



## Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program

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### IREX IARO Final Research Report

Project Title: **The science of music in late-medieval Central Asia**

The purpose of this project was to examine the historical sources about the classical musical traditions of Central Asia written during the late-medieval period. The musical treatises of the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries have not been sufficiently examined, but constitute a considerable body of works which reveal much about the development of musical traditions in Central Asia and in the greater Islamic world.

#### **Project Summary:**

I carried out this research in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan during the summer of 2006. The research involved a survey of the extant musical treatises that were written in the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Central Asia, and a comparative study of the classical musical traditions of modern-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

While there have been several critical studies of some of the medieval musical treatises published in Persian, Tajik, Uzbek, Uyghur, and Russian, the publications have not been disseminated widely, and often times remain unknown even to the author's colleagues and other researchers in the neighboring country, let alone scholars based in the west. Furthermore, there still remain many questions regarding how the theory and practice of music, as it is explained in treatises through the 17<sup>th</sup> century, came to evolve or be restructured into the forms in which it exists today in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Xinjiang. The 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of quietude with regard to

musical treatises, and only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century do musical treatises begin to reappear in Central Asia, although now with less of a focus on the theoretical structure of the system of modes, and more of a focus on the practice-performance of the classical repertoire and the poetry that goes with the musical repertoire.

A study of the historical treatises on music reveal not only a great deal about the musical system and the musicians of history, but also give insight into the historical development of cultural policy exercised by the ruling powers throughout Central Asian history, from periods when the arts were patronized, to the periods when the artists were ostracized.

In order to fully understand the classical *maqom* traditions of music in Central Asia today, it is necessary to understand how the tradition evolved and what principles governed the practice and theory of music both today and in the past. It is for this reason that my research methodology included both the practical aspect of music as well as the theoretical aspect. This topic is one of the few remaining areas open to exploration in the field of historical ethnomusicology, primarily because there has been an ancient tradition of text writing in the Persian-speaking world, and simultaneously, very little scholarly consideration of the musical treatises of Central Asian provenance. This may be due to the limited access that western scholars had to the archives in the former-Soviet Union, as well as difficulties in accessing archives in Iran since the Islamic revolution.

While many of the primary Arabic and Ottoman musical treatises have been translated and studied by scholars in the west since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of scholarly activity centered around Persian musical sources has been carried out by Iranian, Russian, Uzbek, and Tajik musicologists. Their studies have led to several excellent publications which have not been distributed very widely, often times not even reaching neighboring countries.

Due to the scarcity of recent publications on the history of *maqam* in Central Asia, it is necessary to consult the extant sources that were written in the Timurid, Safavid, Shaybonid, and Astarkhanid eras, written in the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. These manuscripts are housed in archives in Tashkent, St. Petersburg, Dushanbe, Tehran, Moscow, and in various private collections. My research has focused on the texts that can be found in Tashkent and Dushanbe, and my intention is to continue my work with these texts in order to eventually publish translations of several of the texts in order to make them more widely available to scholars. My research in Central Asia during the summer of 2006 has also paved the way for me to make rapid progress as I am currently just beginning a PhD program.

### **Approach and Research Methodology:**

My research methodology consisted of a combination of archival research, field work, and language and music study. I have been simultaneously engaged in consulting, transcribing, and translating several medieval musical treatises, while continuing my study and practice of the modern *maqam* traditions of Central Asia. I attended the *Shashmaqam Academy* in Dushanbe preceding and during the term of my IREX research. There I attended classes on the theory of *shashmaqam* suite performance, and had classes on the Perso-Tajik science of versification known as '*ilm-i'aruz*, as well as private

lessons on the *tanbur*, the instrument which is most closely tied to the theory and performance of the classical traditions of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. At the same time I was working daily with several scholars from the Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe, and the manuscript archive adjacent to the Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Written Heritage (*Institut-i Meros-i Xat*). I worked regularly with musicologist Askar Ali Rajabov, and manuscript specialist Muhammadjon Umarov, who helped me in working out difficult-to-decipher parts of the texts.

Prior to my return to Dushanbe, I visited Tashkent, where I visited the Abu Raykhon Beruni manuscript archive, and obtained digital copies of five rare Persian-Tajik manuscripts on music written in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. I then worked with Ziadulloh Umarov at the National Conservatory in Tashkent to correctly understand difficult parts of the texts as I began transcribing type-written editions of the texts. I continued the work of transcribing the texts into type, and then worked with linguist and translator Muhammadjon Umarov at the Institute of Written Heritage in Dushanbe to proof-read and correct my transcriptions.

In addition to working with the manuscripts and attending classes intensively at the Shashmaqam Academy in Dushanbe, I also contacted many knowledgeable musicians from Dushanbe, Khojand, Bukhara, Samarqand, Tashkent, and Dushanbe who, through our discussions of music practice, performance, and theory, came to be valuable informants and friends who I intend to remain in contact with and visit during future field-work.

### **Summary of Research Findings:**

The research has shed much light on the structure and development of the science of music, or *'ilm-i musiqi*, in medieval Herat, Bukhara, and Samarkand at the end of the Timurid period and in the following period under the rule of the Samanid and Shaybonid dynasties. The medieval sources all provide a wealth of information regarding the system of *maqam*-s, the modes that served as the basis of melodic composition in the medieval classical traditions of music of Central Asia. The texts relate stories about the origins of music, often reiterating stories of how music and the *maqam*-s were discovered by Moses, or Pythagoras, or Plato. The *maqam*-s are also imbued with cosmological and spiritual significance as the texts draw correspondences between the *maqam*-s and the Prophets, the twelve zodiacal signs, the seasons, the times of the day, the different temperaments of people, and to various animals and colors.

The system of *maqam*-s and their branch modes and consists of twelve *maqam*, as well as 24 *shu'ba*, 6 *avaz*, and sometimes include information about the *gushe*, or *murattiba*, or *rang* which derive from the *maqam* and *shu'bat*. The texts also elucidate on more practical aspects of music, such as which *maqam* should be performed together or with which *shu'bat* they may be played. The practical information contained in the texts provides many clues which may help to illuminate the ways in which the musical tradition in the 17<sup>th</sup> century come to evolve into the tradition and repertoire of the *shashmaqam* which emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Bukhara, and the evolution of the other classical traditions in Central Asia, such as the *charmaqam* (4 *maqam*) in Ferghana and Tashkent, and the *alta yarim maqom* (6 ½ *maqom*) in Khorezm.

A few of the texts detail the system of rhythmic cycles used in the medieval tradition and give syllabic transcriptions of the rhythms used during the period. These rhythmic notations have also been useful in comparing the rhythms used in the traditions as they are practiced today.

Further information is given about the different composition types used and the type of poetic forms used in musical performance of the period. Different song types, such as *sawt*, *qawl*, *amal*, etc, are defined as are several different melodic composition types. There is mention of many musicians of the period and of preceding eras, and the information provided about them and their students will contribute missing links in the genealogy of musicians and the transmission of the science music from the great musicians and theorists Safi ad-Din Urmavi and Abd al-Qadir Maraghi, to the great musicians of the Timurid court in Herat under Husayn Bayqora, and on to the great musicians and scholars of the Shaybonid court under the Uzbek khans following the fall of the Timurid rule in Herat.

The science of music as it developed in Transoxiana shows a strong re-emergence of the so-called ‘*ethos*’ of music which was widespread in the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries in ‘Abbasid court in Baghdad, and was influenced heavily by translations of Greek and Syriac texts. It is not a revival of this early-Islamic trend in music, but is a different system incorporating many extra-musical elements which correspond to musical modes and rhythms by virtue of their intrinsic emotive quality. For example, the 12 *maqam* find their order alongside the 12 zodiacal signs of ancient (and modern) astronomy, and find further correspondents in the times of the day, the temperaments of different people, different geographic regions, different animals, Prophets, etc. These extra-musical elements play a prominent role in the majority of the texts from the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, perhaps more so than a systematic explanation of the musical modes. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the melodic modes that were used in this period since the late-medieval theorists did not make use of or devise a suitable system of annotation for the different musical modes. The vehicle for the transmission of the science of music in the medieval period was the *tanbur*, the instrument which has been most closely tied with the classical tradition in Central Asia for at least a millennium.

While the ‘Systematist’ theorists of the 13<sup>th</sup> century focused on the notation of modes, the physical properties of sound, etc., later theorists of later centuries paid more attention to the system of *maqam* through their relationships to one another, and the derivation from them of the *shu’bat*, *avaz*, and *rang/gushe*. For a tradition that was and had been for centuries transmitted and taught orally from *ustad* to *shogird*, it may be that devising a system for transcribing the *maqam* into a written notation was just not very practical or useful for the majority of musicians.

Today it is not really feasible to extract the medieval modes from the modes in current use. While there are enough clues in the medieval manuscripts to hypothesize about how the medieval modes may be extracted from modes in current use, it would be nearly impossible to say with any certainty that the modes would actually correspond to the modes mentioned in the texts. This is due to the fact that some of the names of *maqam*-s are not always uniform from region to region, and have also undergone changes throughout the course of the past three or four centuries. Indeed, the name’s of many of the ancient modes are completely absent from the modern repertoires of classical music

in Central Asia. Because of these reasons and the complete lack of treatises from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there are certain gaps which may not be filled.

Having said this, it becomes even more important to look carefully at the texts that were written through the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and to compare them with the treatises from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. These 19<sup>th</sup> century treatises present the musical tradition from a practice-performance point of view and are largely devoid of a theory of music. They are primary *bayoz*, compendiums of poetry that is sung with the *shashmaqam* musical tradition. In addition, the later texts present a complete reorganization of the classical repertoire, and the performance practice has become based on the suite-performance of six *maqam*, which has attained a new meaning of 'suite'. Within the collective repertoire of the *shashmaqam*, one can find classical pieces bearing the names of approximately 17 of the names which were also current in earlier centuries as names of *maqam*-s, *shu'bat*, and *avaz*. Within other local traditions, such as the *maqam* traditions of Khorazm, Ferghana valley, and among the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, China, other musical modes are preserved which bear the names of modes described in the medieval period.

While it is not feasible to try and re-create medieval music based upon current practice and the clues provided in medieval treatises, it is necessary to consider modern traditions when examining the medieval traditions in order to gain a better grasp on how the traditions may have changed.

### **Contribution to the Field:**

The field of historical ethnomusicology is a relatively new field in itself, but the history of musical traditions has interested musicians and musical scholars for centuries. The medieval musical theorists also sought out the early history of their inherited musical traditions and wrote about them in their treatises. While these histories remain known to select scholars in Central Asia and Iran, the history of Central Asian musical traditions remains largely unknown to scholars working in the western academic world. Historical sources about Central Asian music remain largely inaccessible to scholars in the west, and the majority of ethnomusicologists aren't trained linguists, and linguists rarely concentrate on musical treatises. For these reason, there are still many ways to contribute to the understanding of Central Asian musical historiography.

My research has definitely helped to fill in many gaps in the historical picture of Central Asian musical traditions. A comparative study of the texts of Najmuddin Kavkabi, Darvish Ali Changi, as well as other treatises such as the *Risala-i Keramiya*, *Risala-i dar Bayan-i Duvozdah Maqom*, and others show uniformity in the structure of the *maqam* system in Central Asia, and re-iterate stories that were previously transmitted orally or written in earlier treatises regarding the origins of *maqam*-s. We see that it was in Khorasan and Central Asia that the number of *maqam*-s became canonized with the system of 12 *maqam*, and this duodecimal *maqam* system remained as a foundation for subsequent developments in the Arabic and Turkic-speaking worlds as well.

Although the results of my research remain as yet unpublished, my research has provided a very strong foundation for my doctoral research which I have just begun at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. I intend to continue working with these and other sources and to complete my PhD dissertation on the topic of the history of

the science of music in Central Asia in the late-medieval period. I plan on completing and publishing critical editions of several of the treatises which I feel are most important for other scholars to have access to, particularly the anonymously authored treatise entitled *Nihal al-Aswat* ('the seedling of sounds'), the *Risala-i Keramiya*, and the *Risala-i Musiqi* of *Najm ad-Din Kavkabi*, and the biographies of musicians that are found in the *Risala-i Musiqi* of Darvish Ali Changi.

The results of my research are not only important for ethnomusicologists and historians who study Central Asia, but is also of benefit to scholars and ethnomusicologists with interests in the history of the arts in the greater Islamic world. The science of music as it developed in Central Asia represents a stage in the evolution of the science and art of music of humanity, as the Central Asian traditions benefited from prior musical developments in the Arab and Iranian areas which in turn learned many things about music from the Greco-Roman empire and ancient Mesopotamia.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

There are many topics that I have encountered which would be fascinating research topics and I would encourage scholars to explore. Topics such as the relationship between the system of versification and poetic meter (*'ilm-i aruz*) used in Persian and Tajik music, and the melodic and rhythmic system of the classical musical traditions. Another topic in need of further research is the historical musical texts that were written in Chaghatai in the 17<sup>th</sup> century which present a system of *maqam* theory that is quite different than that which is contained in the Persian texts.

Comparative studies of these Persian musical treatises and those that were written in Arabic and Chaghatai will also contribute to the field in many ways, and will foster cross-disciplinary collaborations between scholars working in different countries, languages, and fields.

Researchers in Tajikistan are very agreeable when it comes to collaboration efforts. I believe that there are many fields of historical, political, and cultural significance which can be carried out with great success in Tajikistan.