



SUFI PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS IN MAQOM MUSIC

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Abstract: This article explores the historical and philosophical connections between maqom and Sufism, examining the educational and spiritual significance of music and mystical thought before and after the advent of Islam. It analyzes the spiritual and philosophical unity between maqom melodies and Sufi teachings, examples of maqoms resembling zikr, and the transformative influence of music in spiritual development.

Keywords: Maqom, Ushshoq, Girya, Samandar, Munojot, Sufism, Tariqat, Sema, Qalandar, Gardun, Sufi, Zikr.

Sufi concepts within maqom manifest through ideas of seeking divine truth, purifying the soul, and achieving spiritual perfection through music. Maqom is not merely a musical genre but a complex art form embodying profound philosophical and spiritual meaning. Rasulov, U. U. (2025). Sufism, as an inner path of Islam, is a spiritual-philosophical doctrine focused on purification of the inner self (batin) and striving toward closeness to God.

Spiritual Parallels: Many maqom melodies express deep spiritual states resembling the Sufi notion of hal (divine state). Listening to maqoms brings one closer to Sufi concepts such as tajalli (divine manifestation), fana (annihilation of self), and ma’rifat (gnosis).

Mystical Poetics: Numerous maqom songs are based on Sufi poetry. Works of Jalal al-Din Rumi, Hafez of Shiraz, Alisher Navoi, Babur, and Lutfiy are widely used, expressing divine love, spiritual perfection, loss, and reunion with the Divine.

Influence of Sufi Orders: In the Samarkand and Bukhara maqom schools, particularly within the formation of Shashmaqom, the influence of the Naqshbandi order is evident. These maqoms are composed not only for aesthetic pleasure but also to evoke the state of zikr (remembrance of God).

Spiritual Discipline in Performance: In maqom performance, singers (hofiz) and instrumentalists strive for self-purification, spiritual training, and patience — reflecting Sufi concepts of riyozat (ascetic practice) and control over the nafs (ego).

Maqom as Artistic Zikr: In Sufism, zikr—the remembrance of God—is essential. Many maqom compositions share a repetitive, meditative structure similar to zikr, guiding the listener toward divine contemplation.

Professor Okilkhon Ibrohimov notes:

“The terminology used in maqom cycles, such as maqom, sama’, qalandar, samandar, gardun, charx, girya, faryod, and soqiynoma, reflects the influence of Sufi traditions and carries spiritual significance.¹

Pre-Islamic Roots and Evolution

¹ Ibrohimov O. Semantics of Maqom. “Elnur-Print” T, 2023. p.109



Before Islam, in the broader Turkic musical culture, the term *kuy* (melody) originated from *kug* (sky). Scholars suggest this was related to the concept of *maqom*. During Maraghi's era, *kok* (sky) was synonymous with *maqom* in Turkic. The idea of ascent toward the sky in melodies corresponded with the ancient Turkic Tengri faith. Later, the same melodic framework served as a form for expressing Sufi thought within an Islamic context, evolving into the *maqom-sama*' synthesis.

Sufism as a Spiritual-Educational System. Sufism, derived from the Arabic word *suf* (wool), symbolizing the coarse wool garments of ascetics, seeks purification of the heart, divine love, and detachment from worldly desires. Emerging as a movement of asceticism in the 7th–8th centuries², Sufism defines spiritual progress through three main stages: *Shariat* (the law), *Tariqat* (the path), and *Haqiqat* (the truth).

According to Professor Okilkhon Ibrohimov:

“In Sufism, the term *maqom* signifies the seven fundamental stages of spiritual ascent. It represents the spiritual journey of the *salik* (seeker) through successive levels of *suluk*³ (spiritual discipline).”

Sufism and the Arts

Sufi creativity extends beyond poetry to include music, dance, and visual arts. Sufi theatrical practices emerged that combined poetry, song, and dance through the ritual of *sama*' — “listening with the heart.” Abdinabiyevna, S. M. (2024).

Music, in this sense, is the manifestation of divine love. . Ulasheva, M. (2023). *Zikr*, *hamd*, *munojot*, and *qira'at* are poetic forms belonging to the Sufi *sama*' ceremony. While *zikr* involves remembrance through repetition of divine names, music influences emotional and spiritual states similarly, leading to inner peace and contemplation.

For Sufis — dervishes and *qalandars* — music is a means of expressing divine love (*'ishq ilohi*) and achieving ecstatic union (*wajd*). In various Sufi orders, forms of *zikr* differ — *jahri* (loud), *khafi* (silent), *adadi* (counted), and *dil* (of the heart). The *Naqshbandi* order, common in Turkistan, practiced *Zikri Jahriy*, often accompanied by rhythmic patterns (*yakzarb*, *duzarb*). In these rituals, recited Qur'anic verses and rhythmic chants influenced the evolution of Uzbek vocal genres, especially within *Shashmaqom* traditions.

Historical Continuity and Regional Variations

By the early 20th century, *maqom* became a secularized art form in Bukhara and Khorezm, though religious themes persisted in forms such as *xonaqohi*, *jar*, and *suvoriy* songs. Karimova, M. (2025).

In the Fergana–Tashkent *maqom* traditions, two paths developed: *maqom* paths and *zikr* paths, reflecting secular and spiritual purposes respectively. The spread of the *Yassavi* order in the Fergana Valley and Turkistan reinforced the vocal nature of *jahri zikr*, where *maqom* melodies were integral. As ethnomusicologist Otanazar Matyoqubov notes:

“Among the people, the saying goes: ‘In Mecca — Muhammad, in Turkistan — Khoja Ahmad.’ In Ahmad Yassavi's *jahri zikr*, the voice and song held immense importance, and *maqom*-based classical melodies occupied a central role in these rituals”⁴

Maqom, *Zikr*, and Ritual Performance

² Komilov N. Sufism and Artistic Creativity. *Yoshlik Journal*, 8\1991, p74

³ Ibrohimov O. History and Theory of *Maqoms*. “*Donishmand Ziyosi*” T,2023. p.38

⁴ Matyoqubov O. *Maqomot*. “*Musiqa Publishing*”, T,2004. p.94



Outside of xonaqohs, sacred songs were performed to classical melodies such as Katta Ashula (Grand Song), while zikr was performed rhythmically and collectively. Other forms, like Yovvoyi Ushshoq and Yovvoyi Chorgoh, represented free, improvisational maqom styles. A key element of zikr is the munojot (supplication), followed by rhythmic chanting of “ha” or “ha-hu.” These performances, often set in compound meters (oqsoq rhythms), include Talqin, Talqincha, Chapandoz, Qalandariy, and Samandariy forms, showing stylistic parallels between religious munojots and Shashmaqom sarakhbor sections.

In jahri (loud) zikr, vocal, instrumental, and dance elements merge. The ritual instrument safoil — a type of metallic clapper — is used exclusively in spiritual performances (zikri sama’). Such ritual dances were historically performed in Khorezm, Mawarannahr, Fergana, Turkistan, and East Turkestan.

Renowned zikr singers such as Shahlokhon Hofiz, Mulla Toychi, Sotildi Hofiz, and their descendants Sofikhon, Bobokhon, and Akmalxon continued these traditions, performing sacred songs with the tanbur.

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