

Theory and practice in contemporary Central Asian Maqām traditions: the Uyghur On Ikki Muqam and the Kashmiri Sūfyāna Musīqī

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In a 1992 article, Owen Wright traces the changing modal nature of ‘Segāh Maqām’ across different historical periods. He argues that caution must be exercised in comparative studies of *maqām* across time and space; we should never assume that the use of the same name in theoretical treatises equates to the use of the same modal material in practice. In our occasional conversations about contemporary Central Asian *maqām* traditions, Wright was still more radical, and suggested more than once that in these traditions the *maqām* were little more than ‘bins’ or repositories for organising and storing repertoire.

This chapter considers the problem of theory and practice in Central Asian *maqām* traditions with reference to two distinct traditions: the Kashmiri Sūfyāna Musīqī and the Uyghur On

Ikki Muqam.¹ Both of these traditions pay homage to the Systematist School of music theory² as it was transmitted to Central Asia, but they have also evolved over time, absorbing new layers of theorisation and new kinds of repertoire, and adapting to new contexts of performance. I speculate that the imposition of different forms of musical theory in the different locations may serve to mask deeper, unmarked, similarities in performance and aesthetics. I argue that the common features shared by these traditions are in part the heritage of a shared Central Asian theoretical tradition, but also a deeply sedimented set of shared musical practices and aesthetic preferences. *Maqām* traditions in this region are closely tied to Sufi traditions of vocal practice, and I suggest that these are more significant than the elite heritage of music theory in explaining the close musical relations between different regional *maqām* traditions.

Contemporary repertoire

If we take a look at the contemporary repertoires of these two traditions, we can note broad similarities between them. In terms of structure, both traditions comprise fixed suites with a modal profile, with an unmetered introduction - an instrumental *shakl* in Sūfyāna Musīqī, a

¹ The comparison was inspired by an international seminar, *Synthesis of Raga and Maqam in Kashmiri musical culture* held in Srinagar in June 2013. I am indebted to the organiser Dilorom Karomat and our hosts in the Centre of Central Asian Studies in Kashmir.

² By the 13th century a joint Arab-Persian system of music was used through much of the Middle East and Central Asia. Its principal theorist was Safi-al Din Urmani of Baghdad who is generally regarded as the founder of the Systematist School; Wright 1978: pp. 1-19.

sung *muqāddimā* in the On Ikki Muqam - followed by a series of named, metered pieces which move from longer and slower to faster and shorter metres; some of the pieces are followed by instrumental repeats or variations, called *jawab* in Sūfyāna Musīqī or *mārghul* in the On Ikki Muqam. We cannot draw many conclusions from this. Suites structures (also termed ‘cyclic’ or ‘compound forms’) are widespread across Central Asia and beyond. Pacholczyk has suggested that the structure of the Sūfyāna Musīqī is most reminiscent of a 9th century Andalusian suite form,³ while Chinese scholars like to compare the On Ikki Muqam with the 9th century Daqu (Great Suites) of China’s Tang dynasty court.⁴

We can also note the shared names of the *maqām* in both traditions: seven of the names of the On Ikki Muqam are also found amongst the Kashmiri *maqām*: Segah, Chahargah, Panjigah, Iraq, Nava, Ozzal, and Bayat. However, as Wright is quick to point out, just as we find in other related *maqām* traditions, the shared names do not necessarily imply that the modal material is the same. It is a moot point whether at some point in history the Kashmiri and Uyghur, or indeed Bukharan Nava Maqām, indicated the same modal material, or if these prestigious names were simply grafted onto local traditions of practice without necessarily indicating the same modal profile.⁵

³ Pacholczyk 1996: p. 65.

⁴ See, for example, Gu 1985.

⁵ See, for example, Wright 1992: pp. 480-509.

I have argued elsewhere that the On Ikki Muqam have existed less as an actual repertoire and more as an idealised framework – derived from the Central Asian theoretical tradition – which surrounds a much more fluid oral tradition, from which individual musicians learn, perform, and vary different parts, and into which musicians might slot their own local repertoires and compositions.⁶ This loose web of musical practices crosses different contexts of life, many of which are directly related to traditions of Sufism. As I will argue below, this shared Sufi heritage may be particularly significant in explaining shared musical elements within the Kashmiri Sūfyāna Musīqī and the On Ikki Muqam. However, the 20th century development of the On Ikki Muqam serves to obscure this understanding of the repertoire, and hence its links with Sūfyāna Musīqī.

Central Asian Theoretical Traditions

The very name On Ikki Muqam (Twelve Maqām) seems to identify this repertoire as a direct descendent of the Systematist tradition, which was transmitted in the Central Asian context through a chain of theoretical musical treatises. Prominent examples in this written tradition include the *Risāla-i Musīqī* by Nishāpūri, written in Khorasān in the late 12th to early 13th centuries. This text is one of the earliest Persian language treatises on music, and it is the first to give the names of the twelve ‘*parda*’, a term later used interchangeably with *maqām*. According to Nishāpūri’s text, Bārbad (c.585- 629), the famous musician of the Sassānian

⁶ Harris 2008.

court of Khusrau Parviz, created seven *parda*, which were augmented to twelve by his students.⁷

Also important in the Central Asian theoretical tradition are two major treatises on music written by Abd al-Qadir al-Maraghi (d. 1435). Maraghi, who was brought by Timur⁸ from Baghdad to Samarqand, is regarded as the first major Timurid theorist. It is in his writings that the term *maqām* first becomes fully established. Wright argues that Maraghi played a significant role in determining the norms of Timurid art music, in essence by transmitting the shared Islamic art music idiom from Baghdad to Samarqand and subsequently to Herat.⁹ A version of this tradition was transmitted to Bukhara following the fall of the Timurid empire. Prominent texts from Bukhara include the 16th century treatise by Najm ad-Dīn Kavkabī, and the 17th century text by Darvish Ali Changi.¹⁰ From their writings emerges a simplified modal system in which the twelve *maqām* serve as the foundation from which the *shu'ba* (branches) and *āvāz* (voices) were derived.¹¹

⁷ Sumits 2013: p. 5.

⁸ Timur emerged as the most powerful ruler in the Muslim world in the late 14th century after defeating the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria, the emerging Ottoman Empire and the declining Sultanate of Delhi. He founded the Timurid Empire, and cultivated a reputation as a patron of art and architecture.

⁹ Wright 1996.

¹⁰ Alexandre Djumaev has published extensively on these texts. In English, see Djumaev 1992 and 1997.

¹¹ Sumits 2011: pp. 76-7.

To what extent did this theoretical tradition communicate itself to the lesser centres of Central Asia – Kashgar and Kashmir – and to what extent was it maintained in these centres through the 18th and 19th centuries? We know from Józef Pacholczyk’s detailed study that the Kashmiri Sūfyāna Musīqī tradition possesses several 18th century theoretical treatises and anthologies which link it firmly to this Central Asian tradition of musical theory. These include the *Karāmat-e-Majrā* (‘Marvel of Courses’) which Djumaev has identified as in part copied directly from 16th century Bukharan manuscripts.¹²

For the On Ikki Muqam, the primary surviving historical text is the *Tavārikh-i Musīqīyyūn* (History of Musicians), written by Mulla Mūjiz in 1854-5 on the request of the Shah of Khotan. A 1919 copy of this text was found in Khotan in 1950, and it has since become of great importance to Uyghur music history.¹³ Like the Kashmiri texts, this source also explicitly draws on earlier Persian and Arab language musical treatises. It offers no theoretical musical description, but it does provide a genealogical account of a lineage of master musicians stretching back to Fī sāghūr (Pythagoras) and including, amongst others, Abd ar-Rahmān Jāmī of the Timurid court in Herat, who is said to have created Ajam Maqām and was the teacher of Ali-Shīr Navā’ī, who created Navā Maqām. The text demonstrates that this Eastern Turki writer, like most Central Asian authors between the 13th and 20th centuries, drew in his histories on the valued cultural traditions that were part of the Islamic synthesis.¹⁴

¹² Pacholczyk 1996: pp. 45-8.

¹³ Baytur & Tömür 1982.

¹⁴ Light 2008: p. 162.

In many ways, the figure of Ali-Shīr Navāʿī exemplifies this Central Asian tradition. Navāʿī was a key cultural figure of the Timurid era, a high-ranking and wealthy official under the Timurid ruler Husayn Bāyqarā (1438–1506). With his numerous *ghazal* and historical works, he is today more commonly seen as the outstanding classical poet of the Turkic languages rather than, in Mūjiz’s conception, as a composer of *maqām*. He is claimed as a culture hero by both Uzbeks and Uyghurs, and his *ghazal* feature prominently in the contemporary Uyghur On Ikki Muqam repertoire. But his works do not fit comfortably into modern nationalist narratives. His texts are particularly praised for their seamless and sophisticated incorporation of Arabic and Persian vocabulary into the Turkic, providing a ready demonstration of the Central Asian Islamic synthesis:

*Ārabi guft’ām zāhkāt, bi farsi guft’ām khāndāt,
Bi turki sözlisām külküng bu alām mushki-bar olsun.
Ārabi guft’ām sidrāt, bi farsi guft’ām sināt,
Bi turki sözlisām köksung qizil alma, anar olsun....*

If I say in Arabic ‘your laugh’ and if I say in Persian ‘your laugh,’
And if I say in Turki ‘your laugh,’ let this world be your fragrant hair.
If I say in Arabic ‘your breast’ and if I say in Persian ‘your breast,’
And if I say in Turki ‘your breast,’ let it be a red apple, a pomegranate...¹⁵

¹⁵ Chebiyat Muqam: *muqāddimā* (attributed to Navāʿī), excerpt, as performed by Sanubar Tursun, Edinburgh festival, 2014. Translated by Rachel Harris and Aziz Isa.

Although it is not explicit, Mūjiz's writing suggests a dual understanding of *maqām*, both as a modal system that composers would use for singing a poetical text, and also as a particular composition.¹⁶ This reflects the period in which he was writing (the mid-19th century) which may be characterised as a period of transition between two understandings of *maqām*. Up to the 18th century, Central Asian theoretical texts present *maqām* as a modal system, as conventions of melody and modulation that form the basis for musicians to create, improvise, and vary their own unique musical expressions. By the 20th century in Central Asia we find this idea largely replaced by the idea of *maqām* as repertoire, exemplified by the large-scale suites known as the Shash Maqām of Bukhara, and the On Ikki Muqam of Kashgar-Yarkand. Today these large-scale suites serve as national symbols of the Uzbek and the Uyghur nations. The historical transformations they have undergone can be understood as processes of canonisation.¹⁷

Processes of Canonisation

In the mid-1950s, soon after the Chinese Communist Party had established its rule in the Uyghur region, the new authorities set up a project to preserve and order the On Ikki Muqam. They chose one musician to provide the raw material: a respected Muqam performer named Turdi Akhun. According to a 1960s biography, Turdi Akhun was born into a hereditary

¹⁶ For example, he separates the canonical 15th century *shu'ba* systems: Dūgāh, Sīgāh, Chahārgāh, from Pahlavān Muhammad's compositions based in them; see Light 2008: p.164.

¹⁷ Harris 2008.

family of musicians near Kashgar in 1881, and he wandered with his *satar* (bowed lute) on his back between the cities of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan for 50 years before being discovered by Communist Party cultural workers. He was invited to participate in recording sessions in the mid-1950s. Staff transcriptions of these recordings were published in 1960, which constituted the first notations of the On Ikki Muqam tradition.¹⁸

Following the hiatus of the Cultural Revolution, a succession of transcriptions, audio and video recordings were published. Today, Muqam performance is taught in the Xinjiang Arts College. A state-funded Muqam Research Committee and Muqam Ensemble employ over one hundred musicians, dancers and singers. They have toured extensively around China and internationally, and more recently successfully solicited UNESCO support with the 2005 proclamation of the ‘Uyghur Muqam’ on the list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Figure 2: Turdi Akhun demonstrating Muqam to the masses in the 1950s

Contemporary Chinese and Uyghur musicologists draw primarily on Western classical musical theory to describe and explain the On Ikki Muqam, and published transcriptions use staff notation. Thus, for example, the characteristic ‘limping’ rhythms found in some parts of

¹⁸ Shinjang 1960, p. 1.

the repertoire – discussed in more detail below – are rendered as a form of hemiola.¹⁹ Chinese musicologists also sometimes draw on Chinese theoretical traditions, describing – for example – the ‘unstable’ or fluctuating pitches characteristic of some of the Muqam as ‘*huoyin*’ (lively notes), a term derived from southern Chinese instrumental genres.²⁰

Under the current political instability in Kashmir, the Sūfyāna Musīqī musicians can only dream of the levels of state support currently enjoyed by the musicians of the On Ikki Muqam tradition,²¹ but the 20th century history of Sūfyāna Musīqī does show evidence of local attempts to embark on the work of canonisation. In 1983, a Kashmiri musician, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, produced a new theorisation of Sūfyāna Musīqī in his *Ramūz-e-Mūsīqī* (Secrets of Music). This new theorisation drew on multiple sources: on musicians’ practice, on the 18th century Central Asian-style treatises mentioned above, and on the theoretical traditions of Indian classical music. Aziz used the Hindu system of *thāt* to describe the scales; he drew on the *Karāmat-e-Majrā* to describe a hierarchy of *maqām* and link them to extra-musical phenomena such as the zodiac, and therapeutic powers; and he described the rhythmic modes of Sūfyāna Musīqī in terms of *tāla*, *mātra*, and drum patterns (*bols*).²² Pacholczyk argues that Aziz produced his new theory under pressure to legitimise Sūfyāna Musīqī practice, and that the use of Indian classical theory was primarily introduced in order to please the largely

¹⁹ See, for example, Shinjang 1994.

²⁰ Zhou 1995.

²¹ It was clear from the 2013 conference in Srinagar that contemporary musicians are indeed dreaming of obtaining greater state support for the tradition.

²² Pacholczyk 1996: pp. 116-7.

Hindu intellectual elite of the time.²³ Thus we see similar processes at work on both repertoires in the 20th century, drawing their theorisation away from the Islamic tradition, and towards different traditions of musical theory.

In 20th century Xinjiang, we also find evidence of the incorporation of new repertoires into the framework of the On Ikki Muqam. The canonisation of the On Ikki Muqam, and its elevation to the status of national icon, involved a number of choices. The process privileged the repertoire of certain performers over others; it also involved juxtaposing and synthesising separate performances by different musicians. When the first notations were published in the 1960s, the contents, the names, even the number of the On Ikki Muqam varied in different musicians' repertoires. Much of the extensive work of research and composition undertaken over the past few decades has been done with the aim of restoring, or recreating, the full complement of twelve suites that – it is widely assumed – once existed. A cursory look at the available historical sources suggest that this popular view is questionable at the least.

Cosmopolitan Courts and Sufi Shrines

The prevalent discourse on the On Ikki Muqam holds that their roots date back to the pre-Islamic period; that is to the 3rd to 9th century Buddhist kingdoms which occupied the same territory as today's Xinjiang region. In this interpretation, the Arabo-Persian language terminology that they currently employ is simply a more recent grafting on of theoretical

²³ Pacholcky 1996: p. 119.

terms onto an ancient, indigenous body of music. This geographically static, historically deep-rooted, and typically nationalist account appears quite at odds with Mūjiz's genealogies. The nationalist account does, however, pay homage to Mūjiz in its emphasis on two historical figures of the 16th century Yarkand Khanate. This khanate is today widely regarded as a key historical point in the transmission of the On Ikki Muqam. It is also a period when the links between Kashgar and Kashmir are prominent in the historical record.

One of the oldest extant Uyghur historical texts is Mirza Haydar Dughlat's 1541 *Tarikh-i Rashidi*. Mirza Haydar took part in a military campaign waged by Sultan Sa'id of Yarkand against Tibet. They set out with an army of 5000 in the year 1531, crossed the Karakorum pass, fought as far as Ladakh, then returned to spend the winter in the Muslim kingdom of Kashmir. They were hosted by its ruler, Sultan Muhammad Shah, who married his daughter to Sa'id as a sign of the warm relations between the two kingdoms. On his way back to Yarkand, Sa'id died of altitude sickness on the mountain pass, his son Abdurashid took the throne, and Mirza Haydar went into exile in Kashmir. There he wrote, in the scholarly lingua franca of Persian, his history of the Yarkand Khanate, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, named after the ruler who had exiled him.²⁴

The period of Abdurashid's rule (1533-1560), for which Mirza Haydar is the principal source, is portrayed today as a golden age in Uyghur history, a cultural flowering. In the course of his rule, Abdurashid concluded treaties with the Khanate of Bukhara and the

²⁴ Bellew 1999: p. 39.

Moghul Empire. He welcomed, and granted land to, the Naqshbandi Sufi teacher Ahmad Kasani, also known as Makhdum-i ‘Azam (the Great Master), from Samarqand. This marked the beginning of the political ascendancy of the Naqshbandi Sufis in this region.²⁵ We can see from Mūjiz’s brief account that the Yarkand court of this period was musically cosmopolitan, participating in the elite musical and literary culture shared across Central Asia. The last two musical masters in Mūjiz’s genealogy are attached to this court: Qidir Khan Yarkandi and Amannisa Khan, wife of the Sultan. Mūjiz writes of musicians coming from as far afield as Iraq to study with Qidir Khan, and he devotes considerable space to the Sultan’s wife, Amannisa Khan, who is described as the composer of the no longer extant Maqām ‘Ishrat-i Angiz, and an outstanding singer and performer on the *satar*, with whom the Sultan was passionately in love. These two figures are widely regarded by contemporary Uyghurs as the direct transmitters of today’s On Ikki Muqam.

Figure 3: Still from a 1980s film on the life of Amannisa Khan, featuring Qidir Khan Yarkandi (centre, holding a modern *satar*), and an arrangement of musicians, choir and dancers that owes much to contemporary styles of professional troupe performance.²⁶

In many ways we might see this period in Yarkand as equivalent to the earlier reign of Sultan Zain al-‘Ābidīn (1420-70) in Kashmir, which is also regarded as a cultural golden age. Zain al-‘Ābidīn was a connoisseur and patron of music; his court was cosmopolitan and renowned

²⁵ Elias 1898.

²⁶ http://people.cs.pitt.edu/~mehmud/uyghur/music_dance.html (accessed 14/2/2015).

for its music and dance. Under his rule, several schools of music were founded in Kashmir. They invited musicians from Iran and Central Asia who were responsible for introducing Persian and Central Asian musical elements into Kashmiri practice. Pacholczyk speculates that many features of today's Sūfyāna Musīqī could be a result of this 15th century Central Asian influence.²⁷

Undoubtedly these elite histories are significant in drawing both traditions into the wider sphere of elite Islamic musical theory and practice, but we should also take into account the many other points of contact over the ensuing centuries, which might provide scope for the sharing and exchange of musical practices and ideas. Regular contacts were maintained between Kashmir and the region now known as Xinjiang – for that period more appropriately termed Altishahr (the six cities that ringed the Taklamakan desert) – through diplomacy, trade, and itinerant Sufis. Srinagar seems to have served Uyghurs as a place of exile, from the time of Mirza Haydar well into the 20th century, and traders regularly crossed the mountain passes between them. Just 20 years after Mūjiz wrote his *Tavārikh-i Musīqīyyūn*, the British diplomat Henry Bellew travelled the route from Srinagar to Kashgar in 1873 as part of a diplomatic mission,²⁸ and produced an account of the journey written to delight a British public fascinated with this newly accessible exotic realm. From his account we can see that

²⁷ Pacholczyk 1996: pp. 26-7.

²⁸ A mission sent from British India to establish relations with Yaquub Beg, the military leader from Ferghana who temporarily took Altishahr out of Qing imperial control in the late 19th century.

trade between the two regions was well established in the late 19th century. Bellew notes the patterns of export from Altishahr:

The wool of Turfan and the musk of Khutan were exported to Kashmir, the one for the manufacture of its peculiar shawls, the other for the drug market of India. ... whilst the hemp resin, or *bang*, of Yarkand formed the principal item of export in the direction of Kashmir and the Panjob.²⁹

Figure 3: Map. (Detail) 1903 Map of Central Asia made by European traveller Sven Hedin, showing Yarkand and Srinigar.

Arguably, the most direct correspondences between these two musical traditions can be traced to their relationship with the Sufi tradition, a relationship that encompasses both the elite literary tradition and popular religious practices at Sufi shrines. In his *Tavārikh-i Musīqīyyūn*, Mūjiz places strong emphasis on music as a mystical form of religious practice. He describes a *majlis* (gathering) held at the 16th century court of Babur in Kabul, at which Mavlānā Sāhib Balkhī picked up his *tanbūr* and began playing Chöl Iraq Maqām. After he passed the second *avj* [musical climax] and reached the third, a nightingale came and perched on the tuning pegs of the *tanbūr* and began to sing, causing the people at the *majlis* to shout, weep, faint, and roll about. Mūjiz also describes Navāʿī falling unconscious, overcome by

²⁹ Bellew 1999: pp. 67.

ecstasy, while singing his own *ghazals*. Both Navā'ī and his shaykh 'Abd ar-Rahmān Jāmī, were in fact followers of the Naqshbandi Sufi order,³⁰ and much of Navā'ī's poetry is redolent of images of madness, the wine shop, the rose and its thorns: all common themes of the Sufi allegory. In contemporary professional performance and published versions of the On Ikki Muqam there have been efforts to reduce the number of explicitly religious and mystical texts, but even so, many of the texts commonly used in the On Ikki Muqam, like Navā'ī's *ghazal* cited above, are still coloured with Sufi imagery.

Sūfyāna Musīqī uses a mixture of Persian and Kashmiri language poetic texts. The Persian texts are primarily attributable to the major Sufi poets such as Hafiz and Rumi. We know that at least up until the mid-20th century Uyghur singers also performed the On Ikki Muqam to a mixture of Turkic and Persian language texts, although the 20th century reforms have exorcised the Persian texts and replaced them with canonical Chagatay Turkic poetry. It is entirely feasible that the same Persian texts were shared by both traditions until the 1950s. The Kashmiri texts are equally influenced by Sufi imagery, expressing common tropes such as the longing for mystical union with the Divine (*wisal*), the mystical journey through worlds, and the wine bearer who brings divine ecstasy:

Oh my Friend, come and save my life

I am like a river, please come and bathe in it

³⁰ Founded by Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari (1318–1389).

You have bought me as a slave, please come and save my life.³¹

Sūfyāna Musīqī is traditionally performed in Sufi gatherings (*mehfil*) associated with the Qādirī order (which was established in Baghdad in the 12th century by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir Gīlanī). This was the last major Sufi order to be introduced to Kashmir, in the late 16th century. It remains the largest order in Kashmir today although it has come under pressure from reformists and Islamists in recent decades. *Mehfil* usually take place in private houses, and may take the form of weekly evening gatherings that include music and food, or all-night gatherings on religious holidays. Sūfyāna Musīqī was performed by a special caste of low-status professional hereditary musicians, hired to perform at the *mehfil*. They guarded their musical knowledge from exploitation by outsiders, but did not develop virtuosic performance techniques; musicians were judged by their command of the repertoire of poems, their ability to select the right poem to suit the mood of the *mehfil*, and to communicate its emotion effectively.³² Pacholczyk comments that some *maqām* might provoke the gathered dervishes to tears, and some might achieve ecstasy even though no actual *dhikr* was performed.³³ Although Pacholczyk does not mention it, even to the present day, Sūfyāna Musīqī is also performed weekly at some of the shrines of Sufi saints around Kashmir.³⁴

³¹ Pacholczyk 1996: p. 30.

³² Pacholczyk 1996: pp. 31-2. The limited description of the social context provided by Pacholczyk suggests a set of relationships and practices similar to those described by Regula Burckhardt Qureshi in her rich study of Qawwali in the context of Sufi *samā’* ritual (2006).

³³ Pacholczyk 1996: p. 40.

³⁴ M. K. Raina, personal communication, Srinagar, June 2013.

The Qādirī order is also widespread in Uyghur communities in contemporary Xinjiang. It spread into the Uyghur region from the neighbouring Ferghana valley in today's Uzbekistan, and is primarily active in the Kashgar-Yarkand area. Adherents hold weekly gatherings in Sufi lodges (*khaniqa*) and in private homes. These rituals include melodic prayers, *dhikr* and *samā'*. However, unlike the Kashmiri Qādirī *mehfil*, their rituals do not use musical instruments. The Chishti order, which came to Khotan in the 19th century, spread by merchants from India and Afghanistan, is better known for the musicality of its *samā'*.³⁵ This order has a large following in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, where it is famous for the explicit use of Qawwali music in its *samā'* rituals.³⁶ Its followers in Khotan have maintained the practice of using musical instruments (including plucked lutes and percussion) to accompany *samā'* rituals, but what they play is very different from Qawwali, and more closely related to parts of the On Ikki Muqam.³⁷

The songs of the *samā'* rituals of the Uyghur Chishti Sufis are principally associated with a group of people known as *ashiq*: the Sufi mendicants who congregate at the shrines of Islamic saints which are found across Xinjiang, but especially in Khotan. These shrines

³⁵ For further details on Sufi orders in Xinjiang, see Zarcone 2002: pp. 534-41.

³⁶ For detailed discussion of Qawwali in Afghanistan see Baily 1988. For Pakistan, see Burckhardt Qureshi 2006.

³⁷ Clips of this kind of *samā'* ritual can be seen on the website 'Sounding Islam in China', <http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=778> (accessed 16/2/2015).

(*mazar*) are ubiquitous in the landscape, and form a key part of religious practice in the region; even small villages have holy graves, and the shrines of more important figures are the focus of large-scale pilgrimage, and the site of huge festivals held annually to celebrate the birthday of the saint.³⁸ They are often believed to be built where Islamic martyrs fell in battle, but in fact many are built on ancient Buddhist sites. Thus many of them are found deep in what is now inhospitable desert, constructed when the place was fertile. These are not major monuments like the shrine of Yasavi in Turkestan or the shrine of Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer; most have survived the centuries marked only by a few flag poles – remarkable testaments to the strength and tenacity of community memory.³⁹

Amongst the Uyghurs the meaning of *ashiq* (literally ‘lover’) differs somewhat from meanings in other parts of the Islamic world.⁴⁰ The *ashiq* are religious mendicants and musicians who can still today be found across the Xinjiang region, singing in town bazaars and especially congregating at the shrines where pilgrims are generous with their charity. At festivals, people crowd around the *ashiq* as they sing and pray, seeking the blessings (*baraka*) that are thought to accrue from their presence. The signature instruments of the *ashiq* are the simple *sapaya* percussion sticks, made from wood or ibex horn and hung with a pair of metal

³⁸ Over the past few decades these shrine festivals have been periodically restricted under the tight controls on religious practices in Xinjiang.

³⁹ See Thum 2014 for further details on the shrines and associated pilgrimage tradition.

⁴⁰ The *ashiq* bards of eastern Turkey and Azerbaijan, for example.

rings, but they may also play *tash*, a pair of flat stones struck together, and sometimes frame drums and plucked lutes, usually the *rawap* or *tämbur*.⁴¹

Figure 4. Ashiq at the Imam Hasim shrine festival near Khotan, 1990. Photo courtesy of Rahile Dawut.

The term *ashiq* appears to be a relatively modern usage for the people once more commonly known as dervishes or *qalandar*, perhaps adopted to avoid the stigma now associated with these terms. The British diplomat Henry Bellew encountered a group during his visit to Yarkand in 1873:

As we proceed, we come to a group of men and boys around a party of dancing dervishes. The rogues brave the cold in their tatters, and drown care in the wild song of their calling, and free life of their selection. They wear a high-peaked conical hat with a bushy edging of fur, and carry a leopard, or antelope, or other skin hanging on the back. Swung in front is the beggars' trough [a hollow gourd for drinking?], and in the hand is

⁴¹ Harris & Dawut 2002; Harris 2009. See also the film by Liu Xiangchen: *Ashiq: The Last Troubadour* (The View Culture & Media, 2009).

a stout club, or an iron mace set with jingling bells [*sapaya*]. This last is the music that accompanies their song, and gives the time to their step in the dance.⁴²

A somewhat different picture emerges from a local Uyghur scholar's account of *qalandar* and dervishes, written in the early 20th century by Muhammad Ali Damollah of Kashgar, and translated by the Swedish missionary, Gunnar Jarring. Damollah distinguishes carefully between the 'true' dervishes who do not accept money, and the many liars, beggars and cheats who imitate them. The 'true' dervishes perform *dhikr* and recite *hikmat* (the poetry of Ahmed Yasavi), and they say 'we are united with God in the same way as rain-water is joined with river-water'.⁴³ Damollah's description of *qalandar* repeats the distinction between 'true' *qalandar* and thieves. 'True' *qalandar* play the *sapaya*, perform a whirling dance, and sing the poetry of the 17th century mendicant mystic and poet Baba Rahim Mashrab.⁴⁴

Although they have been often conflated with secular beggars, and although historical accounts are sparse, the *ashiq* or *qalandar* of Altishahr are surely related to the Sufi Qalandariyya order, which is recorded in Islamic histories since the 11th century. Mongol rule facilitated their spread from Turkey and Egypt into Central Asian and India from the 14th

⁴² Bellew 1875: pp. 278-9. The English missionaries Mildred Cable and Francesca French also write colourfully of a group of *qalandar* (*ashiq*) encountered in the bazaar in the eastern town of Turpan in the 1930s; Cable & French 1942: p. 193.

⁴³ Jarring 1987: pp. 14-6.

⁴⁴ Jarring 1987: pp. 24-6.

century onwards. In early Persian language accounts, the Qalandariyya are portrayed as people intoxicated by *qalb* (tranquillity of the heart), who reject social norms, pray and fast, and actively seek to violate orthodox behaviour. They believed that only by reducing oneself to a beggar could one experience the real value of spiritual involvement. The 11th century Persian poet and mystic Baba Tahir writes:

I am the mystic gypsy called Qalandar;
I have neither fire, home nor monastery.
By day I wander about the world, and at night
I sleep with a brick under my head.⁴⁵

As Alexandre Papas (2010) describes, the *qalandar* generally occupied a marginal place among conventional Muslims, admired by some for their spiritual exploits but feared and mistrusted for their disobedience to conventional law and social norms. Though many mystics adhered closely to orthodox Islam while pursuing their more esoteric practice, others lived unconventional lives, self-consciously breaking religious rules in order to gain mystical insight.⁴⁶ The Qalandariyya often found themselves in a hostile relationship with the settled *khaniqa* life of other Sufi orders, but in places they also seem to have merged with more settled orders, and formed hybrid orders, such as the Qalanderiyya-Chishtiyya of northern India.⁴⁷ The itinerant *qalandar* seem to have moved quite freely across Central Asia in the 18th-19th centuries. Another British traveller, Henry Landsell tells of a group of *qalandar* from Kashgar whom he encountered in 1882, ‘prancing about the streets’ of Khiva (in

⁴⁵ Rizvi 1983: p. 301.

⁴⁶ See also Baldick 1989: pp. 98-9; Algar 1999: pp. 1-16.

⁴⁷ Rizvi 1983: p. 303.

today's western Uzbekistan), singing 'sacred songs in Persian and Turki, shouting as loudly as possible, accompanying the singing with boundings, prostrations, and whirling about'.⁴⁸ The *Diwani-i Mashrab*, a popular collection of ecstatic poetry and tales from oral tradition, chronicles the wanderings of the major 18th century mystic poet and *qalandar* Baba Rahim Mashrab as he travelled between Bukhara to Yarkand, urinating on the thrones of kings, defecating in mosques, and delighting in confounding the everyday morality of the time.⁴⁹

Ashiq and the On Ikki Muqam

These itinerant Sufi mendicants may seem far removed from the low-status but respectable urban musician caste who perform the Sūfyāna Musīqī.⁵⁰ They seem a still less likely source for the formation of a national musical canon, but we know that their songs are closely related musically to parts of the On Ikki Muqam as it is sung on the professional stage today, in particular the free-metered opening *muqāddimā* section and final *māshrāp* metered dance sections of the On Ikki Muqam.⁵¹ As I will argue below, these are the sections of the Muqam which also share prominent stylistic attributes with the Sūfyāna Musīqī repertoire. Interviews with contemporary Uyghur musicians confirm the relationship between the *ashiq* and the On

⁴⁸ Lansdell 2011: pp. 484-5.

⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion and annotated translation, see Papas 2010.

⁵⁰ The Kashmiri scholar Mushtaq Kaw suggests that the Kashmiri Rishis are related with the 'ascetics' (presumably the *ashiq*) of Xinjiang, though he does not provide any evidence for this claim; Kaw 2010: p. 253. See Ramsey 2012: pp. 197-200 for further discussion of the Rishi.

⁵¹ Zhou 1999: pp. 248-266.

Ikki Muqam. Abdurishit, the son of a well-known 20th century Muqam performer, Qadirazi Muhämmät, told me:

My father, in order to learn *muqam*, *mäshräp* and many other things, wherever there were *ashiq*, wherever there were dervishes he would go to learn with them ... and in that way he learned the full *muqam*. The *ashiq* know the *mäshräp* well.⁵²

Qawul Akhun, the son of Turdi Akhun, also describes how his father:

... would go to a *gulkhan*, which is a house where they sold meat and tea and smoked *näshä* [hashish] ... He went with the intention of learning *mäshräp* songs, but they would not let him in if he did not smoke *näshä*. All of the performers were *ashiq*.⁵³

Unsurprisingly, this version of the transmission of the Uyghur national canon is not privileged in official accounts but it attests to the close, and recent, links between the *ashiq* repertoire and the On Ikki Muqam. The links appear still clearer when we consider the source of much of the poetry of the *mäshräp* sections of the Muqam: the *ghazal* of the region's best-loved *qalandar*, Baba Rahim Mashrab (in the modern Uyghur pronunciation: Mäshräp).

Much of this poetry is in the ecstatic mystic tradition:

Ishqida köymäs hechkim diwana bolmaghunchä,

⁵² Interview, Almaty, July 2003.

⁵³ Light 2008: p. 113.

*Shäm 'idä yanmas hechkim pärwanä bolmaghunchä,
Söymäs sädäpni hechkim durdanä bolmachunchä,
Ädhäm supät dunyadin biganä bolmaghunchä*

No one will burn in love unless he is insane,
No one will burn in a candle flame unless he is a moth,
No one will love an oyster unless there is a pearl,
No one will be like Adam until they forget the world.⁵⁴

Another couplet by Mashrab that appears in Turdi Akhun's rendition of *māshrāp* songs, but has been eliminated from the revised editions, makes the links with the *qalandar* perfectly explicit:

*Män qäländär shahimän, aläm manga wäyranädur,
Paytäkhti gülkhänim, ordam qäländär khanädur.*

I am the king of the *qalandar*, the world is desolate to me,
My capital is the hashish house, my court is the place of the *qalandar*.⁵⁵

Musical style and instrumentation

I now turn back to the two repertoires as they are performed today, in order to highlight some of the similarities between them. Both genres are traditionally performed by a group of male voices supported by bowed and plucked lutes, zither and percussion. The bowed *sāz-e-*

⁵⁴ Translation by Nathan Light 2008: p. 113.

⁵⁵ Light 2008: p. 288.

kashmīrī with its bowl-shaped body and sympathetic strings, which is generally regarded as unique to Kashmir, is in fact very similar to the Dolan *ghijäk*, a type of large bowed lute still used in one regional form of Uyghur Muqam which has escaped the modernisation undergone by most other Uyghur instruments in the 20th century.⁵⁶

Figure 5. Dolan ghijäk

Figure 6. Sāz-e-kashmīrī

In Sūfyāna Musīqī the *santur* hammered zither takes a central position in the ensemble, usually played by the lead musician, whereas the lead role in Uyghur ensembles is traditionally taken by the bowed *satar* long-necked lute or the *tāmbur* plucked lute. This kind of small, hammered zither is now rarely found in Uyghur amateur ensembles, but they feature more strongly in early 20th century recordings from the region.⁵⁷ The On Ikki Muqam is

⁵⁶ They differ slightly in the construction of the body, and in that the *sāz-e-kashmīrī* has three melodic strings of gut or metal, while the Dolan *ghijäk* has one melodic string of horsehair. One of the two tuning pegs visible in the picture is cosmetic; tuning pegs are called *qolaq* (ears), and ‘an instrument must have two ears’ (interview, Yasin Muhpul, August 2000). For details of the *sāz-e-kashmīrī* see Pacholczyk 1996: p. 38; for the Uyghur *ghijäk*, see Trebinjac 2000: pp. 200-5.

⁵⁷ See, for example, *Before the Revolution: A 1909 recording expedition in the Caucasus and Central Asia by the Gramophone Company* (British Library Sound Archive, 2002). Larger hammered dulcimers called *chang*, identical to the Chinese *yangqin*, are commonly used in contemporary large Uyghur professional troupes.

accompanied by the small frame drums (*dap*, *doira*) that are found widespread around Central Asia, whereas the *dokra* used in Sūfyāna Musīqī are identical to Indian *tabla*, and use the same techniques and technical vocabulary.

Some aspects of musical style found in the Sūfyāna Musīqī repertoire appear to link them directly to the sections of the On Ikki Muqām which come from the ecstatic songs of the *ashiq*. In both traditions, the unmetred introductory sections – the *muqāddimā* of the On Ikki Muqām and the *shakl* in Sūfyāna Musīqī – lay out the tonal and melodic material of the *maqām*. Both the Kashmiri and Uyghur instruments are tuned to diatonic scales but the voices often use microtonal intervals. The realisation of the melodic line and details of ornamentation in these sections, especially by the bowed lutes – the *sāz-e-kashmīrī* and the Uyghur *satar* – are strikingly similar with their characteristic use of slides up or down a third or a fourth, and sustained vibrato.

Figure 7. Melodic detail in *sāz-e-kashmīrī* performance⁵⁸

Also of note is a more specific correspondence: in certain *maqām* in both traditions, the third and seventh steps of the scale are what we might term ‘unstable’ or fluctuating pitches: played higher in ascending passages, lower in descending passages. This is not a unique

⁵⁸ Transcribed from a short excerpt in the documentary film *Mann Faqeerī*, directed by M. K. Raina (2012).

phenomenon; it is also found in genres of Arabic music where such pitches are termed *mutaghayyir* ('changeable'). Pacholczyk notes that in Sūfyāna Musīqī the singers raise or lower the pitch by microtonal intervals, while musicians either play the nearest available diatonic note causing a clash, or omit these pitches on their instruments.⁵⁹ In the On Ikki Muqam these fluctuating pitches are always performed on instruments with vibrato; possibly a neater solution to the same problem. In Nawa *muqāddimā* in the On Ikki Muqam, for example, the third and seventh steps are fluctuating pitches, oscillating between two pitches a semitone apart. This is easily observed in a version performed by Abdulla Mājnun on the bowed *diltar*; here the third step oscillates between F (with vibrato below to E) and F sharp (with vibrato above to G), and the seventh shifts between B (with vibrato above to C) and B flat (with vibrato below to A).⁶⁰

Figure 8. Nawa Muqam, *muqāddimā* (excerpt), instrumental version performed on the bowed *diltar* lute by Abdulla Mājnun.

In terms of rhythm, there are striking correspondences between metres found in the later sections of both the On Ikki Muqam and the Sūfyāna Musīqī suites. Of note in the Sūfyāna Musīqī tradition are two metres (*tala*) which are placed at end of the suites: *setāla* and

⁵⁹ Pacholczyk 1996: pp. 68-9.

⁶⁰ For biographical details, and further analysis of Abdulla Mājnun's performance style, see Harris 2008: pp. 45-66.

chapāndāz.⁶¹ Both of these metres are discussed as if they contain beats of equal length, but in performance some beats are lengthened. Thus the metre *chapāndāz* is described by musicians as being of six beats (*mātras*): 1 + 2 + 3, following a system of stroke elaboration taken directly from Indian tabla technique. Pacholczyk comments that while this could normally be rendered in the Western classical tradition in a time signature of 6/8, what he hears in performance is 14/16, thus:



The *setāla* metre is theorised as twelve *mātras*: 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 but, according to Pacholczyk, is rendered in performance as 28/8 (or four bars of 7/8), thus:



Heard in performance, these are evidently types of ‘limping rhythms’, which are also very characteristic of the *māshrāp* sections of the On Ikki Muqam. A ‘limping’ three-beat (i.e. with a lengthened final beat) is the more natural way to conceive both of these rhythms, but in the transcriptions below I have followed Pacholczyk’s suggestion, which is also usual practice in modern Uyghur musicology, and transcribed them in 7/8 with use of hemiola (two quavers in the space of three).

⁶¹ Pacholczyk 1996: p. 64.

Figure 9: Rak Muqam, first *māshrāp*, excerpt, sung by Abdulla Mājnun (transcribed an octave above actual pitch).⁶²

Compare this with an excerpt from the *setāla* section of Segah Maqām in Sūfyāna Musīqī, transcribed according the same convention:

Figure 10. Segah Maqām, *setāla*, excerpt, sung by Ustad Muhammad Yaqoob Sheykh and his students, Srinigar 2013, (transcribed an octave above actual pitch).

Any attempt to transcribe these rhythms into a regular metre inevitably involves the artificial imposition of a constraining framework, which belies their flexibility. Jean During provides detailed analytical investigation and discussion of these kinds of rhythms in Tajik-Uzbek and Baluchi traditions, which are clearly related to the phenomenon in Uyghur and Kashmiri traditions. During argues that in these rhythms we are dealing with beats of two, or even three, different lengths within a single cycles, and prefers to term them ‘ovoid’ (egg-shaped rather than circular) rhythmic cycles.⁶³ Alexandre Djumaev notes that the limping asymmetrical rhythms which are systematised in the Tajik-Uzbek *maqām* traditions, such as the *talqincha*, are closely linked to the trance-inducing rhythms of Sufi *dhikr* rituals (2002:

⁶² *Mājnun: Classical Traditions of the Uyghurs* (SOASIS, 2004).

⁶³ During 1997. See also Benjamin Koen’s discussion of rhythm and affect in Badakhshani ritual maddoh performance; Koen 2005.

937). The phenomenon of limping rhythms is not confined to Central Asian traditions; if we look further west, we again find the limping rhythms of courtly traditions closely related to Sufi *samā'* practices. Walter Feldman provides a detailed discussion of the *aksak semā'i* rhythm (the term is likely etymologically linked to the Sufi *samā'*) in the Ottoman repertoire, which he believes to be derived from the Mevlevi ritual, and possibly linked to Central Asian traditions.⁶⁴ While contemporary more formalised Turkish *aksak* rhythm cycles do not display the striking 'ovoid' nature of the Central Asian limping rhythms, in this volume, Ekinci suggests that during the 18th century Semai *usul* may have been performed with an uneven internal division, i.e., as an ovoid rhythm.⁶⁵ Arguably, then, they too form part of this widespread pattern of incorporating limping rhythms from Sufi traditions into art music and folk music repertoires.

Conclusion

⁶⁴ Feldman 1996: 461-2; 477-8. See also Jerome Cler's (1994) discussion of *aksak* rhythms in Turkish folk traditions.

⁶⁵ This supposition explains the lack of a consistent definition and notation of Semai in pre-19th century sources. Ekinci argues that a high degree of variation and spontaneity in performance practice was gradually replaced by clearly defined patterns and a strict differentiation between regular and limping styles of performance, again evidencing the historical tensions between theory and practice.

Following Owen Wright's hypothesis, we may argue that historically as well as today, Central Asian *maqām* traditions have existed less as actual repertoires of music and more as idealised frameworks surrounding more fluid oral traditions. As Pacholczyk notes, the Sūfyāna Musīqī was theorised first in the mid-18th century, drawing on the Systematist school of *maqām* theory, and again in the mid-20th century, when this tradition was juxtaposed with Indian *rāga* theory. At both points, this theorisation occurred in response to social and political pressures to intellectualise the musical practice, and it was done by superimposing existing theoretical traditions rather than by developing new ones to actually describe musical practice.⁶⁶ In 20th century Xinjiang, in the story of Turdi Akhun and the *ashiq*, we have clear evidence of the ways in which musicians insert new repertoire into *maqām* frameworks, again acting in response to new social and political forces. If we understand these practices, not as somehow exceptional or deviant, but as characteristic of the development of *maqām* traditions in Central Asia, this understanding of Central Asian *maqām* builds a picture of musical creativity, flexibility and change across multiple contexts of performance.

Even in contemporary Xinjiang, professional stage performances and *ashiq* singing at shrine festivals exist side by side, and they continue to influence each other. The Sūfyāna Musīqī and the On Ikki Muqam share a heritage of Central Asian musical theory, but we can see that this heritage is subject to change and is always locally interpreted and practised. The two traditions share the names of various *maqām*, but in terms of actual musical correspondences this may be less significant than the finer points of melodic and rhythmic style that they share. These aspects of shared style suggest links which are much more immediate in terms

⁶⁶ Pacholczyk 1996: p. 120.

of geography and history, and rooted in shared practices of musical performance at Sufi shrines. 20th century national borders have interrupted historical patterns of cultural exchange in this region, and the nationalist tendency to understand these traditions in ethnically exclusive, geographically limited terms has obscured the historical links between these neighbouring traditions, but these links are still audible in contemporary performance and deserve to be better recognised and understood.

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