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## HISTORICAL AND EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT OF SHASHMAQOM TRADITIONS AND IMOMJON IKROMOV'S COMPOSITIONAL APPROACH TO MAQOM MUSIC

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### Abstract

This article examines the historical formation, stages of development, and contemporary performance traditions of maqom art, which represents an essential component of the Uzbek classical musical heritage. The article also analyzes the creative activity of Imomjon Ikromov, who occupies an important place in the development of Uzbek compositional art. Special emphasis is placed on the composer's engagement with maqom instrumental melodies and on the transformation of such works as "Cho'li Iroq" and "Munojot" into vocal pieces. Their artistic characteristics and their role in continuing maqom traditions are discussed in detail. The research further highlights the modal–intonational nature of maqom melodies, the system of *namud*, and the interaction between musical structure and poetic text from a scholarly perspective. In addition, the article addresses issues related to preserving and developing maqom art and transmitting it to younger generations within the conditions of the modern cultural environment.

**Keywords:** *Shashmaqom, maqom system, maqom performance, compositional creativity, Imomjon Ikromov, Cho'li Iroq, Munojot, maqom modal system, namud, master–disciple tradition, Uzbek classical music*

The multi-layered and diverse musical heritage of the Uzbek people includes the art of maqom as a highly refined artistic phenomenon possessing distinctive aesthetic, historical, and theoretical value. Maqom is not only a professional musical form based on a specific modal, melodic, and rhythmic system, but also a complex artistic structure that embodies the centuries-old artistic thinking, spiritual world, philosophical

views, and aesthetic ideals of the peoples of the East. In this sense, the maqom system represents a unique phenomenon that preserves the historical memory of the people, their spiritual heritage, refined artistic taste, and mature performance culture.

When analyzing the history of maqom art, it is important to consider not only its musical dimension but also its essence as a socio-cultural system. Over the centuries,

maqom evolved and flourished within royal courts, madrasas, literary and artistic gatherings, Sufi assemblies, and intellectual circles. As a result, it embodies a synthesis of religious and philosophical symbolism, aesthetic interpretations of love, and educational and spiritual meanings. In particular, the widespread use of ghazals by classical poets such as Alisher Navoi, Jami, Bedil, Hafiz, Mashrab, and Lutfiy within maqom repertoires clearly demonstrates its nature as a phenomenon of musical and literary synthesis. Therefore, understanding maqom requires studying it not only through modal, rhythmic, or structural criteria, but also within the broader context of Eastern artistic thought.

At present, two main directions can be observed in the development of maqom art. On the one hand, there is a strong effort to preserve traditional schools, the master-disciple relationship, and historically established performance practices. On the other hand, tendencies toward stage adaptation, ensemble performance, notation, and adjustment to a wider audience are becoming increasingly prominent. At times, this situation may lead to the risk of diminishing the inner philosophical depth of maqom and the logical structure of its cyclical performance. The full artistic impact of maqom is most clearly revealed when it is perceived as a complete cycle with its internal stages and dramaturgical development. Frequent performance of individual excerpts in concert practice may, on the one hand, bring listeners closer to maqom, but on the other hand, it may fragment its holistic nature and internal philosophical meaning. Therefore, the issue of restoring and preserving the cyclical performance tradition remains an important and urgent task for contemporary maqom studies.

Imomjon Ikromov belonged to the older generation of master musicians and had a deep command of such traditional instruments as the *tanbur*, *dutor*, and *ghijjak*. His creative formation was significantly influenced by the musical environment of Tashkent, his education at the People's Conservatory, and his artistic connections with masters such as Shorahim Shoumarov, Solikhon Hoji, and Hoji Abdulaziz Rasulov. These factors contributed to the formation of a musical worldview in which traditional

performance practice, profound knowledge of maqom, and compositional intuition were harmoniously combined.

The composer occupies an important place in the history of Uzbek musical culture as a prominent composer, a highly skilled instrumentalist, an experienced pedagogue, and a respected master artist. His creative activity played a significant role in preserving and enriching the traditions of Uzbek classical music. Over the course of his career, the composer created more than 200 vocal pieces, instrumental melodies, and songs. In addition, his suites titled *Farhod*, *Ohangaron*, and *O'zbekiston* hold an important place within the Uzbek musical repertoire.

Works based on maqom traditions occupy a particularly significant place in Ikromov's creative legacy. Among them are such compositions as *So'lim* (based on a ghazal by Soatiy), *Tortadur* (based on a ghazal by Furqat), as well as the vocal works *Munojot*, *Cho'li Iroq*, and *Ajam*, composed on the basis of ghazals by Alisher Navoi. These pieces represent major vocal works created on the foundations of maqom melodic paths. One of the distinctive aspects of the composer's work is his practice of reinterpreting traditional folk melodies in vocal form. He successfully combined traditional melodies with Alisher Navoi's ghazals bearing the radifs "kelmadi," "ayt," and "etmush mani," creating new vocal interpretations of these poetic texts.

In performance practice, these works became widely known under the titles *Munojot – Sarvi gulro kelmadi*, *Cho'li Iroq – Diloromimg'a ayt*, and *Ajam – Etmush mani*. Today they are recognized not only in Uzbekistan but also internationally as part of the distinguished repertoire of Uzbek classical vocal music.

The artistic value of Imomjon Ikromov's creative legacy lies in the harmonious combination of deep lyrical expression, spiritual purity, and aesthetic beauty that profoundly affects the human psyche. In his works, folk melodiousness, national spirit, and classical traditions are organically intertwined, evoking deep emotional experiences in listeners. These melodies and songs reflect the people's sorrow and longing, their spiritual suffering, patriotic feelings, and the expression of national values.

In fact, within the Uzbek compositional tradition, the reinterpretation of folk melodies in vocal form has long been one of the established creative approaches. In the musical heritage of Uzbekistan, numerous works created through this method can be found. Among them are such well-known examples as *Dilxiroj*, *Cho'li Iroq*, *Hojiniyoz*, and *Munojot*. Through these works, composers enriched traditional folk melodies with new artistic interpretations and elevated them to the level of professional musical performance.

Imomjon Ikromov's engagement with maqom traditions is primarily characterized by introducing existing instrumental melodies into new vocal forms, linking them with poetic texts, and thereby creating new vocal paths. His treatment of the melody *Cho'li Iroq* is particularly significant in this respect. By its melodic nature, *Cho'li Iroq* is an instrumental work with a deeply contemplative, philosophical, and lyrical character. According to scholarly studies, although this melody has been preserved within the Fergana–Tashkent maqom traditions, its melodic origins are directly connected with the maqom *Iraq*. The composition embodies images of a spiritual journey, travel, search, and aspiration toward inner perfection. Its structure clearly reveals maqom-like developmental elements such as *daromad*, *bozgo'y*, the middle *avj*, and the grand *avj*. These characteristics allow *Cho'li Iroq* to be interpreted not merely as a simple instrumental piece, but as a highly artistic composition closely related to maqom musical thinking.

The association of this melody with the ghazal of Alisher Navoi beginning with the line “Ey nasimi subh, ahvolim diloromimg‘a ayt” by Imomjon Ikromov represents an important event in the history of Uzbek composition. In this process, the composer did not simply adapt the poetic text to the melody; rather, he succeeded in discovering the inner spiritual harmony between the music and the poetry. The mood of longing and love, spiritual anguish, and delicate emotional expression present in Navoi's ghazal harmoniously corresponds with the melancholic, restrained, and profound melodic character of *Cho'li Iroq*, resulting in the artistic completeness of a new vocal composition. Such

an approach requires from the composer not only musical taste and experience but also a deep understanding of classical literature. In this sense, Ikromov's interpretation may be regarded as a mature example of compositional thinking.

Another important direction in Imomjon Ikromov's creative work is connected with *Munojot*. In Eastern musical thought, *Munojot* represents an ancient phenomenon that carries not only musical but also spiritual and aesthetic significance. The term, derived from Arabic and meaning “supplication,” “plea,” or “intimate address,” has come to signify in music the expression of deep inner feeling, spiritual appeal, and emotional suffering. Within the Uzbek classical musical heritage, *Munojot* is known as a major instrumental cycle that includes such sections as *Munojot*, *Savti Munojot*, and *Ufari Munojot*. In terms of modal foundations, it is closely related to the *Dugoh* and *Chorgoh* paths, yet its aesthetic nature is defined primarily by a sense of supplication, inner sorrow, and spiritual purification. By linking a ghazal of Alisher Navoi with the melody *Munojot* and creating a vocal interpretation, Imomjon Ikromov once again demonstrated a vivid synthesis of traditional musical heritage and classical poetry.

At this point, it is necessary to draw attention to another important issue: in the process of transforming maqom and maqom-like melodies into vocal compositions, the delicate balance between word and melody acquires special significance. Prolonged melodic lines, melismatic ornamentations, and *avj* structures may sometimes lead to the artificial separation of syllables in the pronunciation of the poetic text. For this reason, in maqom vocal performance the clear and meaningful articulation of the poetic text largely depends on the artistic taste of the performer and composer, their culture of pronunciation, and their ability to maintain a subtle balance between the musical and literary texts. Certain issues of textual articulation connected with the ghazal of Alisher Navoi in *Munojot* also provide an opportunity to draw important scholarly and practical conclusions from this perspective. Thus, maqom vocal compositions represent not merely melodies but a synthetic artistic system in

which word, meaning, and melody exist in organic unity.

Imomjon Ikromov's role in the development of Uzbek music is not limited solely to his compositional activity. For many years, he was also active as a performer and pedagogue, influencing the formation of numerous young musicians. In his creative work, folk melodicism, traditional modal thinking, maqom-based intonational logic, and smooth melodic development occupy a central place. In particular, the melodic style close to the Fergana–Tashkent maqom traditions, the principle of developing melodies through *bozgo'y* and *khona*, and the ability to express inner lyrical emotions in a concise yet expressive manner are among the most distinctive features of his compositional style. In this regard, he is highly valued as a continuator of the traditional Uzbek compositional school.

In the present period, alongside preserving and developing maqom art, the issue of bringing it closer to broader layers of society remains highly relevant. Against the background of the growing influence of mass culture and the proliferation of fast and simplified musical products, explaining to younger generations the nature of maqom—which requires a deep culture of attentive listening—remains a complex yet necessary task. Therefore, the introduction of specialized maqom-related disciplines within the educational system, the preparation of textbooks and teaching manuals, and the organization of competitions and practical seminars for young performers are of great importance. In particular, the inclusion of subjects such as *Maqom Alifbosi* in educational curricula contributes to strengthen-

ing methodological work in this field and to forming initial knowledge about maqom traditions.

Furthermore, the future of maqom art largely depends on the level of its scholarly research. It is essential to systematically study the historical layers of maqom repertoire, regional variants, performance schools, poetic foundations, issues of musical notation, and contemporary interpretations. Limiting maqom only to practical performance cannot fully reveal its theoretical, philosophical, and cultural potential. For this reason, research in maqom studies, ethnomusicology, textual studies, and performance practice should develop in a unified and coordinated direction.

In conclusion, Shashmaqom, and the Uzbek maqom system in general, represents one of the highest achievements of national artistic thought. Its internal laws formed over centuries, its complex modal and rhythmic systems, poetic foundations, and performance traditions constitute a unique reflection of the spiritual world of the Uzbek people. Imomjon Ikromov's creative engagement with traditional melodic sources such as *Cho'li Iroq* and *Munojot* demonstrates the capacity of maqom traditions to renew themselves across time. His compositional explorations are significant as vivid examples of continuing tradition in new artistic forms without breaking its essential foundations. Therefore, the deep study of maqom heritage and its preservation as a historical memory, an aesthetic value, and a living school of performance remain among the priority tasks of contemporary music scholarship and cultural policy.

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