

DOI:10.29013/EJA-26-1-75-78



TRADITIONS OF FOLK SINGING OF THE KHOREZM OASIS

Obidov Doniyorbek Navruzovich ¹

¹ Department of Arts, Urgench State University named after Abu Rayhon Beruni, State Conservatory of Uzbekistan

Cite: Obidov D.N. (2026). *Traditions of Folk Singing of the Khorezm Oasis*. *European Journal of Arts* 2026, No 1. <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJA-26-1-75-78>

Abstract

This article analyzes the folk song traditions of the Khorezm oasis from a historical and musicological point of view. Starting from the first written sources, scientific research conducted in the 20th century, in particular, the process of notation and systematization of songs, is considered. Based on the works of such scholars as Y.Romanovskaya, Il.Akbarov, M.Yusupov, F.Karomatov, the genres characteristic of Khorezm singing, performance traditions, and their scientific significance are highlighted.

Keywords: *song, folk singing, genres, notation, musical folklore, khalfa, bakhshi, musicologist*

Introduction

Uzbek musical art is formed on the basis of the master-student tradition, and song is one of its most popular genres. If we pay attention to the lexical meaning of the word “qo’shiq”, it becomes clear that it comes from the verb “qo’shmoq”. The genre is divided into various groups according to its formation and content: ritual, everyday, lyrical, children’s, and other types of songs. They are distinguished by the narrowness of the melodic range, the stanzaic construction of the musical development, the harmony of melody and word intonations, as well as the general musical interpretation of the ideas and feelings expressed in the poetic text.

Literature review

The concept of song belongs to the oldest layers of the lexicon of Turkic languages, and its roots are found in early written sources.

In particular, in Mahmud Kashgari’s work “Devonu lug’otit turk”, the song is recorded in several forms. (Mahmud Kashgari T., 2017). The terms “qo’shug” and “yir”, used by the author, denote a poem with artistic and aesthetic content, performed with intonation. This situation indicates that the song was formed from the very beginning as a unit of music and poetic text.

Scientific research on the folk song traditions of the Khorezm oasis confirms that this musical culture is distinguished by its historical layers, the diversity of performance schools, and the richness of the genre system. Research conducted by representatives of folklore studies, musicology, and ethnography in this area has laid the foundation for the scientific study of the musical heritage of Khorezm.

In particular, the first notation of samples of singing from the Khorezm oasis by such

musicologists as Y. Romanovskaya, Il. Akbarov, M. Kharratov, Sh. Ramazonov, M. Yusupov, F. Karomatov is an important stage in the development of this field. In these studies, along with the musical structure of the song, in some cases, brief explanations of its genre features and performance traditions are given.

The collection “Uzbek Folk Songs”, published in 1939 under the editorship of Y. Romanovskaya and Il. Akbarov, is one of the first important publications aimed at the scientific systematization of Uzbek folk singing. The songs in this collection were transcribed into modern musical notation by T. Sodikov, M. Ashrafi, Y. Rajabi, M. Kharratov, Sh. Ramazonov.

In the collection “Uzbek Folk Music”, published in 1960 under the editorship of Il. Akbarov (Volume VII), songs characteristic of the Khorezm style were notated by M. Yusupov. The collection also provides historical and social information about mature song performers and the artistic environment of that time.

F. Karomatov’s book “The Musical Heritage of the Uzbek People”, published in 1978, extensively covers songs by Khivan khalfas. The musical notations and scientific commentaries presented by the author are an important source in determining the performance characteristics of the Khorezm singing traditions.

In general, although these scientific sources have created an important theoretical and practical basis for the study of folk singing of the Khorezm oasis, some issues, in particular, the classification of genres, the specifics of local performance schools, as well as issues related to modern performance processes, have not yet been sufficiently studied.

Analysis and results

In our research, we planned to analyze songs and songs related to lyrical, labor, ritual, legends, and narratives as major branches of Khorezm folk song art. Because in the art of singing, in addition to songs belonging to oral folk art, genres such as classical song and *suvora* also occupied a large place.

The structure of songs characteristic of folk song art consists of the following. Lyrical songs, labor songs, songs about agricultural traditions, ritual songs, family ritual songs, songs formed on the basis of legends and sto-

ries. Most of them belong to the category of songs that are sung publicly without requiring special time or special conditions. Such songs do not require a strong or wide-ranging voice from the performer. The most important aspect is that the lyrics should promote the ideas of goodness, purity, and kindness. The songs “*Soz bilan suhbat*”, “*Qoradali*”, and “*Feruz*”, created in the style of nazira to the Six and a Half Maqoms and Dutor Maqoms, were performed by master singers.

Labor songs can be divided into two subgroups. These are:

a) Songs and melodies related to hunting and animal husbandry – for example, works like “*Sulgun*”, “*Chiprodalli*”, “*Chag’olloq*”. Since ancient times, these works have been performed only in the form of music and dance. Later, skilled composers of that time selected lyrics for some of them and turned them into songs.

b) Songs related to agricultural traditions – songs and sayings characteristic of Navruz, reflecting the awakening of nature. In connection with this holiday, folk festivals have been held for a long time. In it, games and songs related to water, such as “*Hubbimboy*”, were performed.

Ceremonial songs consist of two large cycles:

a) Seasonal ritual songs – performed according to seasonal traditions. Songs performed during ceremonies such as “Navruz”, “Red Flower Festival”, and “Melon Festival” belong to this group. During the Navruz holiday, humorous songs were performed, such as “*Ashshadaroz*” and “*Sumalak*”, related to Sumalak, and “*Patir*”, “*Palov*”, and “*Barak*”, about dishes. In “Red Flower Festival”, a special song called “*Olma*” was performed, and in “Melon Festival”, a special song called “*Qovun*” was performed. Since ancient times, Khorezmians have performed the “*Lazgi*” melody in all these ceremonies (Kilichev, T., 1988).

b) Family ritual songs are songs performed in family and household rituals, and songs such as “*Alla*”, “*Bak-bavak*”, “*To’y bola*”, “*To’ylar muborak*” belong to this category. Wedding songs were sung in an even more unique style and tone in each region of the oasis.

Songs and melodies formed on the basis of legends and tales. This direc-

tion includes a number of works related to the motifs of oral folk art. For example, “*Soz bilan suhbat*”, based on the melody “*Alikambar*”, and “*Majmundali*”, inspired by the legend of “*Qoradali*”.

Nazira (musical imitation or contrafactum). Among them are “*Feruz*”, created as a response to “*Tani maqomi Segoh*” from the Six and a Half Maqom cycle, and “*Orazibom*”, created based on the fret and mode of “*Tani maqomi Buzruk*”.

The majority of oasis songs differ from others in that they have a firm tone and a unique musical style. Performers of songs were known by various names, such as bakhshi, hafiz, ashulachi, sozanda, koshikchi, talqinchi, goyanda, khalfa, and mug’an-ni. Artists who have made this art their life’s purpose and profession have always been respected and honored among the people as holders of respected professions.

According to information, “32 musicians and more than 40 bakhshi koshs operated in the Khiva Khanate. In the performances of bakhshis and hafizs, clowns often participated” (Matyakubov B., 2009., p. 29). Master hafiz, bakhshi and khalfa, in order to continue their art schools, accepted the most talented young people as disciples and taught them their experience as a legacy. The students gradually mastered the techniques of melodies and songs, the secrets of performance, and stage culture.

Folk songs have been preserved from generation to generation through master-student, from master to student through oral creativity. Teachers paid special attention to the development of students’ voices: they regularly practiced skills such as voice training, proper breathing, and voice control through special exercises.

To preserve and maintain a stable voice, it was important to be wary of heat and cold, as well as to follow certain rules of nutrition. Including:

- not to consume various vinegar, hot pepper, sticky and fresh fruits;
- limiting cold foods;
- After singing, don’t eat immediately, wait a little, then have a snack with porridge, rice pudding, or liquefied dishes;

- preferably eat chicken soup or pilaf cooked in butter before going out to the gathering;
- allocate time for daytime sleep before attending weddings and gatherings;
- Dress neatly and tastefully when attending celebrations;
- bowing to the fans when entering the circle.

Hafizs and performers who regularly observed these rules of etiquette did not lose their respect even in old age and were always respected among the people. (G’ofur and G’ulom Eshchonov T., 2021)

In the Khorezm oasis, there was a specific procedure for conducting wedding ceremonies. Musicians, singers, bakhshis, and khalfas participated in each wedding, performing songs and melodies appropriate to the theme and spirit of the ceremony. In the men’s circle, songs were mainly performed by bakhshis and hafiz, while in the women’s circle, this task was performed by khalfas.

These creators typically worked in the following five main directions:

1. epic traditions,
2. Maqom performance,
3. divinely inspired sayings,
4. khalfa songs,
5. proverbs and songs of oral folk art.

Khalfas regularly participated not only in wedding ceremonies, but also in public festivities – Navruz, Red Flower, Harvest Festival.

Conclusion

The folk song traditions of the Khorezm oasis stand out as an important layer of our national culture with its rich history, unique performance school, and diverse directions. Bakhshi, hafiz, khalfa, and other performers have passed down from generation to generation not only melodies and songs, but also the spirit, worldview, and philosophy of life of the people. Their work formed a unique school in the art of weddings, seasonal ceremonies, festivals, epic poetry, and maqam.

Oasis songs are distinguished by a firm tone, unique musical style, and deep meaning. The artists performing them were trained on the basis of strict requirements for sound preservation, performance etiquette, and stage culture.

References

- Matyakubov, B. Doston navolari [Melodies of the Dastan]. – Tashkent, 2009.
- Mahmud Qoshg‘ariy. Devonu lug‘oti-t-turk (Turkiy so‘zlar devoni). [Devonu lug‘oti-t-turk (Compendium of Turkic Words)] – Tashkent, 2017.
- Rahimov, Botir Matyakubovich. “Stili soprovojdaniya golosom i sotvorchestva v Xorezmskom pesennom iskusstve.” Problemy sovremennoy nauki i obrazovaniya, – 7 (176). (2022): 48–51.
- Qilichev, T. Xorazm xalq teatri. XIX asrning oxiri – XX asrning boshlarida (tarixiy-etnografik ocherk). [Khorezm Folk Theater. Late 19th – early 20th centuries (historical-ethnographic essay)] – Tashkent, 1988.
- G‘ofur va G‘ulom Eshchonov. Xorazm hofizlik maktabi. [Khorezm school of singing] – Tashkent, 2021.

submitted 26.10.2025;
accepted for publication 10.11.2025;
published 31.01.2026
© Obidov D. N.
Contact: navouzbek@mail.ru