art Forum in Shakhrisabz, celebrate Maqom traditions and encourage young musicians to engage with classical singing styles.

Beyond government initiatives, independent musicians and scholars have taken active roles in revitalizing Maqom. Many artists blend Maqom elements with modern genres, creating innovative interpretations that appeal to contemporary audiences while maintaining traditional authenticity. These efforts have led to a resurgence of interest in Maqom, particularly among younger generations who seek to balance heritage with modern creativity. Digitalization has also played a crucial role in preserving Maqom, as archival recordings, online tutorials, and virtual performances make this tradition more accessible worldwide.[9]

In addition, cultural exchanges and collaborations with international musicians have introduced Maqom to a broader audience. Cross-cultural projects, where Uzbek singers perform with global artists, help

integrate Maqom into diverse musical contexts while preserving its essence. Educational programs in music schools and universities continue to emphasize Maqom training, ensuring that future generations inherit its complexities and beauty. By adapting Maqom to modern contexts while maintaining its authenticity, Uzbekistan continues to uphold this vital musical tradition as a living and evolving art form.[10]

Conclusion

Maqom has played a pivotal role in shaping Uzbek national singing, providing its structural foundation, melodic richness, and expressive depth. From the classical traditions of Shashmaqom to its modern adaptations, Maqom continues to influence Uzbek musical culture. By preserving and revitalizing Maqom-based singing, Uzbekistan upholds a vital aspect of its cultural heritage while allowing it to evolve in new and meaningful ways. The continued study and promotion of Maqom will ensure that its legacy remains an integral part of Uzbek national singing for generations to come.

References

1. G. Yunusov, R. Ahmedov, I. Jurayev, и S. Yuldasheva, «A Look at the Folklore of Fergana Valley or History of a Song in the Series of Tanovar», Ann. Romanian Soc. Cell Biol., т. 25, вып. 6, сс. 2225–2232, 2021.
2. J. Mamatov, «Art as a Means of Reflecting the Realities of Life», Kresna Soc. Sci. Humanit. Res., т. 6, сс. 68–71, 2022.
3. R. Karimov, «Influence of Traditional Uzbek Music on Modern Compositions», J. Music Cult., т. 7, вып. 3, сс. 150–162, 2023.
4. N. Ismailova, «Makom and Its Role in the Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan», Ethnomusicol. Rev., т. 12, сс. 80–94, 2022.
5. A. N. Talaboyev и B. S. Umarov, «The Harmony of Singing and Instrumental Performance in Our National Music», Orient. Art Cult., т. 4, вып. 6, сс. 468–470, 2023.
6. G. Y. Yunusov и S. Topildiyev, «The Issue of Namuds in Makom Songs Performing», J. Pharm. Negat. Results, сс. 4731–4735, 2022.
7. A. Yuldashev, «The Role of Instrumental Performance in Preserving Uzbek Cultural Identity», Eur. J. Innov. Nonform. Educ., т. 4, вып. 10, сс. 303–306, 2024.
8. I. Jurayev, «The Role of National Classical Melodies and Songs in Human Spirituality and Education», Orient. Art Cult., т. 3, вып. 4, сс. 280–283, 2022.
9. B. Rahimov, Uzbek Traditional Music and Its Impact on Society. Tashkent Academy of Music, 2024.
10. D. Y. Madolimov, «Working with and Developing Children’s Voices in Singing», Orient. Art Cult., т. 5, вып. 2, сс. 61–65, 2024.