

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ART OF MUSIC IN THE PERIOD OF THE
SOMANIDS ERA**

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Abstract: The article analyzes the views of such thinkers as Abu Abdullah Rudaki, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abu Nasr Farabi, who contributed to the formation and development of music science during the Samanid period in the 9th-10th centuries. In this period, the attention of the Somanid kings to literature and art, the expression of music science and musical concepts in the works of thinkers, the construction of musical instruments (borbat, oud, shahrud, flute, trumpet, chang, etc.) and their performance, the development of modern music. In addition, the possibilities of using the musical views of such thinkers as Abu Abdullah Rudaki, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abu Nasr Farabi were revealed.

Key words: music, Samanid era, borbat, dust, oud, song, Abu Abdullah Rudaki, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abu Nasr Farabi

Enter. In the scientific literature devoted to the historical and cultural problems of Central Asia in the 9th–10th centuries, a well-grounded and widely accepted conclusion has been established regarding the cultural and social development of our ancestors. According to researchers, during this period within the territory of the Arab Caliphate, a unique and multifaceted synthesis of the cultural and creative traditions of all the peoples of the region—including the Tajik people—was formed. This significant cultural phenomenon later came to be referred to in scholarly works as “Arab-Islamic culture” and, in some cases, as “Muslim culture.”

Indeed, based on hundreds of reliable historical sources, we can state today that literature, science, education, architecture, painting, carving, and music reached new heights and assumed distinctive forms during the rule of the Samanids.

The main part. A large number of scientific studies and historical sources are devoted to the music of the Samanid period. Their main conclusions are summarized in the work of the historian S. Abdulloyev, *Revival of Art and Music in Samanid Culture (Ehyoi hunar va musiqi dar Farhangi Somoniyon)*. Research on this topic from the standpoint of musicology is presented in detail in the monograph of the art scholar A. Nizami, *History of Tajik Music (Tarikhi Musiqai Tojik)*. According to Nizami, “The newest examples of creativity—poems, songs, melodies, and new musical forms—emerged from the wisdom of the people. From this period onward, we can clearly observe the rich process of the formation of Tajik musical art” [3, 101].

The development of musical culture during the Samanid era was influenced by many factors. Music as a science was taught alongside other subjects in the madrasas of Samarkand, Bukhara, Mary, and Nishapur, and it was closely intertwined with poetry. The participation of major intellectuals of the period—particularly Ibn Sina and Abu Nasr Farabi—in translating Greek musical treatises contributed significantly to the development of musical theory and laid a solid foundation for further advancements.

Prominent thinkers such as Abu Abdullah Rudaki, Abu Hafs Sogdi, Abul-Abbās Sarakhsi, Muhammad Sarakhsi, Shay Barbat, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abdullah Katib Khorezmi, Abu Nasr

Farabi, Marwan Sarakhsi, Hasan ibn Musa, Amr ibn Bano, Ahmad ibn Muhammad Rabehi, Ubaydullah ibn Abdullah ibn Tahir, and Abulfaraj Isfahani made invaluable contributions to the formation and development of musical science and practice during this period.

One of the earliest revived cultural traditions of the Samanids was the gathering of leading poets and musicians at the royal court. Artists from various regions of the country were invited to the capital, Bukhara, where they collaborated and enriched the cultural life of the palace. According to the Soviet scholar E. E. Bertels, historical evidence shows that during the Samanid period many **female singers and musicians** were also present among the court artists [4, 104].

The musical school of this era saw the revival of ancient epic performance traditions, including the performance of instrumental cycles that would later be known as maqom. Central to the poetic and musical creativity of the time was the poetic meter *mutaqārib*, which had hardly been used in Arabic poetry before. This meter later became the rhythmic foundation of the *Duvozdahmaqom* and *Shashmaqom* traditions and emerged as one of the most popular forms in poetry and music [3, 106].

Among the outstanding figures of Samanid musical and literary culture was **Abu Abdullah Rudaki**, who performed his own poetry as both poet and singer, possessing a melodious and expressive voice. Rudaki's interest in music began in childhood; he was gifted with a captivating voice that astonished all who heard him. According to tradition, a skilled musician named *Bakhtiyār* was so impressed by Rudaki's musical talent that he presented him with his own instrument. Rudaki himself and later his contemporaries mentioned that he played the *dust* and sang at the emir's gatherings.

The 15th-century poet Abdurrahman Jami also cites Awfi's account in the seventh chapter of *Bahoriston*, with slight variations: "Rudaki, may God bless him, was from Mawarannahr and blind from birth. Yet he was so intelligent and gifted that at the age of eight he memorized the Qur'an, learned its recitation, and began writing poetry. Blessed with a beautiful voice, he mastered the playing of the *mutrib* and the *ūd*, and rose to prominence under Nasr ibn Ahmad Samanī. It is reported that he had two hundred slaves and four hundred camels, a level of honor reached by no poet after him" [1, 95–96].

Sadriddin Aini also emphasizes Rudaki's musical inclination: "His childhood and youth were devoted to reciting the Qur'an and studying music. These two arts—poetry and music—were inseparable for him, and like the folk poets, he would take a musical instrument, compose poetry, and sing" [2, 14].

The Russian orientalist A. A. Semyonov repeats earlier scholars' views, noting Rudaki's exceptional memory and poetic-musical talent: "He (Rudaki) possessed remarkable memory and artistic ability; even in childhood he memorized the Qur'an and astonished those around him".

Nizami Aruzi also highlights Rudaki's masterful musical abilities. In one account, he describes how the emir of Bukhara traveled to Herat during a summer retreat, accompanied by Rudaki. The emir grew fond of the beauty of Herat and prolonged his stay, but the nobles, longing for home, appealed to Rudaki for help. As Said Nafisi writes: "They said to the poet: 'If you persuade the emir to return to Bukhara, we will give you five thousand dinars, for our hearts yearn for our children and our homeland'".

Fulfilling their request, Rudaki took his *dust* and performed his celebrated ode *Būi jūi Muliyan* ("The Breeze from Muliyan"), singing it in the *Ushshāq* mode during a royal gathering. The emir, moved deeply by the performance and filled with longing for Bukhara, immediately ordered the return to his capital. Later musical treatises describe each melodic mode with specific emotional qualities, and *Ushshāq* was associated with "arousing longing for one's homeland." This suggests that Rudaki understood well the emotional influence of musical modes and intentionally selected the appropriate poetic imagery, vocal delivery, and melody to achieve his purpose.

Rudaki repeatedly emphasizes that music possesses its own rules, beauty, and expressive power. In several verses, he contrasts the uplifting nature of song and instrumental performance with the unpleasantness of loud cries or incorrect, unskilled playing. The poet criticizes harsh or discordant sound and highlights that only a pure voice and skilful instrumental performance can delight the listener. These ideas show that Rudaki had a refined understanding of musical artistry, and they confirm that he was both a practitioner and a theoretician of music.

From the above, it becomes evident that Rudaki possessed profound knowledge of the musical and poetic traditions of his ancestors. Although music and poetry existed long before him, Rudaki—as a gifted musician, singer, and poet—introduced artistic innovations that have endured through the centuries.

One of the most important factors in the development of musical science during the Samanid era was the rulers' strong support for scholarship. The great Samanid library in Bukhara housed translations of works by major Greek thinkers—including Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Nicomachus, Aristoxenus, and Pythagoras—produced in the Baghdad translation school (7th–10th centuries). These texts on philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and history had a profound influence on the intellectual life of Bukhara and laid the foundation for the rise of classical sciences in Central Asia.

The treatises of Abu Nasr Farabi and Ibn Sina clearly show their extensive engagement with Aristotelian thought. This influence is also evident in their writings on music. Following the theoretical principles of Aristotle and ancient Greek authors, Farabi and Ibn Sina produced highly sophisticated musical treatises that became authoritative throughout the Islamic world. Remarkably, by the 12th century the musicological works of Farabi and Ibn Sina were being used as textbooks in educational centers in Andalusia and Córdoba, and from there their ideas spread to France and Germany.

As a result of this intellectual transmission, the Western theorist Guido of Arezzo, in the early 11th century, created the six-step musical hexachord system. His naming of the scale degrees was influenced by Arabic terminology derived from the works of Farabi and Ibn Sina. The Arabic letter-names *mīm*, *fā'*, *šād*, *lām*, *sīn*, *dāl*, *rā'* correspond to the European solmization syllables *Mi*, *Fa*, *Sol*, *La*, *Si*, *Do*, *Re*. Notably, these forms have survived into modern global music theory, where solmization is pronounced in nearly the same way worldwide.

In a number of works by Ibn Sina and Farabi, the theory of sound, tone, rhythm, and *maqām* is examined in detail, alongside the influence of Greek musicology. Their treatises show that music enjoyed a high status in the scientific culture of the time, and they reflect both the theoretical foundations and the practical forms of local musical traditions. Genres, instruments, and other features of the musical art of the Bukhara region are described extensively in their musicological writings. The information provided in these treatises is particularly reliable, since both Farabi and Ibn Sina were not only theorists but also highly skilled practitioners of music.

According to his biography, Abu Ali Ibn Sina mastered the science of music from a very young age. Having thoroughly studied mathematics—which included music as one of its branches—he became well acquainted with the works of notable Greek scholars such as Plato and Euclid. Ibn Sina authored several writings on music, among which the musical section of his monumental encyclopedia *Kitāb al-Shifā* (“The Book of Healing”), known as *Jāmi' ilm al-mūsīqā* (“Compendium of the Science of Music”), occupies a central place. More than a hundred

manuscript copies of The Book of Healing survive today in major libraries and museums around the world.

During Ibn Sina's lifetime, before the term *maqām* became widespread, classical musical cycles were known as *rōh*, *navo*, and *parda*. In Bukhara—as well as in cities where Ibn Sina later lived and worked, such as Urganch, Ray, and Hamadan—the flourishing activities of composers, singers, and musicians created a strong demand for a systematic science of music. Ibn Sina's works played a major role in meeting this need.

Although music-related topics appear in many of Ibn Sina's writings, not all have survived. For example, Ibn Usaybi'a mentions a treatise titled *Madkhal šinā'at al-mūsīqā* ("Introduction to the Art of Music"), and Ibn Sina himself refers to another work, *Kitāb al-Lawāḥīq* ("Book of Addenda"), in The Book of Healing. These writings are known only by name, as their manuscripts have not yet been discovered. The musical thought of Ibn Sina has reached us primarily through his major encyclopedic works.

Among his most important surviving contributions to music are the sections *Jāmi' ilm al-mūsīqā* ("Compendium of the Science of Music") in The Book of Healing, *Mukhtaṣar ilm al-mūsīqā* ("Summary of the Science of Music") in *Kitāb al-Najāt* ("The Book of Salvation"), and the musical chapters of the *Dānīshnāma-yi 'Alā'ī*. In addition, valuable remarks on music appear in unexpected places, such as The Canon of Medicine and his treatise *Risāla fī al-'Ishq* ("Treatise on Love"). Together, these works provide a comprehensive picture of Ibn Sina's views on music and constitute one of the most significant sources for understanding the musical culture of his era.

At this stage, it is necessary to examine the largest, most complete, and most important of Abu Ali Ibn Sina's works on music—the *Jāmi' al-'Ilm al-Mūsīqī* ("Collection of the Science of Music"). As noted above, this treatise forms one part of his encyclopedic work *Kitāb al-Shifā* ("The Book of Healing"). The collection consists of six articles (*maqālāt*) and nineteen chapters, arranged as follows:

1. This section provides Ibn Sina's general definition of music and explores the origins of sound, pitch, and intensity. The second chapter discusses the criteria by which tones are perceived as pleasant or unpleasant. The third chapter examines primary consonances, while the fourth discusses secondary consonances.
2. The first chapter analyzes addition and subtraction of numerical ratios relevant to music; the second examines multiplication and division of these ratios.
3. Here Ibn Sina discusses musical gender (intervallic genus) and its classifications, the number of genera, and the distinctions between strong and weak genera. This article parallels ancient Greek theoretical categories.
4. Both chapters treat the concept of musical modulation (*migrāh*), explaining transitions between tonal structures and melodic patterns.
5. This is the largest section. It addresses rhythmic modes (*īqā'āt*), their verbal representation, the number of compound and simple forms, specific rhythmic cycles (quadruple, quintuple, and sextuple *īqā'āt*), and the relationship between poetry and musical meter.
6. The first chapter discusses the principles of musical composition, while the second provides descriptions of numerous musical instruments and their characteristics [20].

These materials show that the Collection of the Science of Music encompasses nearly all major branches of medieval musicology. Ibn Sina approaches music from the formation of sound itself to the creation of melodies and complete compositions. He also provides technical descriptions of instruments—from simple aerophones to complex chordophones such as the 'ūd.

A unique feature of Ibn Sina's work is his treatment of the human voice as the most perfect musical instrument. By comparing other instruments to the voice, he concludes that the ghijak (a bowed string instrument) is the closest in expressive potential to human vocal sound. He also describes instruments such as the rubāb, trumpet, nāy, 'ūd, tanbur, and law, and discusses performance technique and ensemble combinations.

The section on music from Kitāb al-Najāt ("Book of Salvation"), known as Mukhtaṣar 'Ilm al-Mūsīqā ("A Summary of the Science of Music"), also survives in various translations. The music chapter of the Dānīshnāma-yi 'Alā'ī, written in Persian for Amir 'Alā' al-Dawla of Isfahan, appears to be a reworked version of this text. It was published in 1935 in Hyderabad, in 1931 in Berlin (with German translation), in 1958 in Paris (French translation), and in 1967 in Dushanbe (in Russian translation).

Summary. The era of the Samanids represents one of the most productive periods in the history of Central Asian musical art. It was a time of cultural revival, the renewal of ancient national traditions, and the formation of musical theory, aesthetics, and creative foundations. The contributions of scholars such as Farabi and Ibn Sina established the intellectual basis for later musical developments both in the East and in the medieval West.

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