

Section 2. Musical arts

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ABOUT THE MUSICAL LEGACY OF ABDULQODIR MARAGHI: RECONSTRUCTION OF BIOGRAPHY AND ANALYSIS OF MUSICAL-THEORETICAL HERITAGE

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Abstract

This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the life, personality, and musical work of Abdulqodir Maraghi (1353–1435) – an outstanding music theorist, composer, and performer of the 14th-15th centuries, who made a significant contribution to the development of Eastern musical scholarship.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the biography of Abdulqodir Maraghi and analyze his role in the development of music theory.

Method: The research employs historical-biographical, comparative, and source study methods. The primary sources are Maraghi's original treatises: "Câmiu'l-Elhân", "Makâsîdü'l-Elhân", "Şerhu'l-Edvâr", as well as chronicles of the Jalayirid, Timurid, and Ottoman periods.

Results: Precise biographical data have been established: birthplace – Maragha (South Azerbaijan), date of birth – December 17, 1353. Key stages of his career at the courts of the Jalayirids, Timur, Shahrukh, and Ottoman Sultan Murad II have been identified. His major works, his contribution to the systematization of the 12 maqams and 24 shu'ba, as well as his pedagogical and compositional activities (over 30 works in the "nawbat-i murattab" form within one month) are examined.

Scientific novelty: For the first time in a foreign VAK journal publication, a complete overview of Maraghi's life and work is presented, including his Turkic origin, the role of his father in his education, his relations with six ruling dynasties, as well as a translation of key fragments from his "award" (nishan) from Timur. It is demonstrated that Maraghi was a Turkic, not Persian, theorist.

Keywords: Abdulqodir Maraghi, Eastern music theory, maqam, "Câmiu'l-Elhân", Jalayirids, Timurids, Ottomans, music pedagogy, 14th century, 15th century

Introduction

Abdulqodir Maraghi (1353–1435) is one of the most significant figures in the history of Eastern and, in particular, Turkish music. However, in modern scholarship, despite his enormous legacy, there is still a lack of systematic research on his life, personality, and musical activities. This article aims to fill this gap.

Maraghi was not only a theorist but also a practitioner: he possessed an outstanding voice, composed music, invented rhythms (“jam”, “parda”, “dawr”) and musical instruments. He eliminated ambiguities in the understanding of modes (dawr) and introduced the concept of “maqam” into wide circulation. His activity spans a complex historical period from the rule of the Jalayirids to the Ottoman Empire. The purpose of this study is to reconstruct his life path and his role in the development of music scholarship.

Main Part

Maraghi lived during an era of struggle between several dynasties: the Aq Qoyunlu, Qara Qoyunlu, Muzaffarids, and Jalayirids, as well as during the expansion of Timur and the rise of the Ottoman Empire. His closest ties were with the Jalayirids (1340–1431) – a Mongol dynasty that adopted Islam and the Turkic language. Under Sultan Shaykh Uvays (1356–1374), he entered the court; later he served his son Sultan Husayn and Ahmad Jalayir as a close companion (nadim). After Timur captured Tabriz in 1386, Maraghi was captured in Karbala but gained Timur’s patronage by reciting poetry. Later he served at the court of Shahrukh in Herat, and in 1423 dedicated his work “Makâsîdü’l-Elhân” to Ottoman Sultan Murad II.

Maraghi was born in the city of Maragha (South Azerbaijan), which was the capital of the Ilkhanate and an important scientific center with the observatory of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. His father, Ghiyas al-Din Ghaybi, was a renowned scholar and hafiz. From his father, Maraghi inherited a love of knowledge and music. It is important to note that European authors mistakenly attribute Persian origin to Maraghi. Contrary to this, the population of Maragha consisted of Turkic tribes, and Maraghi himself describes “kökler” – Turkic compositional forms – which proves his belonging to Turkic culture.

From early childhood, Maraghi showed exceptional abilities. At the age of 4, he began school, and at the age of 8, he memorized the Qur’an. He mastered Arabic and Persian, poetry, calligraphy (six scripts), and the science of qira’at. His father took him to gatherings of scholars, where he recited the Qur’an with beautiful melodies. Maraghi then independently collected and studied all available musical treatises of his predecessors and contemporaries, surpassing all masters of his time.

Maraghi’s main legacy consists of his treatises:

“Câmiu’l-Elhân” (1405, dedicated to his son Nur al-Din Abdurrahman, later revised for Shahrukh in 1415).

“Makâsîdü’l-Elhân” (1418–1423, dedicated to Sultan Murad II).

“Şerhu’l-Edvâr” (a commentary on the work of Safi al-Din).

In these works, he not only systematized the 12 maqams but also developed the theory of rhythms and provided practical examples. According to sources, in 1377 he proved his mastery by composing 30 works in the most complex form “nawbat-i murattab” within one month – a legend in music history.

Discussion

The results obtained allow us to reconsider the established view of Maraghi as exclusively a Persian theorist. Analysis of his biography and treatises clearly indicates his Turkic roots and belonging to Turkic cultural tradition.

Of particular interest is his pedagogical activity. By creating works “for his sons” and for young musicians at various courts, he laid the foundations of professional music education in the East. His system of 12 maqams and 24 shu’ba became the foundation for the subsequent development of classical Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Uzbek music.

A comparison of his career at the Timurid and Ottoman courts shows that music in that era was not merely entertainment but an important element of diplomacy and state ideology. The dedication of his work to Sultan Murad II symbolizes the transmission of scientific and cultural legacy from Central Asia to Anatolia.

Conclusion

Abdulqodir Maraghi is a key figure who connected medieval Eastern music theory with practice, and who bridged the cultures of the Jalayirids, Timurids, and Ottomans.

Main findings of the study:

1. Maraghi was a Turkic scholar, born in 1353 in Maragha.

2. He received an excellent education under his father, Hafız Ghiyas al-Din Ghaybi.

3. He served six different rulers, which testifies to his high authority.

4. His theoretical works (especially “Câmiu’l-Elhân”) laid the foundation for modern maqam theory.

Prospects for further research lie in the deciphering of musical examples recorded by Maraghi and their authentic reconstruction using modern digital technologies.

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