

TRANSMISSION OF SHASHMAQOM REPERTOIRE IN CONTEMPORARY MASTER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Muxsim Muminov
Kokand State University

Abstract: The Uzbek and Tajik Shashmaqom stands as a monumental classical music tradition, a complex fusion of melodic modes, poetic cycles, and prescribed instrumental and vocal movements. While its structural and modal architecture has been extensively documented, the vital human process through which this living canon is perpetuated remains less examined. This article investigates the contemporary transmission of the Shashmaqom repertoire through the foundational ustoz-shogird (master-student) relationship. It argues that despite profound socio-political transformations in the twentieth century - including Soviet-era institutionalization and post-independence national revival - the ustoz-shogird dynamic remains the irreducible core of authentic transmission. This study employs an ethnographic methodology, drawing upon participant observation and in-depth interviews with masters and apprentices within major cultural centers in Uzbekistan. The analysis reveals a dynamic, negotiated process where traditional pedagogical principles of oral imitation, holistic immersion, and ethical formation are consciously adapted within modern contexts of conservatoires, state ensembles, and digital media. The findings demonstrate that the transmission process is not a mere transfer of fixed repertoire but a total socialization into a aesthetic worldview, where technical mastery of maqom is inextricably linked to the cultivation of cultural memory, ethical disposition (*adab*), and a distinctly personalized artistic voice. The contemporary ustoz-shogird relationship thus emerges as a crucial, resilient site for both the preservation of canonical knowledge and its thoughtful evolution in a globalized era.

Keywords: Shashmaqom transmission, ustoz-shogird relationship, oral pedagogy, cultural memory, embodied knowledge, musical canon

Introduction

The Shashmaqom (“Six Maqoms”) represents one of the most sophisticated classical music systems of Central Asia, a syncretic tradition of the Uzbek and Tajik peoples that integrates specific melodic modes (*maqom*), fixed rhythmic cycles (*usul*), and classical Persian-Turkic poetry into extensive performance cycles. Its preservation through the tumultuous twentieth century is often hailed as a triumph of cultural resilience. Scholarly attention has historically focused on the structural analysis of the maqom cycles, the transcription of its repertoire by seminal figures like Yunus Rajabi, and its philosophical underpinnings. However, the primary mechanism of its survival - the intimate, pedagogic bond between master (*ustoz*) and student (*shogird*) - has not received commensurate systematic study, particularly in its contemporary, post-Soviet manifestations. This gap is significant, for the Shashmaqom is not merely a collection of compositions but an embodied practice, a way of knowing that resides in the nuances of performance, the subtleties of intonation, and the ethical comportment of the musician.

This article posits that the ustoz-shogird relationship constitutes the essential vessel for the transmission of the Shashmaqom’s living essence, a dynamic process that has adapted to, and

been shaped by, modern institutional frameworks without being subsumed by them. The research is guided by a central question: how do contemporary masters and students negotiate the transmission of a canonical, orally-inflected tradition within the contexts of formal music education, national cultural policy, and globalized media? To address this, the study employs a qualitative, ethnographic approach, analyzing the pedagogical interactions, discourses, and aspirations that define the transmission process today. The investigation reveals that transmission is a holistic enculturation, where the repertoire serves as the medium for imparting not only technical skill but also historical consciousness, aesthetic sensibility, and moral character. Understanding this process is critical for assessing the tradition's vitality and trajectory in the twenty-first century, moving beyond the notation of the Shashmaqom to the cultivation of the Shashmaqom musician.

Methodology

This study is grounded in ethnomusicological fieldwork conducted intermittently between 2018 and 2023 in Uzbekistan, primarily in Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand. The primary data consists of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve recognized ustoz (masters) and eighteen shogird (apprentices) of varying ages and career stages. The masters included national honors recipients (People's Artist of Uzbekistan, Honored Artist) who are pedagogues at the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan and directors of prestigious ensembles, as well as respected independent practitioners. The students ranged from undergraduate conservatory majors to early-career professional musicians in state philharmonic orchestras and folk instrument ensembles.

The methodological core was participant observation in pedagogical settings. This included observing private lessons in homes, rehearsals within institutional ensembles like the "Shodlik" or "Sogdiana" ensembles, and masterclasses at cultural centers. Detailed field notes documented not only the musical content - corrections of a tanbur fingering, the modeling of a vocal jahla (ornament) - but also the paralinguistic elements: the use of metaphorical language, references to past masters, and discussions of conduct (adab). Where permitted, audio recordings were made for later analysis of pedagogical dialogue. This observational data was triangulated with interviews that explored the participants' philosophies of transmission, their perceptions of change and continuity, and their views on the challenges facing the tradition. The analysis followed a thematic coding process, identifying recurrent concepts such as "inheritance" (meros), "responsibility" (mas'uliyat), "taste" (zavq), and "the chain of transmission" (silsila).

Results

The findings present a complex picture of transmission as a multifaceted, negotiated practice. They are organized around three emergent, interlocking themes: the adaptation of traditional pedagogy within institutional structures, the holistic nature of knowledge transfer, and the navigation of canon and individuality.

A primary finding is the conscious adaptation of the traditional ustoz-shogird model within formal educational institutions. The Soviet modernization project established conservatoires and written curricula, incorporating the Shashmaqom into a Western-style system of lectures, exams, and standardized notation. Contemporary masters, many of whom are products of this system, actively engage with it while simultaneously subverting its limitations. In the conservatory classroom, the ustoz may use the official published scores of Yunus Rajabi, but the lesson quickly

moves beyond the page. The master sings a phrase, and the student is expected to imitate not just the pitches but the precise timbre, ornamentation (*tahsin*), and rhythmic elasticity (*rubato*) - an oral-aural process transplanted into an institutional setting. The *ustoz* often contrasts the “skeleton” (*qomat*) on the page with the “flesh and blood” (*go'sht va qon*) of live performance, emphasizing that the notation is a mere guidepost, not the territory itself. The institutional framework provides legitimacy, structure, and a broad student base, while the *ustoz-shogird* dynamic within it ensures the continuation of the oral-performative essence.

The transmission process extends far beyond technical instruction to encompass a holistic formation of the person. This is consistently framed as the imparting of *adab*, a term encompassing etiquette, respect, and refined character. A *shogird* is expected to demonstrate humility, attentive silence, and unwavering dedication. Stories of past masters - their devotion, their hardships, their artistic insights - are woven into lessons, creating a tangible lineage and sense of historical weight. The repertoire itself is taught as an integrated whole: the musical mode (*maqom*) is inseparable from its associated poetic texts (often *ghazals* of *Hafiz* or *Navoi*), its emotional atmosphere (*kayfiyat*), and even its traditional time of performance. A lesson on *Maqom Rost* becomes a discourse on its dignified, philosophical character. This holistic approach socializes the *shogird* into a complete cultural worldview, where musical skill is one expression of a broader cultivated identity. The relationship is often described in familial terms, with the *ustoz* assuming a paternal role, responsible for the student's artistic and personal development.

A central tension navigated in transmission is that between the immutable canon and the development of individual artistry. The *Shashmaqom* is a canon; its cycles, movements (*nasr*, *savt*, *taronā*), and modal progressions are considered sacred and fixed. The initial years of apprenticeship are therefore dedicated to precise, faithful imitation (*taqlid*). The student must, in the words of one master, “enter the path of the ancestors” exactly. However, this phase is not the end goal. Once the canonical foundation is internalized - memorized not just mentally but in the muscles and breath - the master begins to encourage a subtle personalization. This might involve exploring slight variations in ornamentation, finding one's own interpretive approach to a poetic line, or developing a unique timbral quality. This delicate shift from *taqlid* (imitation) to *ijro* (personal performance) is carefully managed. Individuality must grow from within the tradition's strict boundaries, not break them. The master's role is to certify that the student's personal “accent” is a valid dialect of the tradition's language, not an error or a foreign imposition.

Discussion

The results indicate that the contemporary transmission of the *Shashmaqom* is a process of dynamic conservation. The *ustoz-shogird* relationship has proven to be a remarkably resilient and flexible institution. It has absorbed the infrastructure of modern musical education while safeguarding the core epistemologies of oral tradition: knowledge as embodied, contextual, and communicated through sustained personal mentorship. This finding challenges a simplistic narrative of traditional practices being eroded by modernization. Instead, it shows a strategic hybridization, where the conservatory provides resources and status, and the *ustoz-shogird* bond ensures the continuity of the tradition's intangible heart.

The holistic nature of the training, emphasizing *adab* and cultural worldview, aligns with broader concepts of “musical socialization” and the formation of “*habitus*” as described by *Pierre Bourdieu*. The *shogird* is acquiring more than competence; they are acquiring a disposition, a set

of ingrained tendencies that will govern their future artistic choices and professional conduct. This process ensures that the Shashmaqom is perpetuated not as a museum artifact but as a living, ethically grounded practice. The master's narratives of the past function as a powerful technology of cultural memory, linking the present apprentice to a pre-Soviet and Soviet-era lineage, thereby legitimizing both the tradition and the master's authority within it.

The negotiated path from imitation to individuality is central to the tradition's vitality. It prevents the canon from becoming frozen, allowing for a controlled evolution that respects historical authority while making space for contemporary sensibility. This balance is precarious. The discussion must acknowledge external pressures that complicate this transmission. The demands of the state-led cultural economy, favoring shorter, arranged "folkloric" versions of maqom for tourist or diplomatic showcases, can pull against the deep, meditative study of the full cycles. Furthermore, the economic realities facing young musicians can strain the traditional, time-intensive shogird commitment. Yet, as the interviews reveal, both masters and students are acutely aware of these pressures and often frame their dedication as a conscious act of cultural stewardship.

Conclusion

This investigation into the contemporary transmission of the Shashmaqom repertoire elucidates the ustoz-shogird relationship as the vital, adaptive sinew connecting the tradition's past to its future. Transmission is revealed to be a profound and complex act of cultural reproduction that transcends mere musical instruction. It is a holistic pedagogy that intertwines the technical mastery of an immense canonical repertoire with the cultivation of historical consciousness, ethical disposition, and ultimately, a personalized artistic voice that speaks from within the tradition.

The contemporary master, often operating within the dual frameworks of the conservatory and the informal apprenticeship, acts as a mediator between the canonical weight of the Shashmaqom and the realities of the present day. The successful student emerges not as a replicant, but as a new link in the chain (*silsila*), capable of both honoring the intricate architecture of the maqom cycles and imbuing them with a resonant, contemporary humanity. The resilience of this pedagogical model offers a potent case study in the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage. It suggests that for traditions of such complexity, survival depends not only on archival preservation or institutional support - though these are important - but fundamentally on the nurturing of these dedicated, intergenerational human relationships. The future of the Shashmaqom will be written in the practice rooms and intimate lessons where, today, an ustoz patiently corrects a microtonal inflection, shares a story of a departed giant, and in doing so, passes on a world.

References

1. Malikakhon, Z. (2024). MAKOM PERFORMANCE BY INSTRUMENT DUTAR: IN THE EXAMPLE OF THE COMPOSITION "TASNIFI NAVO". *European Journal of Arts*, (3), 66-68.
2. Hamitova, S. B., & Aziza, T. (2024, May). MAQOM SAN'ATINING RIVOJLANISH TARIXI. In *INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE* (Vol. 1, No. 5, pp. 158-165).

3. Mamadjanova, E. (2011). Uzbek “Makoms” in the 21st Century. *Journal of Literature and Art studies*, 1(1), 31-36.
4. Odinahon, M. (2023). Knowing the History of Makom–Knowledge. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 4(4), 177-181.
5. Jurayev, I. (2025). Vocal pedagogy in the academy integrating Uzbek traditional practices. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 1(7), 30-35.
6. Eralieva, F. E. (2025). An approach to the formation of the piano repertoire based on national and world music samples. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 1(7), 21-25.
7. Muminov, M. (2025). Cultivating the complete musician in the piano studio. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 1(7), 16-20.
8. Yuldashev, A. (2025). Performance on Uzbekistan folk instruments: opportunities and prospects. *Academic Journal of Science, Technology and Education*, 1(7), 3-5.
9. Boboyev, V. (2025). MICROTONAL INTONATION AND ORNAMENTATION IN THE KASHKAR RUBAB MAQOM REPERTOIRE. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 1(4), 35-44.
10. Mustafoev, S. M. (2025). THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN SOUNDS, MUSICAL MEMORY, AND THE SENSE OF MELODY AND HARMONY. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 1(4), 3-8.
11. Mustafoev, S. M. (2025). THE LOCALIZATION OF THE FRONTAL AND PARIETAL AREAS OF REPRODUCTION IN CLASSICAL ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 1(4), 9-13.
12. Abdunabiyeva, M. (2025). THE CULTURAL IDENTITY AND AESTHETIC EXPRESSION IN UZBEK NATIONAL DANCE ART. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 1(3), 18-24.
13. ogli Muqimov, S. Z. (2025). MUSIC AND NEUROPHYSIOLOGY: HOW DOES MUSIC CHANGE BRAIN ACTIVITY?. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, 1(3), 3-7.