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THE MUSICAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE UD IN UZBEK TRADITIONAL MUSIC: A CASE STUDY OF MAQOM ART

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Abstract:

The ud (Arabic: ‘ūd), one of the oldest plucked string instruments in the Near Eastern cultural space, has played a pivotal—yet often underexamined—role in the development of Central Asian musical traditions. In Uzbekistan, particularly within the context of maqom, the ud historically functioned not only as a performance instrument but also as a conceptual and terminological reference point for modes, melodic structures, and pedagogical systems. This article investigates the musical-terminological significance of the ud in Uzbek traditional music, tracing its historical circulation, organological features, integration into maqom practice, and its influence on the theoretical vocabulary of the region. Through comparative analysis of manuscripts, oral histories, and modern ethnomusicological findings, the study argues that the ud served as a formative link between Middle Eastern modal theory and Central Asian maqom aesthetics. The research contributes to a broader understanding of how instrument-based terminology shaped the intellectual foundations of the Uzbek musical canon.

Keywords: Ud; Uzbek traditional music; Maqom; Organology; Modal theory; Central Asian music; Shashmaqom; Musical terminology; Performance practice.

Introduction

The study of Uzbek maqom—especially Shashmaqom, the classical musical heritage of Bukhara—requires attention not only to vocal traditions but also to

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the role of instruments that shaped modal and pedagogical practices. Among these instruments, the ud occupies a historically significant place. Although the ud gradually disappeared from common performance practice in Central Asia after the nineteenth century, its terminology and theoretical implications remain embedded in the structural and conceptual foundations of maqom music (Sukhareva, 1962).

This research aims to analyze the musical and terminological role of the ud within Uzbek traditional music, with particular emphasis on its influence on maqom theory, instrument morphology, and historical performance.

Husayn Voiz Koshifiy writes about the rules in his book "Futuvvatnomai sultoniy." mentorship, what qualities should the teacher and student be equipped with? He writes: "If you are asked what a good teacher should be like, say that he is. He is kind-hearted, able to see his mistakes, and he is a smart person. He cannot be jealous. [10.94-b]

2. Historical Background of the Ud in Central Asia

2.1 Origins and Diffusion

The ud dates back to ancient Mesopotamian and Arabian musical cultures. Scholars widely acknowledge its transmission along trade routes that connected Persia, Central Asia, and North Africa (Farmer, 1997). By the 9th–10th centuries, during the flourishing of the Samanid dynasty, the ud had already reached Transoxiana. The treatises of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)—both with strong Central Asian ties—describe the ud in detail, contributing to its theoretical prominence (al-Farabi, 1930).

2.2 The Ud in Medieval Central Asian Sources

Medieval Persian and Turkic manuscripts, including the writings of Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Safiyuddin al-Urmawi, refer to the ud as a central instrument for demonstrating intervals and nodal divisions (Wright, 2019). These writings influenced later Bukharan and Khorezmian theoretical schools, where ud-based tuning logic informed the modal and scalar systems that shaped maqom performance.



3. The Ud in Uzbek Musical Culture

3.1 Organological Characteristics

The ud is characterized by:

- ❖ a pear-shaped resonator,
- ❖ a fretless short neck,
- ❖ 11–13 strings, usually paired,
- ❖ a wide tonal range suitable for modal exploration.

Its fretless design made it ideal for demonstrating microtonal intervals used in maqom modes such as Buzruk, Rost, Segoh, and Navo.

3.2 Decline and Transformation

Although widely used in earlier centuries, the ud was gradually replaced by local instruments such as tanbur, dutor, and rubob from the 18th century onward (Jabborov, 2001).

Despite its decline, the ud's theoretical legacy persisted, shaping terminological concepts related to:

- ✓ melodic progression,
- ✓ interval classification,
- ✓ instrumental pedagogy,
- ✓ modal calculations.

4. The Ud within the Context of Maqom

4.1 Conceptual and Terminological Influence

Uzbek maqom theory employs terms rooted in earlier Arabic-Persian musical scholarship, much of which used the ud as the main model for explaining:

- ✓ **pitches (sawtiyāt),**
- ✓ **intervals (buʻd),**
- ✓ **modes (maqāmāt),**
- ✓ **string-based tuning analogies.**

The structure of maqom melodic pathways often reflects concepts described using the ud's string layout (Nettl, 1987). For example, the four-course string

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logic influenced the classification of tetrachords and pentachords in maqom music.

4.2 Influence on Shashmaqom

In Shashmaqom, each of the six maqoms (Buzruk, Rost, Navo, Dugoh, Segoh, and Iroq) relies on modal systems comparable to those described in ud-based medieval treatises. The instrument historically served as a reference model for:

- ✓ modal hierarchy,
- ✓ tonal centers,
- ✓ melodic development across register levels.

4.3 Pedagogical Implications

The ud's fretless fingerboard provided an ideal pedagogical tool for teaching subtle maqom intonations. Early music schools in Bukhara reportedly used ud-like diagrams to train students in intervallic accuracy (Mirzaev, 1979).

5. Terminological Contributions of the Ud to Uzbek Music

5.1 Terminology Derived from Ud Practice

Several Uzbek modal and structural terms trace their conceptual roots to ud theory, including:

- ✓ **pardā** (pitch position),
- ✓ **shuba** (modal subset),
- ✓ **usul** (rhythmic-metric cycle),
- ✓ **naghma** (melodic fragment).

These terms entered Uzbek theoretical vocabulary through Persian-Arabic treatises that used the ud as a primary explanatory tool.

5.2 Evolution of Local Terminology

While Uzbek maqom retained the earlier theoretical lexicon, local terms such as sho'ba, tarona, and ufar developed, combining ud-based modal theory with

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Central Asian melodic aesthetics (Is'hoqov, 1994). This hybrid terminology demonstrates how the ud shaped the intellectual framework of Uzbek classical music.

6. Contemporary Revival and Research

The early 21st century has seen renewed interest in reviving the ud within Central Asia. Uzbek instrument makers and conservatories have begun reintroducing the ud as part of historical performance studies, emphasizing its relevance to:

- historically informed maqom performance,
- modal analysis,
- organological research,
- cross-cultural musical dialogue.

Modern performances increasingly incorporate reconstructed ud models to explore how maqom may have sounded in earlier centuries. It is necessary to recall the student-master relationship between Abdurrahman Jami and Alisher Navoi: Alisher Navoi is a student of Abdurrahman Jami, both in life and in his work. In "Khamsa," he continues the teacher's tradition. He also enriched "Nafahotul uns" of his teacher and created a new work called "Nasumumul Muhabbat." In his dastans and many other works, he expresses his respect and reverence for the name of his teacher. [9;94-b]

7. Conclusion

The ud played a crucial yet often overlooked role in the formation of Uzbek traditional music, especially maqom. Its influence survives not only in historical manuscripts but also in the conceptual language of Uzbek modal theory. Although the instrument gradually disappeared from everyday practice, its musical-terminological footprint remains central to understanding how maqom modes were classified, taught, and performed.

By reassessing the ud's position in the cultural history of Uzbekistan, this study contributes to broader debates on instrument-based theoretical systems in Islamic and Central Asian musical scholarship.



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