

**REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION IN UZBEK MAQOM ART: ON THE EXAMPLE OF
BUKHARA, FERGANA–TASHKENT AND KHOREZM MAQOMS**

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Abstract: This article provides a scholarly analysis of the regional differentiation of Bukhara Shashmaqom, the Fergana–Tashkent maqom cycles known as Chormaqom, and the Khorezm maqom within the broader system of Central Asian maqomat. The study examines their shared and distinctive features on the basis of historical sources, including the chronicle *Tarikh-i Bukhara*, written materials from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, performance traditions, notation practices such as the “Tanbur line,” and master–disciple schools of transmission. Elements such as improvisation, the structure of sho‘ba (subsections), Sarakhbor, Talqin and Nasr cycles, the Suvora genre, and the tradition of katta ashula are identified as the principal factors defining regional distinctions.

Keywords: maqomat, Shashmaqom, Chormaqom, Nasr branches, Sarakhbor, Suvora cycles, Tanbur line, katta ashula, improvisation, performance school.

Introduction: The maqomat of Central Asia constitutes one of the most significant layers of Eastern classical musical thought and historically encompasses various schools and stylistic directions. The concept of maqomat does not denote a single unified system, but rather a constellation of regionally formed performance traditions grounded in common theoretical principles. These include Shashmaqom of Bukhara, the maqoms of Khorezm, the Fergana–Tashkent maqom cycles, and their modern derivatives.

Their shared features are manifested in common modal foundations, rhythmic structures, imagery, and certain melodic and vocal compositions. At the same time, regional specificity is reflected in independent repertoires, distinctive interpretations of modal and rhythmic systems, instrumental ensembles, performance aesthetics, and timbral nuances. The historical roots of maqom traditions date back to antiquity. During the Kushan period, religious and military choral practices were widespread. Examples such as the military song “Mozandaron,” the lament “Qini Siyovush,” and folk songs like “Yazno Nofarin” and “Ho-zamzam” illustrate early collective singing traditions. The rhythmic structure of “Ho-zamzam” shows notable similarity to the traditional “ufar” style of Bukhara. The cultural environment of the Bukhara oasis is described in detail in *Tarikh-i Bukhara*. Situated at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road, Bukhara absorbed musical influences from Sogdiana, India, China, and the Arab world.

The sixteenth century marked a turning point in the history of Bukhara maqom. Following the decline of the Herat maqom school, many musicians migrated to Bukhara. Among them, Mavlono Najmiddin Kavkabi Bukhari played a significant role. It was within this cultural milieu that the Shashmaqom system gradually took shape. The term “Shashmaqom” began to appear as an independent designation in written sources from the mid-nineteenth century onward.

Methodology: The research is based on a comprehensive methodological approach to the study of the formation and regional development of Uzbek maqom art. Historical-source analysis of sixteenth–nineteenth century manuscripts, tazkiras, treatises, and court documents revealed the close interrelation between maqom development and the socio-political environment. Comparative musical analysis was applied to modal systems, rhythmic structures, sho‘ba organization, and genre composition, allowing for the identification of regional modal-metric and rhythmic characteristics.

Performance schools and improvisational traditions were examined within the master–disciple transmission framework, highlighting the continuity and variability inherent in oral tradition. Structural analysis of notated materials, particularly those recorded in the “Tanbur line,” clarified the interaction between oral and written transmission. Systematic comparison of regional schools enabled a theoretical substantiation of stylistic differences within the broader maqom system.

Results: The Bukhara maqom school represents the theoretical and practical center of the Shashmaqom tradition. By the eighteenth century, the Shashmaqom cycle had achieved a fully systematized structure. Within the Bukhara tradition, the compositional integrity of the Nasr and Mushkilot sections, the complexity of rhythmic organization, and the stability of the modal framework are especially prominent. Improvisation occupies a central role, allowing vocalists and instrumentalists to demonstrate individual artistic interpretation. During the Shaybanid period, Bukhara’s transformation into a political capital intensified artistic migration. In particular, Ubaydullaxon brought Hofiz Axiy Garaviy from Herat to Bukhara, contributing to the establishment of a professional maqom performance school. Distinctive features of the Bukhara style include a unique interpretation of the “ufar” rhythmic model, ensemble cohesion of tanbur, dutar, gijjak, nay, and chang instruments, complex modal modulations, and profound Sufi-philosophical content. These elements justify characterizing Bukhara as the center of classical refinement and theoretical systematization.

The Fergana–Tashkent maqom tradition is distinguished by its close integration with folk musical culture. The Chormaqom system enriches maqom structures through lyrical and accessible interpretations. Although its modal foundations are related to Shashmaqom, melodic development and rhythmic construction display greater flexibility and lyricism. The tradition of katta ashula, or patnisaki performance, involves polyphonic interaction and alternating vocal delivery that creates dramatic intensification. Prominent representatives include Hamroqul qori To‘raqulov and Xolqora hofiz. Soft melodic contour, expressive textual interpretation, and the use of surnay and dutar repertoires characterize this school, reflecting the popularization and democratization of maqom art.

The Khorezm maqom tradition is marked by dynamism, rhythmic vitality, and dramatic expression. In the early nineteenth century, Niyozjon Xo‘ja studied Shashmaqom in Bukhara and introduced it to Khorezm, initiating a process of regional transformation. Under the patronage of Muhammad Rahimxon II, maqoms were transcribed in the “Tanbur line” notation by Komil Xorazmiy and Muhammad Rasul Mirzo, consolidating the oral tradition in written form. In Khorezm maqoms, alongside Sarakhbor, Talqin, and Nasr sections, the Suvora genre developed extensively. Enlarged tarona sections, distinctive naming conventions, and a maqom order beginning with Dugoh demonstrate an independent conceptual framework. Strong rhythmic accents and clearly defined climactic structures emphasize Khorezm’s expressive and dramatic character.

Discussion: The discussion results show that regional differentiation in Uzbek maqom art did not emerge as a result of a single factor, but rather as a complex process shaped by the interaction of

historical, social, cultural, and aesthetic influences. First of all, the formation of political centers and their court cultures had a direct impact on the institutional development of maqom art. In particular, within the court environments of the Bukhara Emirate and the Khiva Khanate, maqom was elevated to the level of professional art, where performance criteria, repertoire stability, and aesthetic standards became strictly systematized. Such an environment contributed to the strengthening of the theoretical foundations and compositional integrity of maqom.

Another important factor in regional differentiation is related to ethnic composition and processes of cultural exchange. The multi-layered cultural environment formed through the Great Silk Road led to the synthesis of diverse modal, melodic, and rhythmic models. This phenomenon was especially evident in the Bukhara and Fergana–Tashkent regions, where it ensured diversity in melodic development and rhythmic interpretation of maqoms. In the Fergana–Tashkent school, due to its strong integration with folk music traditions, maqom paths acquired a more lyrical, simple, and emotionally accessible character. The master–disciple tradition is considered one of the most important mechanisms ensuring the stability of regional styles. Formed on the basis of oral transmission, this system not only preserved melodies and songs but also ensured the intergenerational transmission of regional aesthetic norms in performance interpretation. At the same time, the tradition of improvisation within each school provided space for performers to express their individual creative potential.

It is also important to emphasize that notation practices played a significant role in theoretically consolidating regional differentiation. Especially in Khorezm, the documentation of maqoms in written form based on the “Tanbur line” created a balance between oral and written traditions and opened broad opportunities for scholarly analysis of the maqom system. As a result, Khorezm maqoms developed as an independent style distinguished by rhythmic intensity, clear dramatic climaxes, and a strict structural framework.

In general, regional differentiation reflects the inner richness and multifaceted aesthetic nature of Uzbek maqom art. It is precisely this diversity that has ensured the historical continuity of maqom and its continued relevance in the modern era.

Conclusion: Although Uzbek maqom art belongs to a unified maqomat system, its Bukhara, Fergana–Tashkent, and Khorezm schools differ significantly in historical context, performance interpretation, structural organization, and aesthetic orientation. The Bukhara school represents theoretical completeness and classical integrity; the Fergana–Tashkent school embodies lyrical and folk-oriented interpretation; and the Khorezm school expresses rhythmic dynamism and dramatic intensity. Contemporary scholarly research, notation, and incorporation into educational curricula play a crucial role in ensuring the continuity and preservation of this national musical heritage.

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