

## **THE FORMATION OF SHASHMAQOM IN THE PALACE OF THE EMIRS AND ITS PERFORMERS**

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**Abstract:** This article provides a scientific exploration of the development of the Shashmaqom art form within the cultural environment of the Bukhara Emirate. The research examines the historical origins, performance practices, and pedagogical significance of Shashmaqom in the ustoz–shogird (master–student) tradition. It highlights the role of court musicians, their influence on musical aesthetics, and the continuing relevance of Shashmaqom in contemporary international music culture. Drawing upon the works of leading scholars such as Rasulov (2025), Abdinabiyevna (2024), and Karimova (2025), the study analyzes the fusion of artistic, spiritual, and social values that shaped this classical musical heritage.

**Keywords:** Shashmaqom, Bukhara Emirate, performance, musical heritage, ustoz–shogird system, Hafiz, Sozanda, cultural identity.

### **Introduction**

The art of maqom represents one of the deepest layers of the cultural and spiritual history of the Uzbek people. Among its various forms, Shashmaqom holds a special position as the pinnacle of classical musical thought. Formed during the late 17th and 18th centuries in the palace of the Bukhara emirs, it reflects the synthesis of artistic refinement, religious philosophy, and state representation. As Rasulov (2025) notes, the emergence of Shashmaqom was not merely an artistic phenomenon but a socio-political and cultural institution that symbolized the intellectual level of the Bukhara Emirate. The courtly environment offered the ideal setting for the development of sophisticated musical expression, supported by the amirs' patronage of musicians, singers (hafiz), and instrumentalists (sozanda).

Shashmaqom served as both a musical and spiritual representation of power, dignity, and cultural continuity. It functioned as a means of moral education and aesthetic refinement for the court and the broader society. Abdinabiyevna (2024) emphasizes that through Shashmaqom, generations of performers inherited a system of ethical discipline and emotional depth that transcended the boundaries of ordinary entertainment.

The oral transmission of the ustoz–shogird system ensured that the authenticity of Shashmaqom was preserved despite historical upheavals. This method of teaching emphasized both musical precision and inner spiritual growth, which contributed to the resilience and richness of the tradition (Ulasheva, 2023).

### **Methodology**

This research employs an interdisciplinary approach, combining historical analysis, ethnomusicology, and pedagogy. The methodological framework rests on four key principles:

#### **Historical-Comparative Analysis:**

Archival documents and early manuscripts describing musical life in the Bukhara Emirate were compared with the oral records of Shashmaqom masters. Through this method, the stages of formation and the structural characteristics of Shashmaqom were identified and correlated with socio-political transformations in Central Asia.

#### **Ethnomusicological Observation:**

The study examines live performances and pedagogical practices in modern Shashmaqom schools. Observations were carried out to identify how the ancient repertoire is transmitted, adapted, and revitalized in contemporary performance contexts (Karimova, 2025).

#### **Pedagogical Inquiry:**

Special attention was given to the ustoz–shogird pedagogical model as a unique cultural phenomenon. The researcher analyzed its effectiveness in preserving the artistic identity and moral foundations of performers (Rasulov, 2025).

#### **Comparative Cultural Context:**

The paper also compares Bukhara’s Shashmaqom with related maqom systems such as Fergana–Tashkent and Khorezm schools, examining how geographical and historical factors shaped stylistic distinctions (Abdinabiyevna, 2024).

A key finding of this methodological review is that Shashmaqom’s endurance lies in its ability to integrate change without losing its essence.

While rooted in Islamic aesthetics and Sufi philosophy, it continually adapts to modern pedagogical needs and performance practices. This balance of preservation and innovation positions Shashmaqom as one of the world’s living classical trad 3. Historical Background of Shashmaqom Formation

The emergence of Shashmaqom in the palace of the Bukhara Emirs was a reflection of the political stability, cultural refinement, and religious scholarship that characterized the Emirate during the 18th–19th centuries. The palace served not only as a political center but also as an academy of arts, where musicians, poets, and philosophers interacted. According to Rasulov (2025), Bukhara’s cultural policy fostered an atmosphere in which art and spirituality were viewed as essential components of governance.

The court’s artistic patronage led to the establishment of a specialized musical ensemble known as the Saroy maqom ansambli (Court Maqom Ensemble). These groups were composed of highly trained performers — sozandas (instrumentalists) and hofizes (singers) — who devoted their lives to perfecting maqom performance. Their role extended beyond entertainment; they embodied ethical, aesthetic, and philosophical ideals through music.

Shashmaqom, literally meaning “six maqoms,” symbolized the unity of diversity in music and thought. Each maqom represented a distinct emotional world (shash maqomlar: Buzruk, Rost, Navo, Dugoh, Segoh, Iroq), which together illustrated the philosophical journey of the soul from earthly passion to divine enlightenment (Ulasheva, 2023). This symbolic interpretation was deeply rooted in Sufi cosmology, where sound and vibration were believed to connect the human heart with divine reality. Abdinabiyevna (2024) explains that during the rule of Amir Haydar and Amir Nasrullo, Shashmaqom became institutionalized as a royal art form, regulated by court ceremonies and seasonal festivals. The music accompanied important events — coronations, religious holidays, and diplomatic receptions — thus merging aesthetics with state ideology. Through this integration, the Bukhara Emirate projected an image of cultural superiority and divine legitimacy.

#### **Court Performers and Musical Aesthetics**

The palace of the Emirs functioned as a cultural nucleus, nurturing generations of artists. Each performer was selected through rigorous evaluation and trained under strict discipline. The ustoz–shogird system played a decisive role in sustaining the continuity of the Shashmaqom

repertoire. As Karimova (2025) notes, the pedagogical process combined technical mastery with moral education, ensuring that the performer internalized not only musical form but also spiritual meaning.

The court's musical hierarchy reflected a clear division of roles — hofiz, sozanda, and muallim (teacher). The hofiz carried the responsibility of interpreting poetic texts with emotional depth, while the sozanda accompanied them with symbolic instrumental expressions. Rasulov (2025) asserts that this harmony between vocal and instrumental elements was the hallmark of classical Uzbek performance aesthetics, representing a dialogue between human voice and divine resonance.

From a theoretical standpoint, Shashmaqom employed a highly sophisticated modal system. Each maqom consisted of several dastgohs (sections), with distinct rhythmic and melodic structures. The use of the tanbur, dutor, and ghijjak provided a tonal color palette that emphasized spiritual elevation. Abdinabiyevna (2024) highlights that the cyclical nature of Shashmaqom compositions mirrors the Sufi notion of “return” (ruju‘) — the soul’s journey back to its divine source.

Furthermore, women also contributed to court musical life, though often in private ceremonies. Female performers, known as hofizalar, maintained their presence in domestic rituals and religious gatherings, ensuring that maqom traditions remained embedded in social consciousness. Their contributions deserve deeper scholarly exploration in modern gender-based musicological studies (Ulasheva, 2023).

### **Pedagogical Legacy and Modern Interpretation**

One of the most enduring legacies of Shashmaqom is its educational system. The ustoz–shogird model remains the cornerstone of maqom training in contemporary Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

This pedagogical philosophy is based on direct transmission of musical knowledge, ethical principles, and creative inspiration from master to disciple. As Rasulov (2025) describes, such transmission ensures the “spiritual continuity of art,” bridging historical traditions with the present.

In the modern context, institutions such as the Yunus Rajabi State Conservatory and the Bukhara Maqom Research Center have revitalized classical maqom education by integrating traditional methods with modern pedagogy. Digital recordings, notation systems, and academic research contribute to documenting and disseminating the vast maqom repertoire (Karimova, 2025).

However, as Abdinabiyevna (2024) observes, while modernization has brought visibility to Shashmaqom on international platforms, it also risks reducing its spiritual essence to mere performance. Thus, maintaining a balance between authenticity and innovation remains a challenge. The involvement of contemporary scholars and performers in cross-cultural collaborations is crucial to preserving maqom’s depth while making it accessible to new audiences.

Shashmaqom’s influence extends beyond national boundaries. Its modal logic and rhythmic patterns have inspired composers in Central Asia, the Middle East, and even Europe. Through intercultural projects and international festivals, such as the Bukhara Maqom Forum (since 2018), Shashmaqom has become a universal symbol of dialogue between East and West. As Ulasheva

(2023) states, this revival represents not just a return to tradition but the renewal of an ethical worldview rooted in harmony and devotion.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that the Shashmaqom tradition, born in the palace of the Bukhara Emirs, remains a living monument of cultural memory and artistic excellence. Its synthesis of music, philosophy, and pedagogy has enabled it to endure through centuries of political and social change.

Through the contributions of court performers, scholars, and contemporary musicians, Shashmaqom continues to embody the unity of form and spirit — a reflection of the timeless dialogue between sound and soul. In the words of Rasulov (2025), “to perform maqom is to meditate through melody, to teach the heart how to listen.”

Therefore, the preservation of Shashmaqom is not only a matter of cultural heritage but an ethical responsibility — to sustain a worldview where beauty, faith, and wisdom coexist harmoniously.

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