

Musical Traditions of Samarkand in the Early 20th Century

Irzayeva Marxabo Shaymatovna

Senior Researcher, History Department, Samarkand Regional Museum of Local Lore

Abstract: In this article, the services rendered by the famous Samarkand vocalists, master-disciple Shashmaqom performers Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov and Qori Siroj Yusupov, in Uzbek musical art, as well as their creative research carried out in the field of art, are discussed. All information in the article is written on the basis of historical facts. Musical terminology is also used.

Keywords: 20th-century musical art, Samarkand, Xaymar, Hoji Abdulaziz, Shashmaqom, Qo'shhovuz, Qori Siroj Yusupov, Shashmaqom, notation, dutor, tanbur.

The most important part of our national musical heritage is the art of maqom. The creation and perfection of this art, which is the priceless treasure of our people, is connected with the incomparable artistic thinking of our ancestors. Regarding this, our President Sh. M. Mirziyoyev stated: "The 'Shashmaqom,' which is the product of the artistic thought of our people, may, if it is permissible to say, be compared to six great rivers, that for centuries have flowed into the ocean of world culture and have enriched it in every respect. For this reason, the inclusion of this magnificent musical pearl into the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list carries deep meaning and significance." Indeed, the contribution of master artists in the further refinement and enrichment of maqom art — the magnificent foundation of Uzbek traditional music — and in its reaching us intact until the present day, is immeasurable. One of such great representatives of art is undoubtedly the Samarkand master Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov.

Abdulaziz Abdurasul Samarqandiy was born in 1854 in the Kokmasjid neighborhood of Samarkand, in the family of Abdurasul, a craftsman. Abdurasul, who possessed sharp intelligence and strong memory, sent his eldest son to an elementary school at the age of six. After completing madrasa studies, Abdulaziz entered service as a mirza copying documents in the tax office located in the Xaymar district of Samarkand. At the same time, he closely interacted with singers and instrumentalists at ceremonies and gatherings. His interest in art increased day by day. He became a disciple of the famous instrumentalist Mirzo Mehtar and began to learn the secrets of surnay performance. [1-16] He mastered tanbur melodies from Hoji Rahimberdi. After some years, receiving formal blessing from his teacher Hoji Rahimberdi, he began independent performance. He learned songs from Boruh hofiz, a performer of maqom melodies. They performed together at literary-artistic gatherings, weddings, and other events. Abdulaziz performed the **savs** and **ufors** of Shashmaqom, the widely spread sections of the instrumental part of "Mushkulot," and folk songs. When he performed maqom paths, especially his delicate and refined voice was pleasing to listeners. [2-2]

With the intention of becoming a true artist, Hoji Abdulaziz firmly resolved to master Shashmaqom thoroughly. He traveled to Bukhara, became a disciple of the famous vocalist Ota Jalol Nosirov, and studied diligently under him. Ota Jalol Nosirov (1845–1928) had been the "rikob" leader of the court vocalists' assembly during the reigns of the last three emirs of Bukhara. [3-14] During six months, Hoji Abdulaziz learned maqom paths, the history of Shashmaqom, and its mysteries from Ota Jalol. In this way, he achieved fame as an artist capable of performing the sequential branches of Shashmaqom in complete form and strict rhythmic order. Knowing that Shashmaqom was not a stagnant art, the

hofiz adorned and performed songs such as “Iroq,” “Chapandozi Iroq,” “Nasrulloyi,” and “Mustahzod” with new climaxes and rhythmic variations. He disliked those who divided songs unnaturally, and he paid great attention to pronunciation, demanding that every word be heard clearly.

Abdulaziz Abdurasulov performed the pilgrimage in 1891–1892. According to the recollections of those who conversed with him, during his first journey to Mecca, he met the poet Zakirjon Xolmuhammad o‘g‘li Furqat. It is said that the two compatriots met on the ship and conversed as if they were old acquaintances. During his second foreign journey in 1907–1908, the master vocalist, along with performing pilgrimage, attempted to become more broadly familiar with the culture and musical art of other peoples. During both journeys, he met the famous singers and instrumentalists of Iran, Arabia, India, and Afghanistan, learning many melodies from them. He also performed Uzbek, Tajik, Turkish, Azerbaijani, and other national songs for the art lovers of those countries. These journeys enriched his repertoire and expanded his creative scope. The beautiful melodic cycle called “Jazoir” is also attributed to him. It is said that he first heard it from an Algerian shepherd playing a tune on a hilltop. At Hoji Abdulaziz’s request, the shepherd repeated the melody several times on a flute. Returning from the journey, the hofiz adapted the melody into national intonations suitable for Uzbek listeners.

Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov was, in the true sense, a national artist. He not only mastered Shashmaqom, but also “learned Khorezm art from the Urgench master Yoqub Dorchi, and the Fergana maqom paths from Ashurali Mahram.” [4-15] In later years, he taught many young people instrumental performance, singing, and the Samarkand maqom styles. In particular, he taught T. Sodiqov, N. Hasanov, S. Yusupov, and the teachers who arrived from Tashkent — R. Rajabiy and I. Ikromov — at the music faculty opened in Samarkand in 1923. Later, the People’s Artist of Uzbekistan and academician Yunus Rajabiy also lived in his house in Samarkand and studied under him. [3]

In 1928, the Scientific Research Institute of Music and Choreography was opened in Samarkand. To scientifically study Uzbek national musical heritage and to transcribe it to pass down in pure form to future generations, the most knowledgeable art masters from all regions of Uzbekistan gathered in this institution. Here too, Hoji Abdulaziz worked productively. He also trained many talented young local students. Among them were Ahror Hamidov from the village of Ohalik, the famous dutor player Qodiravliyo, the mellifluous singer Hamrobobo who performed songs with a tray, Mikhoel Tolmasov, Oqilxon, Maqsadcha, Ma’rufxon, and Qori Siroj. [5]

It can be said that the art of maqom, which for centuries has developed through the master–disciple tradition, is a priceless value of our people. Today, preserving and developing this art is an important responsibility before us. The musical heritage of master artists should be re-studied and widely promoted among youth. Moreover, many recordings of Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov — such as “Iroq,” “Nasrulloiy,” “Ushshoq” — were already recorded in 1909 by the “Gramophone” Society of Riga and reached lovers of Eastern music in Europe. [7] A great cultural heritage remained from him. The melodies he created — “Do‘stxudoyim,” “Bebokcha,” “Bozurgoniy,” “Eshvoy,” “Chorzarb,” “So‘lim,” “Gullarbog‘i,” “Shahnozi Gulyor ufori,” “Samarqand ushshog‘i,” “Qo‘qon ushshog‘i,” “Chapandozi Iroq,” “Gadoyi,” “Jazoir,” “Qurban o‘lam,” “Chapandozi Navo,” “Chapandozi ushshoq,” “Abdurahmonbegi,” “Misriy,” “Dala kuylari,” “Ajam taronalari,” “Daromadi ushshoq,” “Ufori Beboqcha” — became the wealth of Uzbek and Tajik maqom art. In 2001, Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov was awarded the Order “For Great Services” for his dedicated artistic work.

The famous Samarkand vocalist and art figure Qori Siroj Yusupov was born in 1903 in a small craftsman’s family in Samarkand. [8] His grandfather Xushkomil and his brother Usto Muqum played dutor and tanbur and performed fragments from folk songs and maqoms. Growing up in such a family environment, Qori Siroj developed from childhood a special interest and passion for art, especially for national songs and dances. At the age of thirteen, he began learning to play dutor. As he mastered melodies such as “Garduni Segoh,” “Muxammasi Bayoz,” and “Giryoni Qozoq,” he resolved to find a teacher. [9-34] This wish soon came true. He went to the strong master Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov — known as the Bulbul of Samarkand — in the Chorraha quarter of Samarkand, performed samples of

art before him, and requested to be accepted as a disciple. The humble master agreed and diligently taught Qori Siroj classical music, the secrets of instrumental performance, and the methods of singing.

Hoji Abdulaziz first taught him the melodies “Sarparda,” “Sinaxiroj,” and “Soqiyonna.” [9-34] Later, he made the lessons more complex and often took him along to weddings and performances. In 1923, he participated in the concerts held in the various districts and villages of Samarkand and Bukhara regions with the concert group organized under the leadership of Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov. With this group, they performed in Xatirchi, G‘igduvon, Karmana, Karki, Peshku, and other places and gained the admiration of lovers of art and music. [10]

According to the biography written by his own hand, in 1924 he began studying at a one-year Tajik school. In 1925, he finished this school with excellent marks and began working as a teacher at School No. 24 in Samarkand. He worked there until 1927. From 1928 to 1932, he studied at the Uzbek State Music and Choreography Scientific Research Institute and during these years began working at the radio. [5-11]

His interest in art, particularly in national singing, brought him to the newly opened Institute of Arts in Samarkand. As is known, according to Protocol No. 14 of the People’s Committee of the Council of People’s Commissars of Uzbekistan and the Collegium of the Commissariat of Public Education dated 11 December 1928, the Uzbek State Institute of Music and Choreography was established in Samarkand. It was headed by the famous writer, dramatist, and public figure Abdurauf Fitrat and the first Uzbek musicologist Nikolay Nazarovich Mironov. The institute conducted its activity in three directions: teaching students Uzbek and European musical instruments; studying national and European professional dance art; mastering, transcribing, and promoting national musical heritage.

The institute aimed to promote Uzbek national musical heritage and simultaneously began the training of professional musicologists and composers from local youth. Accordingly, among the talented youth admitted were Muxtor Ashrafiy, Tolibjon Sodiqov, Sharif Ramazonov, Mutavakkil Burhonov, Olimjon Xalilov, Shohnazar Sohibov, Rahmon Olloberganov, Mardon Nasimov, Mixail Qalantarov, Manas Leviev, Doni Zokirov, Po‘lat Rahimov, Sharof Bobokalonov, Nabi Hasanov, Fazliddin Shohobov, Soliha Halimboeva, Sharifa Saidnosirova — as well as Qori Siroj Yusupov. Students of this institution were called “aspirants.” Aspirants were taught by experts of Uzbek music such as Ota Jalol Nosirov, Domla Halim Ibodov, Abduqodir Ismoilov, and Matyusuf Harratov. [3-34]

The creative environment at the Institute of Arts enabled Qori Siroj Yusupov to demonstrate his talent. He actively participated in the competitions held in the republic and in the entire Union in 1925, 1930, 1932, 1933, 1935, and 1938 and won these competitions. He was awarded numerous honorary certificates. [3-31]

It is known that in the 1920–30s, certain opportunities were created for the modern development of music and theatre in Uzbekistan. Various cultural events were organized, and regular financial support was provided by the government. In middle schools, vocational institutions, and higher educational establishments throughout the capital and all regions of Uzbekistan, amateur singing and dance ensembles and theatre circles began to appear one after another. Their number was very large. Some of these amateur circles later laid the foundation for professional theatre and concert organizations and trained talented artists.

Amateur girls’ circle in Samarkand. 1928.

One such circle was opened in the Qo‘shhovuz neighborhood of Samarkand. Qori Siroj Yusupov began leading the amateur girls’ group in the women’s club. Here he taught young talented art enthusiasts to sing songs and perform national dances.

Qori Siroj Yusupov passed away in 1965.

He performed Shashmaqom on dutor. His repertoire included many of Hoji Abdulaziz’s melodies, which he re-interpreted, such as “Guluzorim,” “Ajam,” “Bozurgoni,” “Samarqand ushshog‘i,”

“Adoyi,” “Mustahzod,” and “Beboqcha.” His contemporaries wrote in their memoirs that Qori Siroj was an exceptionally unmatched instrumentalist in giving musical refinement to these compositions.

In conclusion, it can be said that the art of maqom, which for centuries has developed through the master-disciple tradition, is undoubtedly the priceless heritage of our people. Today, preserving and developing this art is one of the important responsibilities before us. In this regard, it is necessary to re-study the musical heritage of master artists and widely promote it among youth.

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