

Transmission of Sacred Knowledge in Its Connection to Sufi Tradition

15. USTAD–SHOGIRD TRAINING IN MEDIEVAL SOURCES

Historically, Ustad–Shogird (master–apprentice) has been the only form of knowledge transmission for professional guilds. This chapter examines a medieval document which reflects on the Ustad–Shogird process of training and rite of initiation. *Abloqul solihiyin* (On Ustad [Master] and his conditions) was written in fifteenth-century Herat by Husayn Voiz Koshifiy.¹⁴⁷ It explains many different issues related to Ustad–Shogird relationships, from its forms to its content. It is based on the Sufi way to perfection, of absorbing knowledge, and therefore includes certain ceremonial duties and obligations. The manuscript employs a particular terminology related to training systems within professional guilds: ‘on the road’ means during the process of training; ‘fasten the belt’ means initiating the relationship of Ustad–Shogird (master–apprentice); and ‘stations’ means stages in the process of professional and spiritual training related to Sufi tradition. In fact, this treatise is a manual on the master–apprentice (Ustad–Shogird) relationship and its connection with Sufi tradition.

The very first paragraphs of treatise emphasise the points that the Ustad–Shogird relationship lies in the very heart of any professional training.

Know that no work is done without an Ustad, and every work done without an Ustad is in vain. There is a belief that even though a person might reach a certain degree and carry out a certain amount of work, if he had had no Ustad, or if his Ustad had not been a good one, his work would achieve nothing.

It is said that:

Everyone without an Ustad works in vain, On the road to sense nobody is a better friend than an Ustad.

Therefore everyone who wants to achieve something with his work first of all needs a perfect Ustad. It is obvious what an Ustad is for; without the lead of an Ustad no work goes well:

Everyone who starts his work without an Ustad is doomed in that his work never will gain attention. Keep close to the sleeve of the Ustad and be happy. Serve him for a certain time and become an Ustad yourself.

The person who fastens the belt of another person is called Ustad-the tuner, and Shogird (Apprentice), whose belt suppose to be fastened called Halaf.

The paragraph below shows what kind of character is needed for an Ustad.

'If they ask what the preconditions of Ustad-the tuner are, say they are six:

- 1) First, a perfect Ustad, who fastened his belt, should keep that belt beyond the hands of others (nobody should doubt his perfection) and he himself shouldn't touch the belt of his children/apprentices (not be rude to his children as well as to his apprentices).
- 2) Secondly, he must have all the features of a true man.
- 3) Thirdly, he must know small details of *Tariqat* (Sufi Way) and the subtleties of *Haqiqat* (Sufi Truth), to pass on to his 'child' (apprentice). If they ask who is the perfect Ustad, say one who follows the pure way of religion, who knows his own sins, who is a wise and tasteful person, who is not jealous and revengeful and mean.
- 4) Fourthly, Ustad, who fastens the belt, truly knows it, so the steps are taken in the right direction.
- 5) Fifthly, the belt on the child/apprentice should be fastened publicly, in the presence of Sheikh, Naqib and brothers in the Way, but not in a hidden place.
- 6) Sixthly, he must know the state of the child/apprentice, whether he is worthy of it.

If an Ustad sees that his Shogird is not worthy, he would not fasten his belt on him, as it's evil.'

The paragraphs below are concerned with the process of fastening the belt from the way and conditions of doing it to its consequences.

‘If they ask how many stations of fastening the belt, say they are six.

- 1) Firstly, the Ustad knows and describes parts of tuning and types of it.
- 2) Secondly, he orders his apprentice to serve forty days and the latter should bear it.
- 3) Thirdly, he prepares water and salt for the gathering.
- 4) Fourthly, he uses a five-wick lamp.
- 5) Fifthly, he fastens the belt conditionally.
- 6) Sixthly, for this ritual he must cook *khalva* (sweet).

If they ask how many conditions of fastening the belt there are, say – seven.

- 1) to spread out the rug for the prayer;
- 2) to put his left hand onto the head of Shogird;
- 3) to hold him with his right hand;
- 4) to prepare the belt;
- 5) to take the belt with his left hand;
- 6) to recite a relevant verse of the Qur’an;
- 7) to fasten the belt and take it off in seven days.

If they ask how many rituals there are in fastening the belt, say – ten.

- 1) to remember Pirs/Masters, who have passed away,
- 2) to introduce the Shogird to the community of Shogirds,
- 3) to recite a prayer, holding his hand,
- 4) to step away three steps from the prayer rug,
- 5) to take the belt in his left hand,
- 6) to recite a relevant verse of the Qur’an,
- 7) to turn the Shogird’s face towards the way (i.e. tell him the truth),
- 8) take some *khalva*,
- 9) while taking Shogird’s hand to touch by index finger to his same finger,
- 10) to explain the meaning of every step of the rituals.’

One can see from the paragraphs above that the meaning of every single step is explained in great detail. For instance, Ustad puts his left hand on Shogird’s head because the left hand is closer to the heart. Or Ustad steps aside for three steps, because one step is meant to suppress the sinful soul, the second – Satan, and the third one – the desire for wealth. Unless he suppresses those, the Shogird cannot achieve his goal.

The next paragraph shows how the role of apprentice is related to religious and mystical study and based on an ascetic lifestyle.

On the conditions of being a Shogird

If they ask what is the basis of being a Shogird, say it is based on will.

If they ask what is the will, say sama'/mystical listening and piety.

If they ask what sama' and piety are, say to listen with the ears of the heart to whatever the Ustad is saying and accept it with sincere heart, and to fulfill it with the help of all his members.

If they ask what is good for a Shogird, say pure belief, because only faith brings people to their aim.

If they ask how a Shogird achieves his aim, say through his service.

If they ask what his service is based on, say on refusing pleasure and working hard.

The next two paragraphs describe the rules for the apprentice, including his attitude to the study and behaviour.

'If they ask how many stations of Shogirdness there are, say – four.

- 1) to start his venture bravely, because it is much worse to be scared of beginning, or to retreat;
- 2) to serve sincerely;
- 3) to coordinate his tongue with his heart, i.e. talk and act accordingly and truly;
- 4) to listen to advise and remember what his Ustad is saying, and follow it.

If they ask how many customs of Shogirdness there are, say – eight.

- 1) whenever he sees his Ustad, to greet him first;
- 2) not to talk much in front of his Ustad;
- 3) to bow his head;
- 4) not to look all around;
- 5) if he wants to ask something, first ask his Ustad's permission;
- 6) when his Ustad answers, not to talk back while he is explaining;
- 7) not to gossip in front of his Ustad;
- 8) to be polite in all his behaviour'.

The last paragraph describes how to tie the belt according to different orders:

'Alif' order is the order of 'maddahs' or 'eulogists' or musicians. 'Lam-alif' is the order of simple people. 'Mim' order is the order of philosophers,

'*Sayfiy* of military people, *Salmoniy*' of cleaners, *Yusufiy* of craft workers and artisans, etc.

16. USTAD-SHOGIRD TRADITION TODAY

In discussions about the Ferghana Valley, its rural area and particularly the Andijan district, one should point out that a traditional lifestyle is observed in Uzbek households, within the family, and in the involvement of children in any family work (Photo 4).

According to Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Children, especially daughters from the age 10 and even younger, help mothers with domestic tasks, the care of younger siblings, the care of animals and at cotton harvest when agricultural season starts'.¹⁴⁸ Children do, indeed, help with the cotton harvest, as in Uzbekistan cotton remains a quasi-state monopoly. But it is worth mentioning that the agricultural season in rural areas of Uzbekistan and in



Photo 4: A girl-embroiderer from Ferghana Valley making traditional men's hat (*doppi*)

some parts of Tajikistan is a non-stop process taking place almost all year round, except for winter. Children help their parents with many difficult tasks like, for example, rice growing, which requires many long hours spent bending or standing in the water, or tending to silk worms, which are known for their 24-hour non-stop feeding on mulberry leaves, and so on.

So, children's involvement in agricultural work and domestic tasks leads to the development of strong family relationships supported by traditional social networks.

It is obvious that social structures and networks in Uzbekistan have been preserved from pre-Soviet times. Despite the Soviet regime, Uzbeks were allowed to carry on with previously established forms of social gathering, and therefore to maintain traditional social relationships (Photo 5). Notable among these relationships is *Gap-gashtak*, a social network where neighbourhood members – Mahallya – and friends assemble together. It can also be a gathering for special occasions such as a reunion for former classmates (*Sinfdashlar*), an assembly of teacher-colleagues (*Uqutuvchilar*), Ziyefat – friends' meeting, Maraka – a meeting on the occasions of mourning, or remembrance days. Women's *Gap-gashtaks*, based on economic, rather than spiritual, issues, sometimes take place on a regular basis among the female population. *Gap-gashtaks* in Uzbekistan are a



Photo 5: Female communities meeting *Gap-gashtak* in Keles

dense web of interconnecting networks. The origin of the female *Gap* is clearly related to male gatherings, as formerly *Gap* was a 'male activity consisting of a regular get-together, of about a dozen or so friends primarily for the purposes of entertainment and sociability', but later this began to become a female activity involving also some 'music and dancing'.¹⁴⁹

The most interesting fact for this study is that '*Otin-Oys* gatherings are considered to be among the most prestigious and far away from pure social or entertaining purposes'.¹⁵⁰ These are the main focus of our attention, revealing how local society preserved centuries-old traditional links in networking and entertaining.

From our perspective, of great importance in such a process of preservation is the presence of traditional Mehterlik, professional guilds based on the Ustad–Shogird training system.

17. MEHTERLIK OR PROFESSIONAL GUILDS

Before providing examples of the forms of these activities, it would be helpful to offer some clarification on the concept of the Ustad–Shogird.

The oral knowledge transmission, from master to apprentice, from teacher to pupil, from professional specialist to beginner, originated in Central Asia in early medieval times. Historically, there were a great many professional guilds in every single part of this area with its strong focus on traditional culture, and also around the courts and palaces, where knowledge transmission by the Ustad–Shogird method was considered to be the only way of teaching and learning.

Musicians, artists, craft masters, or those who wished to be associated with correct, high-quality performance were all involved in guilds (*Mehterliks*). Those guilds consisted of 'clubs' of merchants or craftspeople formed to give help and advice to their members and to devise regulations and set standards for particular trades. All guilds were independent, and an exchange of knowledge between them was forbidden and prosecuted by law.

To belong to such a guild had deep spiritual meaning, and required total devotion, determination to follow the chosen life path and a lifetime devoted to improving skills. To be a professional musician meant to be a member of certain *Mehterlik* (guild), and to receive training in the Ustad–Shogird (master–apprentice) style.

In fact, the whole process and methods of *Mehterlik* training were related to the Sufi brotherhood system, where every step was related to religious training:

- 1) the way people worshipped Sheikh/Pir – they had to admire their teachers;
- 2) the whole process of knowledge transmission activity was surrounded by saints as protectors;
- 3) the respect given by the youngest to the oldest when advice was recommended.

Historically, each *Mehterlik* (guild) had a special *Risola* (book of guidance) for members to follow. This was document consisted of a programme of action adopted by a group of individuals, and at the same time, the set of principles on which it was based. One of these given below is ‘*Risola-I Mehterlik*’.¹⁵¹ At the end of the *Risola* is a date, 1327 year of Hijra (i.e. 1909) and the name of the person the *Risola* paper belonged to: Ustad-Mehter-Kurchi Niyas-Mehter-ogly.

The *Risola-I Mehterlik* rules consist of:

- 1) a prayer;
- 2) a legend about the origin of professions and, related to them, *Risola* focused on the sacred roots of the named profession;
- 3) questions and answers on the religious significance of profession/skills mentioned (*farz, vadjib, sunnat, mystahab*) and an account of sacred representatives of that occupation;
- 4) questions and answers on spiritual mentors (Pir) from all stations of Sufism (*Shariat, Tariqat, Hakikat*), on the heads of four Muslim religious-law schools of Islam (Hanafiya, Hanbaliya, Maliliya, and Shafiya), on ‘Pirs of consolation/reassurance’ (Mother, Father, Teacher, Master) and protectors of the present guild;
- 5) (The Most important paragraph of the *Risola*) questions and answers on prayers and sacred statements, which one should repeat during different stages of performance of named skills;
- 6) duties and restrictions for representatives of the above-named occupation;
- 7) policy of the named profession; attitude to the *Risola*; awards and punishments for breaking rules or guidelines/policy of the *Risola*.

The most interesting for us is the second paragraph, which relates the legend of the sacred origin of music and, particularly, of singing:

One should know that the occupation *Mehterlik* comes from the holy man Gavryiil, Peace Be Upon Him. The great Allah said that the soul should enter the shape/body (*kylyb*) of Adam, PBUH, but the soul was scared to do so. Then the great Allah ordered *Mehter* Gavryiil to bring a Bird from Paradise to perform her song. From the pleasure and sweetness of singing the soul went into Adam-Safiulla shape/body. That is why *Mehterlik* comes from Gavryiil, Peace Will Be Upon His Soul. When a human hears music (Nagma) his soul is calmed and his love and joy increase.

So, here the divine origin of music is revealed as God's action. Also, it is closely associated with the fact of God's creation, mentioned in nearly every sacred book, and Adam became the first man to adopt music as a passion and a way of life. (Incidentally, Adam was also a Pir of butchers as well as musicians, because cow hide is used for making percussion instruments like Doira and Nagora.¹⁵² So the material used by the guild for musical instruments united different guilds and their Pirs.)

Another strong guild association from those documents comes from Sufism and its relationship with Murid-Murshid or *silsilah* of oral knowledge transmission. The hierarchy of God-human, with the saints in between, was the framework for every *Mehterlik*, as confirmed by the example above.

We can observe, then, that every kind of professional training in music was deeply based on the Ustad-Shogird system of knowledge transmission and all authentic forms of Uzbek music are still taught this way even today.

18. HOFIZLIK: PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN MUSIC

In discussing Sufi music and Sufi singing one should not forget that its history began with male performers who were at the centre of public attention. What is the Sufi traditional singing style? Who performed Uzbek Sufi songs in the twentieth century?

Sufi traditional music in Central Asia was based on a professional style of singing or the Hofiz training system, combining aesthetic perfection with technical excellence and accomplishment. The skill was acquired with Ustad-Shogird (master-apprentice) guidance, which had both practical and spiritual aspects.¹⁵³

The term ‘Hofiz’ comes from Arabic, where *hifu* means a guard. Today, it has a wider meaning extending from the reader/narrator of *Sura* of Qur’an, documentary writer, writer or poet, epic singer *baqshi/Hofiz*, reader of classical poetry – *Ghazal* to simply a singer and musician.¹⁵⁴

In Hofizlik music training one can see traces of Sufi idea of perfection:

Shariat is a corpus of Muslim law, Tariqat is a mystical Way, Haqiqat is Truth. Ishq is passion and love, Shogirdlik is Apprenticeship, Hofizlik is Mastership.

The same resemblance comes from technical terms of performance where

Sozlanish is tuning, *Tayorlanish* is preparation, *Mukammallik* is Perfection. *Kirish* is entering, *Anglash* is comprehension, *Yettite bosqich o'tish* – ascending seven levels, *Ijod faoliyat* – creative action.

Here are main features of Hofiz’s singing style: a) a beautiful, strong voice with a wide range; b) clear pronunciation; c) a capacity for structuring every single sentence of the songs, with the ability to extend them, adding well-developed decorations and ornamentations (*Hang*); d) the special long/chain-based breathing system illustrating the ability to perform not just one but two or even three melodic phrases on one breath; e) the ability to perform different instrumental passages, melodic forms that imitate percussion sounds, and so on; freedom in ornamenting rhythm and metre; f) skills in *Awj* (long, high culminations) performance; g) aptitude to build inner symmetrical structure with the use of *Hang* and *Shab’d* (the way of breaking the pulse or rhythm of the tune without affecting the whole song).¹⁵⁵

Uzbek culture in the twentieth century was privileged to have three of the most outstanding Hofizes from Ferghana Valley: Sadyrkhon Hofiz (1847–1931); Djurakhon Sultanov (1893–1968); and Rasul Qori Mamadaliev (1928–76). Each of them deserves a special mention.

Sadyrkhon Hofiz’s Ustadslar/teachers were Rummon Said Buzrukhonhoja, and Qori Sangin-domla, from whom the singer learned the Qiroat (Qur’an’s reciting style) with a focus on its poetry and content. Reciting the Qur’an requires the clear pronunciation of words and phrases, with melodically fixed and structurally well-developed delivery. He also played *Tanbur*. By attending *Honakoi* (mystical religious meetings) he learned

religious genres such as Masnaviyhonlik, Maroyahonlik, Na'thonlik. He was not allowed to attend any entertainment events.¹⁵⁶

Hofiz Djurahon Sultanov was more popular in performing both classical and folk *Katta ashula* genres related to outside (open air festivals) music celebrations. He was trained by Boltaboy Hofiz Rajabov (1867–1960) and Mamatbobo Sattarov (1885–1967). He was named a Pir of *Katta ashula's* singers (*katta a ashullachilarning piri*). His interest in folk genres (Kushik, Yalla) has enhanced and enriched his style in Maqam performance (Evvoi Chorgoh, Dugoh Husainyi, Savti Suvora, Sadyrkhon Usshogi).¹⁵⁷

The blind musician Hofiz Rasul-Qori's childhood training mostly concentrated on recitation of the Qur'an. Because of his amazing voice, he was named the Daud's voice representative (*Daudi ovoz sohibi*), the nightingale. His achievements in singing included: a) ornamented decorations; Hudo (poetry Salohyi), Ghazalhonlik, (poetry Chishtyi), Mehmonsan (poetry Huvaido); b) scale and mode arrangement within the ascending ladder of structure; c) instrumental improvisation, including imitation of percussion sounds; d) incorporation of the new style 'Ist': – when, within the same melodic structure, the tempo slows down to reflect dramatic/dynamic/emotional expressiveness... as in *Katta ashula* or Suvora.¹⁵⁸

It is clear that Hofizlik methods required a serious training, which covered style of performance, musical structure, frame, and ornamentations including a fine ability for improvisation. Very often, Hofiz performed his own compositions, and developed a distinctive and personal interpretation of the song.

In the next chapter we shall look at the case of female performers.

Music and Female Sufis

19. SUFI MASTERS IN MUSIC

'Music is called *Ghiza-i-ruh* (the food of the soul) by Sufis. Music, being the most divine art, elevates the soul to the higher spirit; music itself being unseen soon reaches the unseen; just as only the diamond can break the diamond, so musical vibrations are used to make the physical and mental vibrations inactive, in order that the Sufi may be elevated to the spiritual spheres,' wrote Sufi Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan in his book *A Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty*.¹⁵⁹

Chapter 4 quoted the views of Al-Ghazali, as to why music affects Sufis more strongly than reciting the Qur'an, and how it is used for their *zikrs*. But not all theologians in Islam hold the same views. The practice of music and dance in Sufism is, in fact, rather contentious. It is by no means universally accepted by all Sufis, and some orders frown upon it. Others may rejoice in the recitation of mystical poetry, accompanied by musical instruments and performed as part of their prayers and devotions. Some Sufis consider such music conducive to 'mystical ecstasy'. These Sufis maintain that music can arouse passion, either sensual or spiritual. It is spiritual passion (longing for God) that is the Sufi's goal. Hence, musical concerts are a regular feature of some Sufi orders, like *Mawlaviiyya*, *Chishtiyya*, or *Kubraviyya*.

Music has always been the favourite Sufi means of spiritual development for those orders. Rumi, the author of the *Masnavi*, introduced music into his *Mawlaviiyya* order, and enjoyed the memory of his blessed *murshid's* association while listening to it. Since that time, music has become the second subject of Sufi practices. They declare that it creates harmony in both worlds and brings eternal peace.

The great mystic of India, Khwaja Moin-ad-Din Chishti, introduced music into his *Chishtiyya* order. Even today, musical entertainments for the elevation of the soul, called *Sama'*, are held among Sufis.¹⁶⁰

Sufi music is about union with the Beloved, with God. Music is the vehicle to reach the heart and attain a state of grace or enlightenment, a 'stateless state' or *Ma'rifat* – inner knowledge. Music is an essential part of spiritual life and practice for many Sufis. In that sense, Sufism is not simply about theories or the intellect; the goal is the experience of union with the One. So, Sufi teachers lead their *murids* towards the One through practical experience in ritual, movement, voice, and music.

Sama' (which means listening in Arabic) is the key concept, which defines usage of both poetry and music among Sufis. The greatest Islamic theologian and Sufi Master Imam Al-Ghazali, in his fundamental work *Ihya ulum ad-din* (Revival of religious sciences) – considered to be the encyclopaedia of Islam and Sufism – devotes two separate chapters to the nature of *Sama'* and practice of poetry and music in it. In his conclusion he says: '*Sama'* could be sometimes *haram* (disallowed by religion), sometimes *mubah* (admissible), sometimes *makruh* (undesirable), sometimes *mustahab* (beneficial). For those who are enslaved by their worldly lust, and for most youngsters, it is disallowed, because *Sama'* confuses their souls full of beastly lust. *Sama'* is undesirable for those who are routinely using it just for the sake of fun but not turning themselves into beasts. It is admissible for those who are enjoying just the beauty of the sound. *Sama'* is beneficial for those who are woken up to the love to Allah and to good deeds because of it.'¹⁶¹

Imam Al-Ghazali sets out five principles of *Sama'* reflecting on issues of Time, Place and People, *Zikr*, concentration on *Sama'*, participants' behaviour and involvement. He points out that *Sama'* has three relevant prerequisites: Time, Place and People. As to Time, *Sama'* is useless while eating, fighting, praying or when the heart is not quiet and calm. As to Place, *Sama'* is not arranged in the random street, or in a disgusting environment, where the heart is distracted. As to People, they should not be hypocrites – those for whom *Sama'* is disallowed or undesirable. Also, Imam Al-Ghazali argues, the mental state of people at the gathering should be considered. Some people could be happier with *Zikr*, or helping poor people, but having no union with God in *Sama'*. As Imam Al-Ghazali suggested, participants should not be distracted by what is happening in the gathering, but should concentrate fully on *Sama'* and should not simply pretend to achieve ecstasy. They should not jump, dance or cry unless they cannot control the impulse, indicated Imam Al-Ghazali. But at the same time, 'if someone naturally comes to ecstasy and starts to dance, others should follow him.'¹⁶²

Imam Al-Ghazali quotes the views of many famous Sufis regarding *Sama*. Zunnun al-Misri said: ‘*Sama*’ comes from God and turns the heart straight to Him.’ Abu-l-Huseyn ad-Dirac said: ‘*Sama*’ made me dance, gave me the knowledge of Allah as a gift, made me drink from the purest cups and I was elevated to the Gardens of the Heaven.’ Shibli said: ‘The external side of *Sama*’ is a rebellion, but the inner side is an example. Those who are aware of meaning are allowed to follow the example. Those who are unaware of them might drown in rebellion and end up in confusion.’ He also said: ‘Those who are listening to music in a natural way share the tenderness of music and nature, connect the purity of the mystery in the heart with the purity of music and *Sama*.’¹⁶³

Talking about listening and the comprehension of music, Imam Al-Ghazali defines four states (*hal*), which end with a wonderful symbol of Sufism:

- 1) the state when one enjoys music just as a matter of nature: he/she is not different in that sense to any living organism;
- 2) the state when one enjoys music in a comprehensive manner: this is the state of youngsters and lustful people;
- 3) the state when one separates what he listens from his relation with Allah: this is the state of inexperienced *murids* (Sufi apprentices);
- 4) the state of those who are absorbed by Allah: these people are like those Egyptian women, who cut their fingers and didn’t feel the pain, while looking at the beauty of Joseph. ‘They are true Sufis,’ states Imam Al-Ghazali, crediting those women in his main religious and Sufi work.¹⁶⁴

Hazrat Inoyat-khan mentions five aspects of music in the Sufi perspective. He says: ‘Music consists of vibrations which have evolved from the top to the bottom, and if they would only be systematically used, they could be evolved from the bottom to the top. Real music is known only to the most gifted ones. Music has five aspects:

- 1) *Tarab* – music which induces motion of the body (artistic);
- 2) *Raga* – music which appeals to the intellect (gnostic);
- 3) *Qul* – music which creates feelings (emotional);
- 4) *Nida* – music heard in vision (inspirational);
- 5) *Sawt* – music in the abstract (celestial).¹⁶⁵

Keeping these views of the Sufi masters in mind, we now look at the Sufi music of Central Asia.

20. SUFI MUSIC IN CENTRAL ASIA: FROM COURT TO FOLK TRADITIONS

The existence of a cultural division between the nomads and the settled people of Central Asia is reflected in the kind of music they each perform. Historically, the urban population of the cities is made up of Tajiks and Uzbeks and their music is based on the urban classical, or professional, music tradition called *Maqam*. The very word *Maqam*, which means in Arabic 'a station, a degree', is the key word for Sufism, defining the stage of proximity of a Sufi to God. Therefore, the whole *Maqam* music is directly rooted in the Sufi tradition of *Sama*. This music is discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

As for the Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, and Turkmens, who are of a nomadic origin, their music follows the rural, or folk, traditions of bards such as the Kazakh *zhirau*s and the Kyrgyz *manaschies*. This distinction, however, is flexible. Indeed, during the twentieth century many nomadic people took to the settled way of life, and it is also worth noting that the Tajiks and Uzbeks have their own rural communities and musicians, the Baqshies and the *Otin-Oys*. Nonetheless, the deep-rooted traditions of these two kinds of people have survived the progress of time and changes in lifestyle, and the distinction between their music is still discernible as part of their ancestral identity.

The Sufi influence is the common thread which, nevertheless, ties these different types of music together and it is rooted most significantly in the poems by, for instance, Saadi (1184–1292), Rumi (1207–73), Hafez (1318/25-unknown), and Navoiy (1441–1501), which form the basis of song. The singing style of these countries is very distinctive, reflecting the singer's meditation and concentration. The Sufi content is also evident in the structure of classical song, which is analysed later in this chapter, but which represents that of a whole *Zikr* ceremony with the same sort of introductory, developmental, and climactic sections that, in turn, reflect the broader spiritual stages of the Sufi 'way' to divinity.

Uzbek and Tajik religious and Sufi music has not yet been classified among the acknowledged musical categories studied by musicologists. The reasons for this are not purely political – when all religious confessions, including Islam, were banned – but are also of a musical nature. Religious and Sufi music was, and still is, performed mainly without instruments.

This fact led to the genre not being taken seriously enough. However, it is said that: ‘The conceptualization of religious music as a chant or recitation, rather than music or song, reflects a fundamental Muslim belief in the supremacy of the word as the basis of all religious communication, starting from the revealed word of the Qur’an itself, which constitutes the very foundation of Islam.’¹⁶⁶

This statement is also true for Central Asian, and particularly Uzbek, religious music. According to one of the existing classifications, Islamic religious music could be roughly divided into:

- Mosque music (reciting the Qur’an)
- Sufi order music
- hymns and songs for festivals.¹⁶⁷

Another classification of Islamic music is given in reference to Indo-Muslim religious music considering: a) liturgical music; and b) non-liturgical music, including Sufi music.¹⁶⁸

Uzbek and Tajik non-liturgical music is distinguished by its particular variety and richness and it differs from one local area to another. For example, the full range of hymns expressing devotion to God (*Hamd*) or the Prophet (*Na’i*) combining the celebration of *Mavlud* (Prophet Muhammad’s birthday) along with the Sufi rituals are still found in the Ferghana Valley.

This kind of music is still popular in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (also southern parts of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) and has various distinguishing features. One should point out that only a few genres of the Islamic musical tradition (e.g. *Azan* – the call to prayer) are still performed in male society. But all other genres are seen only in female performances. So far, this issue has not been discussed in the context of Uzbek and Tajik religious music.

21. CENTRAL ASIAN SUFI MUSIC AND FEMALE SINGERS

Maqam and Sufism

In Central Asia, Maqam music has a particular role in religious, cultural, and social life.

The very word *Maqam* reveals its Sufi origin. Sufi teachings became extremely widespread as Islam was adopted and reconciled with local traditions and culture. That is one of the explanations why so many Sufi orders were born in Central Asia. These teachings were very often supported by the Central Asian khans and emirs, almost all of whom had their spiritual masters or *Pirs*, who were true Sufis. We can therefore, thank the rich and robust medieval court culture, strengthened by major developments since the fourteenth century (as four different kingdoms grew up in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm, and Kokand), for maintaining the Sufi tradition, including its music.

Originating in the courts of these *emirs* (emperors) and *khans* (kings), the music of *Maqam* tradition developed over a long period, and in different ways, in various regions of the country. Today, the music of Uzbekistan encompasses different forms of *Maqam* – the classical musical form with a Sufi flavour, including the *Maqam* from Bukhara – ‘*Shashmaqam*’, the *Maqam* from Khorezm, and the *Maqam* from Ferghana-Tashkent.

The *Maqam* system of Sufi court music was founded on a particular aesthetic and ethical code. Each *Maqam* had to be played in a hall decorated with an appropriate and specific colour, and everyone present at that reception had to wear clothes of the same colour, which reminds us of Najm ad-din Kubra’s Sufi theory of colours and states of the Sufi. In addition, each *Maqam* had to be performed at a fixed time of day, so, for example, the *Maqam* ‘*Iraq*’ should be performed in the early morning during sunrise. The terrace, hall and musicians’ gowns where that particular *Maqam* was played should be white. *Buzruk* (great) was performed accompanied by red colours, *Ushshoq* (lovers) and *Rost* (straight) in dark yellow, and *Navo* (melody) would have been performed after midnight in black or grey costumes. The evidence is clearly depicted in the miniatures of Kamal ad-Din Behzad, the founder of the Herat school of miniature painting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In paintings such as *Sa’bai Sayar* (Seven Planets) by Alisher Navoiy, and particularly ‘Bahram in the Gold Pavilion’ or ‘Bahram in the Green Pavilion’, the scene is laid out in beautifully decorated pavilions. The emperor is pictured sitting comfortably within the arcades of the palace. Beneath the vaults, the female musicians sit on the floor, and among the warmly glowing candles soft music is performed, played by delicate instruments such as the *ghidjak*, the harp (the predecessor of the *chang*, or box zither) and the *doira*, or frame drum.

Shashmaqam is a cycle of six *maqams*, which was formed towards the eighteenth century. Information about initial *maqams* is mentioned in treatises of the tenth and eleventh centuries (*Farabi, Ibn-Sina*); and in treatises about music of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (*Abd al-Qadir Maragi, Abd al-Rakhman Djami, Darvish Ali Changi*, and others) they figure as the compilation of twelve *maqams*.¹⁶⁹ The term 'maqam' was first used in a musical sense, as the system of modes, by the Persian scholar Qutb ad-din al-Shirazi (d. 1311).¹⁷⁰ In the process of development, six *maqams* remained out of twelve: *Buzruk* (great), *Rost* (straight), *Navo* (melody), *Dugoh* (two moments), *Segoh* (three moments), and *Iraq* (Iraq, far away). Named in accordance with the varieties of similar harmonies, they seemingly assimilated the remaining *maqams*.

In one of our articles, written on the similarities between Sufi literature and Sufi music, my husband and I argued that, just as Sufi poets created a cycle of *Hamsa* (five poems) from the open literary form of *Shahnameh*, where each of those five poems was devoted to one of the Sufi degrees – Benefit, Grace, Good, Beauty, and Truth¹⁷¹ – the same process has happened in the development of *Shashmaqam*. Moreover, *maqam Iraq* is the shortest in the cycle. It is half the length of the other five *maqams*, which makes it possible to assume its residual value. Possibly for this very reason, in contrast to the first five *maqams*, which have independent cycles, *Iraq* is performed extremely rarely as a separate work.

So here we can, once again, refer to five Sufi aspects of music as stated by Inayat-khan: artistic, gnostic, emotional, inspirational, and celestial. Indeed, researchers of *Shashmaqam* assert that each separate *Maqam* initially corresponded with five characteristics, which are applicable to *Hamsa* poems. Thus, *maqam Buzruk* is characterised by majestic, heroic, courageous, open, glad music. *Rost* is described as bright, but very restrained like the shining of truth. *Maqam Navo* characterises the state of bright melancholy, languor, hope, and love. *Dugoh* is joyfully glad, winged. *Maqam Segoh* is amorous and tragic, extremely dramatic, which resembles by its endlessness Mejnun's love for Leyla. *Iraq* has a profound philosophical meaning – the meaning of sorrowful meditation.

Thus *Shashmaqam* in its composition follows the stages of the Sufi Way: from the courageous, majestic elevated heroics of *Buzruk* (great) through the bright but restrained *Rost* (straight, truth), then the wearisome hope and the grief of *Navo* (melody), winged *Dugoh* (two moments), and tragically amorous *Segoh* (three moments) to the deeply philosophical finale of *Maqam Iraq* (far away).¹⁷²

Each of these six *Maqams* has an instrumental section *Mushkilot* (complication) and a vocal section *Nasr* (victory, prose). Each suite contains a series of pieces related by melodic resemblance, but set in different metric-rhythmic genres. In general, every single suite relies on an older distinction between a fixed, canonical sequence of pieces and an open-ended sequence that followed it.

At the centre of the *Maqam* tradition is vocal music. Singers have the greatest cachet among performers, and the ability to reach a high tessitura pitch in the *Awj*, or culmination, of a song and sustain it over an entire long breath is much admired by connoisseurs of classical music. Singing *Maqam*, however, is far more than a display of virtuosity. ‘The lyrical expressiveness of the *Maqam* is also a means of conveying the beauty and symbolic power of the poetic texts. . . . The text composed in classical forms as *Ghazal* . . . are redolent with symbols drawn from Sufism, the mystical trend in Islam. The most salient of these symbols is love, which while describing human feelings and activities alludes metaphorically to the love of the divine.’¹⁷³

The similarity to the path of spiritual wisdom in the Sufi Way – *Tariqat* is quite obvious in the melodic development of each *Maqam*. Its vocal piece *Shu’be* (part), which is based on *Ghazal* poetry, progresses through a series of structural divisions distinguished by tessitura: an introductory section, *Daramad* (entrance), set in a low tessitura leads to a section called *Miyankhona* (mid-room), typically set at an interval of a fifth above the introduction. *Miyankhona* leads to *Dunasr* (double victory), set an octave above the *Daramad*. *Awj* (zenith), the culmination, follows *Dunasr*, after which the piece gradually descends to the original tessitura in a concluding section called *Furaward* (exit). The high tessitura *Awj* is both the musical and the dramatic climax (Figure 2).

On the other hand, every single *Maqam* is identified with development from the wisdom of the first part of the *Maqam*, *Sarabbor* (main message) to a quiet *Interpretation* or the second stage – *Talkin*; observation of *Nasr* (third stage), and then the optimistic finale, conclusion, to the fourth stage – *Ufar* (fragrant).¹⁷⁴

Most of the historical chronicles give the names of famous male performers of *Maqam* – some, among them, sang in a high-pitched feminine voice. Thus in Ferghana Valley some historic documents name a famous *Maqam* singer, Hudoyberdi, whose performing nickname was *Zebo-pari* (Beautiful fairy).¹⁷⁵ The Sound Archive of the British Library keeps early recordings of Central Asian traditional Sufi music, made by the company

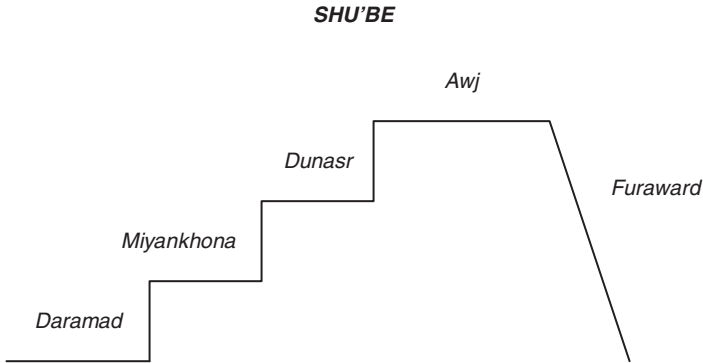


Figure 2: Melodic development in Shu'be

'Gramophone' in 1906. One of them is a Sufi song, sung by three male singers in a falsetto voice. The first female performers of *Maqams* were also recorded at that time. They were the famous women singers Netayhon and Tojinissa.

22. FEMALE MAQAM SINGERS

Berta Davydova and Kommuna Ismailova

Female *Maqam* performers became more common during Soviet times. The names of Tamara Hanum, Halima Nasyrova, Nazira Akhmedova, Hadia Yusupova, Fotima Borukhova, Barno Is'hakova, Shohista Mullaionova, Zainab Palvanova, Rakhima Mazokhidova, Mavlyuda Agzamova, Saodat Kabulova, Berta Davydova, Kommuna Ismailova, and many others make up the pride of Uzbek and Tajik *Maqam* musical and performance arts, and embellish the history of the Uzbeko-Tajik Sufi musical tradition.

Berta Davydova (b. 1927 in Margelan, Ferghana Valley, d. 2008 in Tashkent), was one of the leading performers of *Maqams*. She was born to a rich Bukharian Jewish family, and loved to sing from her early childhood. In 1938 her family moved to Tashkent. After finishing school she graduated from medical college and worked as a nurse in a health centre. Berta liked to sing, and sometimes performed at evening concerts for the local hospital. Once, on a big occasion, famous Uzbek artists came to perform in front of all the wounded soldiers, and one of the young soldiers on crutches

suddenly shouted in the middle of the concert, ‘We also have a singer here!’ People called her and she had to go onto the stage and, feeling embarrassed as she was in her nurse’s white medical gown, she sang a few songs.

‘After the concert the Uzbek People’s artist Imamjon Ikramov came to the Hospital’s director and said that I had a special voice and he would like to invite me to work for the Radio. The head of the health centre said that very soon, on reaching eighteen years of age, I would have to go to the front line to fight the Germans in World War 2. To avoid that, it would be better if they took me to sing.

My mother didn’t want me to become a singer. So, I asked my colleagues to help me and Imamjon Ikramov went to talk to my mother to explain to her that it was the only way to avoid me being sent to war. After that my mother didn’t mind me singing for live broadcasts. I remember I sang at that time *Munajat*, which was the first classical song I learned with Imamjon Ikramov. With this song I became Berta Davydova. Halima Nasyrova was a famous female singer at that time. She was lady in her prime but I was just 17 when I started.

After Imamjon Ikramov retired Yunus Rajabi became the head of our ensemble. I learned all the Uzbek *Maqams* with him during the five years I was working for his Maqam ensemble. In the past only men sang Maqam. I was the first woman who sang Maqam, and I learned it from Imamjon Ikramov who said my voice was appropriate for Maqam-style singing and taught me how to do it. I sang “Bayet 2”, “Bayet 5”, “Talkini Bayet”, “Taronai Bayet”. Then I went to Tajikistan to their Maqam ensemble there and learned “Nasry Bayet”, “Taronai Bayet”, “Talkinnin Baayet”, “Ufori Bayot”, “Ufar oromijon”, “Orazi Navo”, “Sarahbori Oromijon”, “Kashkarchi Savty”, “Usshok”, altogether about ten *Maqams* from Shahnozar Sohibov (People’s Artist of Uzbekistan) and Zirkiev, who was a Maqam singer himself from the Bukharo school. I sang Navoiy, Zebunissa, Uvaysiy poetry in Maqam.

As head of a Shashmaqam ensemble Yunus Rajabi had set Uzbek poetry to the Shashmaqam and published six volumes of Shashmaqam with only Uzbek poetry in it, leaving the Tajik poetry behind. Six *maqams* were transcribed as six wonders! God bless his soul!

If you sing Maqam in the right way you never get tired! In the 1960s, I often went on holiday to Anjijon, I was sometimes singing up to twelve Maqams at once during the same public concert. On one occasion I was taken by helicopter to Jalalabad (a city 100 km away in Tajikistan) where an instant public concert was arranged for me to perform. After the concert,

returning to Andijan, I was told that again another concert was to follow on that very evening as the *Kolhozchilar* (farmers) had asked for another performance. And I was the only singer in those long non-stop concerts!

I have had many students who I taught *Maqam* performance: Nasiba Sattarova (People's artist of Uzbekistan), Maryam Sattarova (People's artist of Uzbekistan) are the most famous among them, then Mahbuaba Sarymsakova, and many others.¹⁷⁶

Another outstanding *Maqam* performer in Uzbekistan was **Kommuna Ismailova**.

During her interview, she told me her story – how she became a singer, and particularly a *Maqam* singer.

'I was born in Khiva city in Khoresm district on the 15 December 1927. I was singing from early childhood. In 1934 Tamara Hanum and Karimzod Kariev came to Khorezm, and all the time I sang songs from their repertoire. Finally my parents took me to Tamara Hanum, saying, 'She likes singing so much!' She blessed me in a way, advising me to carry on, to participate in amateur school groups and performances. At the time when World War 2 began the Soviet army music group came to Urgench under the guidance of Gavhar Rahimova. Once, when I sang for a school performance, artists heard me from outside the window. Artists came to our place and their director asked, 'Who sang a song just now? Can we see that girl, please?' After listening to me they asked if I would like to be taken to Tashkent. Later, in the spring of 1943 I was taken as a 16-year-old to perform in Tashkent for the Uzbek front line group.

'My parents didn't understand I was going to perform for the WW2 front line Ensemble. They thought it was just the Uzbek state ensemble. My Usto at that time was Fahritdin Sadykov. I remember once, for the 1st May celebration, I performed *Yakkahon Ashula*. I sang two songs very well, receiving long applause. But for the third song I had forgotten the lyrics for the *Awj* (culmination). I started introducing the *Awj* ornamentation with...a-a-a-a-a-a---' but the words would not come. I tried again and again but with no success... Finally, after a long, loud 'a-a-a—a' I had no words to sing and I made up the end with the words 'BOREY!' (Get lost!)

I ran from the stage and there the Uzbek People's Artist, the Director of Philharmonic Boborahim Mirzaev, came backstage and pulled my ear. I started to cry but he said, 'You made a new folk song! Do you hear the applause? Now they want you to come to the stage again!'

We sang many folk and classical songs like Karokolpokcha, Azerbaijancha, Gruzincha, Belorassia, Ukrainian, Russian and many others.

On 15 August 1943 we were taken to the Front line, the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian front line in 1944, also the Baltian front line. The most memorable was our performance for the second Belorussian front, when on 23 February 1945 we performed for Sabir Rahimov's (the Uzbek General's) 37th Uzbek division. In July 1946 I came back to Khorezm to be given the honourable title People's Artist of Uzbekistan. After that I performed in the Philharmonic ensemble as a soloist, performing in festivals in every decade.

In 1959 I was invited to Uzbek Radio where I worked for 30 years. I was involved in 468 recordings, performing songs in Uzbek, Russian, Kyrgyz, Tajik and other languages. I sang forty-three songs by Fahritdin Umarov, eleven by Kamiljon Jabbarov, thirteen by Ganijon Toshmatov, seven by Kamiljon Otaniyasov, five by Muhammajon Mirzaev, songs by Sabir Baboev, Nabi Hassanov, Sultan Haiyt, and other composers.'

'I sang Shashmaqam with Berta Davydova and that was great opportunity for us. Look, now there are no such singers as we were at that time! Together with Berta, I sang all six maqams! And we did it!

From 1960 I sang Maqams together with Berta Davydova and with the other most outstanding male singers like Arif Alimaksumov, Karim Mumin, Ortykhoja Imamhojaev, Shokirjon Ergashev, Siroj Aminov. Six of us sang Shashmaqam and also the legendary Jurahon Sultanov from Ferghana and Tolmasov from Samarkand were invited to perform several Awjes (culminations) for our recordings. We learned Maqam ways and performance style from Yunus Rajabi. By 1965 the Shashmaqam recordings were finished. For recordings we used to stay in the studio till midnight and even till 6 o'clock in the morning, before the trams started to run. Then we would go home. We used to 'cook' the part of Shashmaqam for ten to fifteen days and then we would record them. Yunus Rajabiy used to listen to our singing and change the notes for the next session, constantly improving it. When we started Buzruk, he fell ill and then Arif Alimaksumov took over. Professor Rajabi wanted to get stereo recordings but it didn't happen, so we have a mono recording of the whole Shashmaqam, but not in stereo. Our singing was transcribed into notes and put in six volumes books and LP recordings. Yunus Rajabi used to say, 'I will leave this world but my Shashmaqam transcriptions and LP recordings will remain.'

'I have a number of bright and talented students I am very proud of. I teach in the Theatre Institute, in the Pedagogical Musical College. My students were Munojat Tajibaeva, Shahzoda Ismailova, Mavluda Asalhojaeva, Karima Ismailova and other talented girls. I am very proud of them. There are 468

songs in my repertoire from teachers who have now passed away. Now on TV, singers do not say their teachers' names but one needs to remember their names! It's so important! The poet or musician should be named and the Teacher/Usto appreciated. The souls and spirits of our teachers will be happy! We have so many outstanding poets and musicians to be remembered.²¹⁷⁷

Maqam, which used to be performed in long elaborate cycles, is today very often performed as a short extract from the cycle in only one piece of music. However, the significance of its relation to the Sufi dimension is still very high, according to statements by local musicians – that the mystical dimension of Islam can be expressed in musical terms. The subject of such music is remembrance of God. One of the most popular examples of this kind is the song related to the Ferghana Maqam style, called *Munajat* (prayer). This song has become famous, and has been performed by famous female Uzbek and Tajik singers such as Barno Is'hakova, Berta Davydova, or Munajat Yulchieva. Every performance of this song awakens an image of *Zikr* based on a long developed flow of tension in the form of dynamic waves to culmination and back to the foundation. It is a classical song about spiritual assimilation with God and symbolises the Sufi way to perfection.

Female performance of Maqams flourished in the twentieth century. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the art of Maqam became one of the key elements in nation building, both in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Young Maqam singers like Munajat Yulchieva, Maryam Sattarova, Matluba Dadabaeva, Nasiba Sattarova, Khurriyat Israilova, and Zamira Suyunova have largely determined the way that modern Maqam art is developing.

23. MUNOJAT YULCHIEVA

There is not a single fan of Uzbek music abroad who does not know the name of Munajat Yulchieva. In fact, she has outshone the fame of all the Uzbek artists, even those who have ventured abroad. She is unsurpassed in her skill and perfection of vocal technique, and in the beauty of the songs she performs. Nowadays, her name abroad has become a synonym for Uzbek classical music.

Munajat Yulchieva is indeed the brightest star among performers of the classical Uzbek music in recent decades. Even her name, *Munajat*, means 'ascent to God', which represents the true meaning of Sufism. One

of the common traditions of Sufism is the continuity of a spiritual chain or *silsilah*. In those terms, Munojat has inherited her musical knowledge from her spiritual and musical *murshid* (teacher, master) Shavkat Mirzaev, who in his turn inherited this knowledge from his father Muhammajan Mirzaev, to whom the knowledge was passed by the famous musicians Fahriddin Sadykov and Djurahan Sultanov. So the beginning of this chain melts away in the mists of past centuries. Despite Soviet political and cultural pressure on the texts that have been transformed over last century, the music continues in the same traditional way.

Munojat is not just a singer who follows on the traditions taught by Shavkat Mirzaev, she is a great singer, the only one who managed to absorb the essence of Sufi singing style. Born on 26 November 1960, in Andijan village of Sherman Bulak (Ferghana Valley), Munojat studied music at Tashkent State Conservatoire from 1978 to 1985 under the guidance of Shavkat Mirzaev. She studied hard, and was well trained by her famous teacher, concentrating on the proper repertoire of Uzbek classical music. Following her diligence and devotion to Uzbek music, she has never performed at weddings, which is a well-known and well-paid custom for that kind of musician in Uzbekistan. She performs only at concerts and



Photo 6: The Uzbek Sufi singer Munojat Yulchieva

different sorts of festivals. After one of these, a remarkable concert on TV (1978), she became an overnight success (Photo 6).

She worked at Ensemble '*Maqam*' at Uzbek State Radio from 1980 until 1982. Since 1982 she has worked with the Uzbek State Philharmonic Ensemble. She received the awards for 'Honoured Artist of Uzbekistan' (1991), and 'People's Artist of Uzbekistan' (1994) and was decorated with the order 'Respect and Order of the People' (1998).

Munajat took part in many regional and International Festivals and Competitions, gaining first prizes (including, in 1997, the 'Golden Nightingale' at the Samarkand International Festival *Sharq Taronalari*). Since 1989, she has toured many countries, including the United States, and European, Asian, and Latin American countries.

Her repertoire consists of the best examples of Uzbek Maqam music and music of *Bastakors*-composers in traditional Uzbek style. Thanks to her unique voice (mezzo-soprano, extending to 2.5 octaves), owing to Shavkat Mirzaev's training, Munajat not only revived female songs well-known from the history of Uzbek music, but performed for the first time many male songs with really difficult composition and dynamic development. Her repertoire includes Uzbek Sufi music and the poetry of Alisher Navoiy, Fisuli, Mashrab and Huvaido among others.

The most remarkable fact is that Munajat Yulchieva received the same Usto-Shogrid training from her teacher, Professor Shavkat Mirzaev, as other Sufi singers in pre-Soviet times. In spite of the Soviet cultural policy to sideline classical heritage, she was brought up in the traditional way. The basics of that oral tradition was built on long hours of individual sessions and a careful selection of Sufi poetry for her singing repertoire, rather than the popular modern Uzbek poetry that flattered Soviet ideology. This method restored the style of the old singing school.

Professor Mirzaev took a risk in training the traditional singer Munajat during her long association (nearly 30 years) with her Usto. Building such master-apprentice relations during the Soviet times, when conservatory classes were full of students practising in groups, on a five-year course, was both a challenge and an outstanding achievement.

I remember that, as a student, Munajat was a shy young girl who followed every word of her teacher's advice. In 1990, at the Barbat Symposium and congress in Dushanbe, Munajat was staying at the same hotel as me, and I often met her at breakfast. One day, I met her in the corridor and noticed that she needed some help. She was looking for somebody to go to local market. But why, I asked her, pointing out that the market was just

around the corner, two minutes away from the hotel. It turned out her Usto Shavkat Mirzaev had prohibited her from leaving the hotel so as to avoid the crowds of her fans and admirers.

Shavkat Mirzaev, coming from musical family, understood very well the advantages and disadvantages of fame, particularly for a female singer. It is so important for a popular artist not to be exposed to the public, or to become a toy in the hands of communist authorities. As a wise teacher and an outstanding Usto Shavkat Mirzaev tried to protect her from every single danger.

As a result of his devotion, Munojat and Shavkat have become famous all over the world. Together, they have toured many countries in Europe, America and Asia during the last 20 years, conquering the public and winning music lovers' hearts. In Munojat's repertoire today there are songs of Sufi poetry and Maqam pieces. This is the most outstanding achievement in Uzbek music, when most of the Maqam pieces have been forgotten. In fact, Munojat has become a symbol of yesterday's culture, singing classical poetry, using classical idioms and performing the classical music of vanished palaces. The beauty of court music is revealed today when Munojat performs her songs. Her stunning strong voice and wide range tessitura enable her to include even male songs in her repertoire.

When in 1978 Professor Shavkat Mirzaev found a peasant girl from Ferghana Valley crying in the corridor after failing to gain a place in the Uzbek State conservatory, he was attracted by her extremely strong and powerful voice. The timbre of her voice reminded him of the best voices of the Sufi singing tradition. So he decided to help Munojat to become professional singer – but only a Sufi singer. Certainly, Munojat must take the credit for her success as it only came about because of her sincere devotion to that kind of singing. How special was his training style? First of all it affected the voice range. To be able to produce a strong Sufi style sound the voice has to be trained in the way of the old Sufi professionals. What was the Sufi style of singing?

In order that Munojat's voice could be trained in the Sufi style Professor Mirzaev invented new techniques, which included both local voice techniques called *guligi* and *biligi* and the technique from Italian *belcanto* singing style based on chest breathing. His training was, therefore, based on the symbiosis of not only local styles combining throat and cupol/head/nose singing, but also on the best singing style of European opera. To learn the latter, Professor Mirzaev went to Moscow State Conservatory to consult with the best representatives of vocal skills training, returning to

Tashkent with a clear view of how to develop vocal techniques and integrate their basics within the classical Uzbek singing style.

In fact, Shavkat Mirzaev's training system for the voice and breath development was based on Sufi tradition but enriched with the best innovations of contemporary European style. As a result, he has created a completely new technique of singing rooted on the use of the nose, head, and throat but with the creation of deep chest sound.

Being both an instrumentalist (playing Rubab) and a composer, and a musician with a deep knowledge of Sufi poetry and music, Professor Mirzaev established a completely new vocal technique within Uzbek classical music that was adjusted to the female voice.

That is why Munajat's singing is so moving: because she combines the old-fashioned system with the up-to-date methods of European opera and pop music styles. In her voice, one can find all the elaborate nuances of a highly professional singer from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: from a deep low voice at the beginning through whispering sounds for the most intimate declarations to the thrilling voice-blow at high dynamic conclusions. Professor Mirzaev has offered Munajat the whole system of training for a professional singer, which includes not only the voice but also certain body movements (hands and head), posture, alternate use of the chest-nose-throat in singing, and distinctive breathing system.

From numerous interviews with Shavkat Mirzaev I learned that, as a very responsible teacher carefully extending Munajat's repertoire, he introduced songs from the simple to the ever more difficult, developing her voice from the central to the peripheral, most powerful and strong areas of tessitura. Finally, all famous Sufi songs were included in her collection! Freed from the traditional Sufi training (living in the family, cleaning shoes, doing housekeeping duties, and so on), Munajat's dream of becoming a star came true, thanks to her extreme good fortune in meeting Professor Shavkat Mirzaev, her own 'Professor Higgins'.

24. SUFI ORIGIN GENRE *KATTA ASHULA*

Katta ashula (big song) is a vocal genre of Sufi origin, which is quite similar to Spanish *cante hondo*. It could be regarded as remnants of separately performed Maqam, but at the same time it is a distinct genre of Uzbek and Tajik vocal music, which is deeply rooted in Sufi *Zikrs* and *Sama*. *Katta ashula* is usually performed by two or more unaccompanied singers. Other elements of it are: a) reciting parts, b) improvisation, and c) exclamations in the high pitches – all of which are similar to the structure

of the Sufi *Zikr*. The Russian scholar Alexander Semyonov studied that genre of Uzbek music in the mid-1930s, when he was invited to collaborate with the Scientific Institute of Arts Researches. He mentioned two other genres of Sufi music of the ninth to twelfth centuries like *Sama'i* and *Khanaqa'i* (*Khanaqa* is a place of Sufi gatherings) as the origin of *Katta ashula*.¹⁷⁸

Another name for *Katta ashula* is *Yovvoyi Maqom* or *Wild Maqam*. Therefore, the main structure of Maqam's vocal parts or *Shu'be*, which corresponds to the Sufi Way *Tariqat*, is followed here too: an introductory section, *Daramad* (entrance), set in a low tessitura leads to a section called *Miyankhona* (mid-room), typically set at the interval of a fifth above the introduction. *Miyankhona* leads to *Dunasr* (double victory), set an octave above the Daramad. *Auj* (zenith), the culmination follows *Dunasr*, after which the piece gradually descends to the original tessitura in a concluding section called *Furaward* (exit).¹⁷⁹

According to Orifhon Hatamov, one of the greatest performers of *Katta ashula* in Uzbekistan, the Ferghana-Tashkent school of singing is distinguishable in two ways: a) *Maqam* ways of singing, and b) *Zikr Maqams*. In the *Yassaviya* Sufi order *Zikr* is performed in a loud (*Jahriya*) way in which music, and particularly *Katta ashula*, played an important role. In that order *Zikr* has the same structure as *Katta ashula* and follows three stages: a) *Hal* or entering the relevant state; b) *Vajd* or giving up yourself and obtaining a state of ecstasy; c) *Mukashafot* or discovering Allah and finding union with Him.

The high-pitched exclamations correspond with the part of the *Zikr* when the gathering starts to exclaim short names of God: *Haqq, Hu, Huw-wa* (True, He, and Himself). From the musical perspective, this part is based on *Chorzarb* (four beats) *usul*. The rhythm could be changed to *Yakzarb* (one beat), *Duzarb* (two beats), *Sezarb* (three beats), or *Chorzarb* (four beats), depending how many times the names of Allah are repeated.¹⁸⁰

Here is one of the most famous examples of *Katta ashula*, performed by Munojat Yulchieva, a leading Sufi singer of Uzbekistan.

*Ey dilbari jononim, hay sen tarki javob etma,
Yuz jabru jafu birla bolimni barob etma.
Mastona ko'zingdan dod, qoshing qilichin tortib,
Qo'lingga hino bog'lab bag'rimni kabob etma.*

Hey, my Beauty, don't leave me without your answer,
Don't ruin me with hundreds of tortures and suffering.

I cry because of your intoxicating eyes, don't use the sabre of your eyebrows
And don't cut my body into blood, painting your hands with henna.

Munojat said about this song: 'When I sing it, I use what I call a Sufi voice. It's like a prayer. Singing quietly can be much more powerful than singing loudly. When you are praying, you do not bother with other things. When I sing in this way, I concentrate on my inner state. I experience a kind of ecstasy and the music helps me in this. When I sing, I think of God.'¹⁸¹

As a matter of curiosity one must mention that during the Soviet time the same *Katta ashula* was sung with completely different words:

The working people made the desert of Farkhad to blossom.
Steppes are now turned into gardens; crows are not flying above them.
The enemy can't bear it, he cries, his body covered with ulcers,
Enjoy your labour, tireless friends and comrades!

Interaction of Shamanism and Sufism in Central Asian Female Performance

25. FROM HEALING RITUALS TO PROTECTIVE SONGS

Shamanic practices extend, today, all over Central Asia. From my experience of witnessing Shamanic practices in Uzbekistan I remember that they offer different forms of healing.

On one visit to Eski Noukat village (Osh district, Kyrgyzstan) in 2002, I saw two women whispering and talking rapidly, using sayings and tongue twisters, pretending they spoke in other people's voices, bending over a girl who had fallen ill. The two Azaimhans (Shamans) continued in this way until the girl started vomiting and fell asleep. They said the girl had fallen ill because ghosts disturbed her as she went to see ruins of a centuries-old house. They said that they had exorcised the bad spirits and now the girl would recover.

On another occasion, in Boisun village, an old lady cured her granddaughter by chopping off a hen's head. She then soaked her fingers in the hen's fresh blood and spread it inside her granddaughter's throat. 'It's the best treatment against sore throat', she said. In Boisun village the most famous Shaman/*Baqshi* was a man called Turi Shaman. He practised in a smoky room (the central room in his house) heating a knife over the fire preparing for the culmination of his healing ritual. Shaking his head, vibrating his lips, emitting louder and more forceful eerie sounds, he twirled the knife around the head of his patient who was sitting on the floor. The visibility was obscured by the increasing smoke when finally his patient started to move and, crawling slowly, left the room.

Later, Turi Shaman would continue his performance of healing rituals, joining a Boisun group programme and becoming a kind of 'stage performer' showing off his Shamanic skills to an amazed audience.

But the most interesting healing rituals in Central Asia of the twenty-first century are certainly those that contain musical elements. Mostly performed by women, they reflect numerous features of religions from Shamanism to Islam. Various examples of female music-making forms are examined below.

26. FEMALE SHAMANISM IN TURKMENISTAN

Shamanism has always been part of Turkmen culture. The Shamanic idea of the upper, the middle, and the lower worlds (i.e. the main concept of Shamanism) is present in Turkmen arts, primarily in the decorations of rugs, carpets, and kilims. Two main elements of Tengrianism – earth and sky – are depicted by skilful Turkmen female weavers in ornaments that symbolise the Turkmen view of life, as well as their philosophy.

A linguistic approach, according to Dr. Yusuf Azemoun, shows that the archaic word for the carpet in old Turkmen and Turkic languages is *kowuz* or *kowur* (this word has become *kovyor* in Russian), derived from the word *kopuz*. *Kopuz* is the oldest Turkic musical instrument.¹⁸² In the remote past, the *kopuz* was a long-necked bowed lute, which was widely used in Shamanic practice. It is believed that the sound of *kopuz* helps to attract good spirits and to repulse demons.

The principal design of Turkmen rugs and carpets, which has been used for centuries, is called *göl*. Literally, this means a lake, symbolising the cult of water, over which birds are flying. But it is also believed that it was originally a reflection of sky on earth, or stars on water on the earth beneath.

In Turkmen carpets the world is divided into three: the Upper World (heaven), the Middle World (our world), and the Lower World. Soren Neergard argues that the *göl* design on Turkmen carpets might represent the Turkmen image of heaven.¹⁸³ In the old Turkic language, a star (in heaven) has always been used as an important ornamental element of the world. A line in *Kutadgu Bilik*, a Turkic book of poetry written in the twelfth century, says: '*Bu kökteki yulduz bir ança bezek*' (the stars in heaven are such beautiful ornaments).¹⁸⁴

The springs are perceived as the eyes of Mother Earth where, in connection with the cult of water, people make sacrifices.¹⁸⁵ As we notice here, the Shamanistic *yir/sub* or the cult of water and earth play an important role in the art of carpet-making.

Among the people of Central Asia and the Altay mountains, the ram has long been regarded as sacred. Archaeological studies in Central Asia and the Altay mountains have confirmed this fact. In Shamanic traditions the ram is a divine animal, which protects the heavenly spirits from evil spirits. For this reason it is sacrificed. The influence of Shamanism continued among the people of Central Asia, namely the Turkmens, even after they became Muslims. The ram's horn, which is a Shamanic element in Turkmen art, was, and still is, a popular design used both in carpets and felts. It is even used in the decoration of mosques. We also find Orkhun Runic letters as carpet patterns, each with a Shamanistic and mystic connotation. The letter *r*, in particular – beside being a beautiful design, represents the flow of water which symbolises the flow of life.

In twelfth-century Central Asia, as Sufism began to develop, based on the poetry and teaching of Khodja Ahmad Yassavi, his followers established the Yassaviya brotherhood. When the area was invaded by Mongols, those Sufi followers fled to Anatolia, where started the new Sufi order, the Mawlawiyya. The poems of Yassavi, widely used in *zikr*, contain many Shamanistic motifs and elements. *Zikr*, among the Turkmens, is a recital of Sufi poetry with dance rituals, performed by men as well by women, until they reach a state of ecstasy. The Turkmens were prohibited from carrying out the *Zikr* by the Soviet Union. However, it was carried out to treat sick or depressed people, or to exorcise an evil spirit from their souls and bodies.

Curiously, while Sufism was prohibited in the former Soviet Union for being religious, it was prohibited by the Turkmen mullahs in northern Iran for being anti-Islamic.

While singing and dancing, Shamans and the crowd very often produce guttural sounds which correspond to *Hu*, meaning 'God' among the Sufis, with an Islamic connotation. However, it is believed that the ritual and the repetition of a guttural sound similar to the Sufi *Hu* is related to the legend of a spiritual leader who, while preaching vegetarianism, was caught eating meat. As a punishment, he was wrapped in tree bark and cut with a saw. Therefore, the guttural sound in the Sufi ritual is said to be the sound of the saw cutting the bark, which, in time, has turned into the sound of *Hu* – the repetition of the name of God. The guttural sound is present in Turkmen music even today, bringing a mystical property to the song. It is interesting that it is used in both male and female performance.

The four elements of earth, air, fire, and water play an important part in Sufi mysticism. Makhtumkuli, a Turkmen classical poet of the eighteenth century, says in his poem entitled 'The Pains of Love':

*Ishq o'tina tushdim, parvona bo'ldum emdi,
Shavqing ko'zina kuydim, biryona bo'ldim emdi,
Jismim kaboba do'ndi, giryona bo'ldim emdi,
Ganch isteyinlar gelsin, vayrona bo'ldim emdi,
Ayri bo'ldim ag'yorlardin, begona bo'ldim emdi.*

Love caught fire within my heart, and burned and blazed.
Smoke whirling in the wind whipped me like something crazed.
Fate caught me, spinning me upon its Wheel.
Who came to see me through the eyes of real desire?
Separation was a storm and – both flood and fire.¹⁸⁶

In Sufi doctrine the meaning of separation is very important. A Sufi needs separation to reach spiritual perfection. Separation makes a man burn and turn to ash; in other words, it helps a man to be 'annihilated' in God. In the same poem Makhtumkuli says:

*Mahdumquli, har zamon naylayin o'lmay giryon,
Fakrliyna botdim, chiqa bilmasman bir yon,
Ko'r, mehrobtin tarab, ko'nglimning uyi vayron,
Jon jismdek aqldin ayrilib qoldim hayron,
ish geldi bosha dusbdi, vayrona bo'ldim emdi.*

O hopeful slave to the beloved's charm, whereby
I lost my heart! A songbird of sweet tongues was I –
Encaged! But separation scorched my soul.
Then yearning burned me up, to ash was turned my mind.
And Makhtumkuli's life was tossed upon the wind.¹⁸⁷

In Turkmen classical poetry as well as folk literature, the words 'pain' and 'burning' proliferate, because some Sufis summarise the stages of their lives in three phrases – being raw, becoming mature (by the fire of tribulations) and being burnt (and turning to ashes).

In Turkic-speaking world culture, before Islam came to Central Asia, women were highly respected. They were called *khan emme* or *beg emme* literally meaning 'the mother lord' which, with time, turned into the words *khanum* and *begum* that in modern Turkish mean 'my Lady'.¹⁸⁸

Turkmens had lived in a matriarchal society before they became Muslims, where women sang and even played musical instruments. One can find Shamanistic elements in Turkmen folk songs, which usually are pre-Islamic songs. Women improvise the lyrics for the eulogies in which praise the deceased and define his or her virtues. In the villages and in the countryside, young girls in groups under the moonlight sing 'Laleh' in the form of quatrains to express their feelings towards their beloved or to complain about social obstacles which obstruct their meeting with their loved ones.

No wonder that in matriarchal society there were female musicians and even female *Baqshi*. One of them – Heley-Baqshi from the tribe of Yomuts or Chaudyrs which originated from Khiva – was Turkmen Baqshi, the winner of many male musical competitions.

Her brothers shunned her because of her habit of constantly singing, which they deemed inappropriate. To find an accompanist for her songs she followed the Amu Darya upstream to the Kerkenskyi district, where she found a man, the *Dutar* player, who later became her husband. Her name became well known and many famous Baqshi sought the chance to meet her in competition. When she was in final months of her pregnancy the legendary Kyer-Kodjali wanted to compete with her. The competition began in the evening and audience was divided, one side supporting Heley-Baqshi and the other Kyer-Kodjali. 'Let's see if the mare will win in the horse-race!' said Kyer-Kodjali, and Heley-Baqshi answered, 'Let's see!'

Around midnight Heley-Baqshi felt that she was going into labour. She asked her husband whether he would like her to win or to give birth. 'Win!' was his answer. She went out, gave birth to her baby, and returning, continued playing until she won the competition. Kyer-Kodjali admitted his failure and fled from that place forever.¹⁸⁹

Today, in Turkmenistan, a broad range of folk songs are performed, which are related to family, and daily life. If we look at their titles we find a connection with Shamanic or Sufi nature.

For example, the popular Syut-Gazan – a song calling for rain; Like many other Central Asian people, Turkmens still practise Islam together with pre-Islamic religious beliefs. The call for rain, for instance, is addressed to Syut-Gazan, protector of animals, who was able to bring rain using magic rain stones *Yada*. That genre reflects both the ancient agricultural, Shamanic cults of Turks-Oghuz and Islamic influences. Nowadays children sing this song as a game.¹⁹⁰

Other songs known in the area include Yaremezan – festive songs, and Monjukatdy – fortune-telling songs.

Zikr (*Zyakir*, *Zykyr* in Turkmen) are commonplace at Turkmen weddings. Originating from Sufi tradition, mixed up with Shamanic derivation in a form of *Jahr* (or *Jabriya* – a loud form of Sufi *Zikr*) which has developed in two directions: as a healing ritual, and as an entertaining genre for wedding and house-warming ceremonies. Together with wedding songs, with the exclamations *Alla*, *Huw-hu*, ‘Eh-ha’, it is based on dancing forms.

Zikr for weddings plays an important role as a form of protection for the new family. Its form is based on alternating parts contrasting in rhythm and content: the impulsive *Divana* and *Bir-depim* change to quiet *Sedratom*, the fast *Uch-depim* contrasts with the peaceful *Oturma-Ghazal*, while the final *Zem-Zemom* concludes on the highest range of emotions. The link between the forms of *Zikr* is based on construction, architectonics, rhythm, and common melodic patterns.¹⁹¹ Some songs reveal the influence of Sufi *Zikr*, and include repetitive body movements like, for example, *Ayak-lale* (jumping on one leg combined with intense body movement).

The female group of songs is quiet wide-ranging, including wedding songs such as *Yar-Yar*, the lullaby *Hundi*, and other songs-laments (*Agy*). Other groups of female songs consist of game songs: *Lale* – girls’ songs; and the same genre in the form of a game; *Daman-lale* (accompanied by clapping on the throat producing harsh and grating sounds made in the throat or towards the back of the mouth); *Dodek-lale* (in which the lower lip is nipped with the fingers); *Egin-lale* or *hymmyl-lale* (tong-twisters or brain-teasers songs).

27. GALEKE: THE KAZAKH SHAMAN

It is well known that music has the power to affect our mood and our health. We listen to music to raise our spirits or, on sad occasions, to give relief from deep sorrow or grief. Music can be used specifically for its healing effects, as in the case of Galeke, an exceptional personality who is famous in Kazakhstan for her unique ability to heal people using song. I had a chance to witness her performance. When her divine, tender, and pure voice starts flowing over the audience, people forget all their troubles. Her voice brings such a memorable joy that people ask her to sing again and again.

The image of Galeke is a very special one.

At the age of five, Galeke acquired the power of prophetic prediction. She has never received any training in the healing rituals, acting only through intuition. She sings and her voice – unpolished, and untrained – purifies your soul like a stream of water. She senses immediately what problems are affecting your body from the first time she sees you, and during her singing sessions helps people to balance their health. The basis of her repertoire comprises such genres of Kazakh traditional musical culture as *kara olen*. But she also sings Tatar, Russian, and Kyrgyz folk songs with or without accompaniment. ‘Galiya’s birth was preceded by amazing and memorable events. The wolf is a common ancient totem of the Kazakhs and, more widely, of the Turks. The she-wolf, who legendarily reared the Turkic Prince Ashin, is the heroine of many ancient Turkic myths. Well, a large pack of dark blue wolves had overwhelmed the small settlement in the north of Kazakhstan at the time when Galiya Kasymova was born. For days people could not venture out for fear of the wolf pack. The nurse who had to help deliver the child was strong and determined. She took an axe for self-defence and went to Galeke’s parents’ house ignoring the danger of wolves around the village.’ No doubt that was the moment to mark the arrival of, in Basilov’s term, ‘the chosen one of the spirits’.

The sound of music in Galeke’s performance impacts on the listeners in a manner similar to a Baqshi’s healing seance. Through the sound of her voice, especially notable for its high vibrations, pure energy enters the mind to purify and cure those who hear it.¹⁹²

In daily life, Galeke is an outstanding personality who combines two different images; she is a Shaman, and at the same time, she is a scholar who tries to understand her own power in her reflections and observations. According to Galeke,

Sound is a channel of energy. The effect on your body depends on what the song sounds like. Music reflects the harmony of universe, bringing a stream of information which affects our mind and body. Humans live without identifying the stream of time, like floating in water. When we are listening to music our mind is resting though our body does not rest at all: the heart still pulsing, the breath is inhaled and exhaled, the blood is moving in our vessels etc. so, music is curing our body. I feel immediately the physical problems of every human around. When I perform a healing ritual, when people are sitting around in the hall and listening to my singing for two or three hours, they feel better after just one performance.

'All folk songs have extreme magic power. Not pop or jazz music but old folk songs. It doesn't matter what language they are sung in or what ethnicity they represent: Kazakh, Tatar, Kyrgyz, Russian. These folk songs are energetically active and are supposed to have healing effects on ill people. The same happens with traditional instruments. Music played on those instruments possesses healing power. Abu Ali ibn Sina recommended listening to the music of traditional instruments to take preventative measures to protect your body. I know from my experience that traditional instruments can heal even drug addicts. Classical music is also available for healing. It could be Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov. Some carefully-chosen pieces of music from other composers' music have a special effect as a means of healing.'

'Prayers, casting spells and chanting are also effective means for the healing process. Not only should my medicine/melody therapy work here but also it requires a personal involvement. The ill person should read prayers himself to clean the body.'

'Not only Sound but also Water is a substance with strong healing power. A molecule of water has the power to heal as was proved by scholars in 1995. Seventy per cent of the human body consists of water. No wonder that water also has a powerful impact on the human body due to mechanical vibrations which form a bio-magnetic field. Music can change the code of water, as water remembers the information and can acquire sacred or healing features. No wonder that there is sacred water, Holy water. If prayers and sayings are said to the water, imbuing it with the spells' effect, it can be used afterwards for the healing process.'

'I never had teachers for my healing ability. I have healed intuitively from the very beginning using non-contact therapy. In my childhood I could call for rain. I don't know how it happened, how it occurred to me, the knowledge or the way how to do it. I can foresee people's destinies. They come to me as a picture of colours or a code of digits.'

(from my original interviews: February 2006, July 2007, July 2008)

28. FEMALE SHAMANISM IN TAJIKISTAN

Hojent is a city in the Ferghana Valley where the Uzbek and Tajik populations are mixed together. In the Soviet past, Hojent, which used to be called Leninabad, was the most Russianised, industrialised, and densely populated city, counting the regional Communist elite among its 175,000 inhabitants. At the same time, common Tajik-Uzbek traditions maintained close links between these ethnicities for centuries. Many rituals are carried out here in both the Tajik and Uzbek languages. In 1997, when I visited

Hojent, the city was in deep economic crisis with crowds of jobless people all over the places. Depression was in the air.

In such an atmosphere, I recorded a healing ritual which involved a huge crowd of people. People gathered in the Central Square around a small house (the former Club of Culture), forming a long queue. Waiting patiently in line to experience the cures of well-known Sitorabanu-Otin, were people who had travelled long distances from different parts of Tajikistan. She turned out to be a magician who helped everyone absolutely free of charge. People said she was able to cure not only different kind of illnesses and disease but even some neglected conditions such as alcoholism or the behaviour of bad-tempered husbands.

The story of her healing power was moving. Six years ago, one day both of her children disappeared. She desperately looked for them everywhere and then, people said, she had a dream where the Hazrat Ali advised her to start helping people, to heal them for twelve years and then her children would safely return. When I met her she looked depressed, but was performing her duty with a devotion to the process of healing that was astonishing. She spent long hours trying to cure people, gaining enormous respect. People consider that Sitorabanu-Otin is an angel who has come to the troubled city to rescue them.

Those who joined her sessions were asked to attend ten sessions of twenty minutes each. Every person had to be covered by white headscarf. Nearly everyone had a jar of water front of them. Usually a session started with a prayer followed by a collective prayer, her speech (very much of religious content) and a long musical meditation during which people sat on the floor, sinking into a deep trance, after which the session was over. People said that her cure came from her image, her appearance and her way of praying over their heads. Her style of healing was simple: prayers were recited in her very genuine beautiful voice with dynamically wavy structure, tapes were played in musical sessions, during which she continued slowly walking around. She was just strolling between seated patients, touching each head during the session and making gentle gestures with her arms. Not only the patients themselves but even those people who could not make a journey to see the Sitorabanu-Otin but whose photographs were displayed, got restored to health.

Other wonders surrounded the Otin's presence in the city include the following. A girl who sat next to me later on that evening at the local wedding told me that after attending Sitorabanu-Otin's session returning home she found a couple of pearls in her tea cup! Many people told me

that they were saved by this inexplicable experience. A teenage boy who was previously unable to walk, but later was miraculously cured by her, was assisting his mentor.

All kinds of music were used for these sessions, including local pop music, and local stars' hits with a traditional flavour. But all the music was heard in the background. *Otin-Oy* herself said that she had a well-known spiritual teacher in Kokand (a neighbouring city in the Ferghana Valley) from whom she acquired her spiritual power. Her teacher also practised with prayers, and by reciting classical poetry by Navoiy, Fuzuli, Nodira, Uvaysiy, and other Uzbek Sufi poets.

29. ELEMENTS OF SHAMANISM AND SUFISM IN UZBEK FOLK MUSIC

Our journey of examination continues with Uzbek music. Although we have numerous examples of the relationship between religion and music in Uzbek culture, we focus here on the most common form: music of celebration, and in particular, a wedding song performed by local women (Photo 7). This song is heard at every single wedding throughout the nation. How have pre-Islamic beliefs and practices developed in folk music? Have they mixed with Islamic features? To answer these questions, to get an idea of religious symbiosis, let us analyse just one example: the Uzbek wedding song *Yor-Yor* (beloved, beloved).

*Hoy-hoy o'lan, jon o'lano, o'lanchi qiz,
Yor-yorey o'lanchi qiz,
Vâldasida turmagan—o, yolg'onchi qiz,
Yor-yorey, yolg'onchi qiz.
Tog'da toycha kishnaydiyo ot bo'ldim deb
Yor-yorey bo'ldim deb.
Uyda kelin yig'laydiyo yot bo'ldim deb,
Yor-yorey yot bo'ldim deb.
Yig'lama qiz, yig'lama yo, toy saniki,
Yor-yorey, toy saniki
Ostonasi tillodano uy saniki,
Yor-yorey uy saniki.
Osmondagi yulduzniyo sakkiz denglar
Yor-yorey sakkiz denglar,
Sakkiz qizning sardoriyo keldi denglar
Yor-yorey, keldi denglar.*



Photo 7: Uzbek wedding *Toy*

*Sakkiz qizning sardoriyo biz bo'lamiz,
Yor-yorey biz bo'lamiz,
Sakkiz bog'da ochilgano gul bo'lamiz,
Yor-yorey gul bo'lamiz.
Hovlimizning o'rtasida bir tup anjir,
Yor-yorey bir tup anjir,
Bir tup anjir tagidayo tillo sandiq,
Yor-yorey tillo sandiq.
Tillo sandiq simlariyo uzilmasin,
Yor-yorey uzilmasin.
Kelin-kuyov taqdiriyo buzilmasin,
Yor-yorey buzilmasin.*

Hello riding woman, horse woman,
You didn't keep your promises you deceiver-woman.

A foal is in the meadow and thinks he is already a horse
At home the new bride is crying saying she is a stranger here.

Don't cry girl, don't cry girl, it's your wedding
The golden threshold of the house is yours.

In the sky there are stars, they say you are the eight stars
The eight star girls have come.

We will be the head of the eight girls
As sight in the garden we will be like open flowers.

In the middle of the garden there is a fig tree
Under the tree there is a golden chest.

Let the hinges of the chest not be broken
Let the bond of the bride and the groom not be broken.

At first glance we find no obvious religious references, in the song's lyrics, either to Islam or Sufism. This song, which has been handed down from ancient times, is sung all over Uzbekistan. The tune and rhythm are simple, easy to remember and to repeat, and is said to have protective meaning. No wonder every family encourages performers to sing and play it again and again! However, in analysing the song's poetry in the more detailed way one can find that the meaningful symbols of local religions and beliefs are present here in the most dynamic way. What first draws our attention is a record of hidden symbols in lyrics of the song. Why are the words and phrases, 'threshold', 'house', 'eight flowers', 'eight stars' so widely used here? What is their origin? What do they mean?

To answer those questions we should turn our attention to another phenomenon of Uzbek traditional culture, to the local decorative art and particularly to its special example – Suzane.

These large decorative wall-hanging silk embroideries – Suzanis – originated in the nineteenth century and were made exclusively by women. These embroideries were popular only in the Central Asian region, where different Suzane designs developed in different areas. By the mid-nineteenth century the art of Suzane was formed as a standard system of patterns and developed its traditional styles. The composition, colour, and ornamentation based on floral motives and vegetative-style images were the supreme manifestation of the harmony of universe. The semantics of their appearance testify to a long evolution of this art.

The tradition is characterized by picturesque and complex coloured patterns, placed against a background. Each Suzane was designed by a professional craftswoman, known as a *Kalamkash*. These skills were passed down from mother to daughter, or between other female members of the family. The genesis of Suzane embroidery was closely connected to family life. Though these were primarily designed as domestic articles, the ornamentation was intended to give protection from the evil eye. The language of ornamentation was a language of metaphor whose usage and

interpretation were determined by tradition. Behind every conventional sign there was a meaning. It employed a space-related symbolism where each element of ornament goes back to astral motives, whose source was probably in religious belief. Embroideries played the part of protective objects, but in the patterns the women saw a way to express certain ideas and content connected with real life.

Some decorative motives of the Suzane, expressed in ornamental details and floral roundels symbolise a house and a threshold, pointing to the hidden meaning of a protected space where no evil eye could reach and affect you. According to Ashirov, 'a door as a threshold possesses a deep symbolic meaning, bringing the image of the frontier between good and evil, light and dark, new and old, associated with sunrise and sunset. As archaeologists found out in the seventh–eighth centuries in Afrosiabe and Pandjikent areas, sacred rituals occurred on the thresholds of Sogdian shrines' (Ashirov, p. 30).

However, one of the most popular motifs in Uzbek Suzane is certainly the floral roundel in the shape of an eight-cornered star, emerging very often as an eight-petalled flower.

Originating in the Shamanic past, the symbol of the eight-cornered star symbolises the cosmos, the power of universe. Eight items is so significant for that culture that you can often meet the symbol in old folk songs like the one above. However, here in the Suzane those Shamanic symbols are combined with later Islamic decorations: the eight-cornered star, the astral Shamanic symbol, sign of the universe has become the symbol of Sufism.¹⁹³

Today, in the most popular songs like the Uzbek wedding folk song *Yor-Yor* one can find a close connection between Shamanism and Sufism which is expressed in different signs and symbols of decoration and in ornamental arts.