

UZBEK MUSIC

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Please note that this paper was originally written before the breakup of the USSR, so it reflects the pre-independence situation in Uzbekistan

Introduction

Central Asia stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Gobi Desert in the east, and from the steppes of Kazakhstan in the north to the Hindu Kush mountain range in Afghanistan in the south.¹ As such, it encompasses territory contained in three separate geopolitical countries: The Soviet Union, China, and Afghanistan. Within this area one may find a rich geographic diversity - ice and snow-covered mountain peaks, alpine meadows, evergreen forests, lush agricultural valleys, steppes, deserts and oases.

Equally as diverse are the peoples dwelling in this part of the world. Five of the six largest indigenous groups are Turkic-speaking: the Kazakhs, the Kirghiz, the Turkmen, the Uighurs, and the Uzbeks. The Tajiks, who comprise the other major indigenous group in the area, are Iranian-speaking. Other traditionally Muslim groups living in Central Asia include the Karakalpaks, the Tatars, and the Dungans (Chinese Muslims) in Soviet Central Asia; the Tatars and the Hui (this is the Chinese name for the Dungans) in Chinese Central Asia; and the Pathans and Hazaras in Afghan Central Asia. In addition, many Han Chinese have moved into Chinese Central Asia, as have numerous Russians, Ukrainians, and ethnic Germans in Soviet Central Asia.

The variety of physical environments and cultural backgrounds found in Central Asia has resulted in a broad spectrum of lifestyles amongst the inhabitants. Nomadic shepherds and horse breeders still live in portable *yurts* (circular felt tents) as they travel with their flocks and herds from pasture to pasture. More sedentary peasants live in mud-walled villages or work on collective farms. The area is well-known for its agricultural products, including cotton, wool, silk, rice, melons and other fruits, nuts, and spices. City-dwellers in Soviet Central Asia often live in modern high-rise apartment complexes and have access to a large selection of modern conveniences. In the cities one can see old men, known as *aqsaqals* (white beards), going to market in multicoloured traditional robes and turbans and the *chaykhana* (tea house) is still a popular gathering place to hear the latest gossip. Younger men and women, however, usually dress in Western clothing. This mixture of the old and the new can also be seen in the diversity of modes of transportation used: every thing from camels, horses, and donkeys to cars, buses and airplanes.²

¹ Some use the term *Central Asia* to include parts of Siberia, Mongolia or Tibet as well, but this paper will isolate the term to the areas of Central Asia where Turkic-speaking peoples predominate.

² A good source for more details on the lifestyles of Central Asians in what is now the USSR, both before and after the Russian conquest of the area, is Elizabeth E. Bacon, *Central Asians Under Russian Rule: A Study in Culture Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966).

Amidst all this diversity, however, one thing serves as a unifying factor, a sort of “social glue” for the indigenous people of Central Asia: the religion of Islam. Not that the Muslims of Central Asia are the most devout in the world. On the contrary, at least in the Soviet Union and China, the result of decades of anti-religious Communist propaganda has had a detrimental effect on all organised religion, including Islam.

Although in Afghanistan nearly all Central Asians would strongly identify with Islam as their religion, the situation is different in Soviet and Chinese Central Asia, where Islam is largely viewed as a cultural factor, not a religious one. In truth, no one knows the actual number of genuine believers; estimates range from five percent to 65 percent. It is very likely that, at least in Soviet Central Asia, “official Islam” (that which is regulated by the government) is only the tip of the iceberg and that “parallel Islam” (clandestine groups, which are run by the Sufi brotherhoods) has a much greater hold on the population than the government cares to admit.

However, even though the state of Islam as a religion is slightly ambiguous, its status as a sociocultural force is not. Though many younger Soviet Central Asians would claim to be atheists, they still regard themselves as ethnic Muslims and participate in the Muslim rituals which distinguish them from the non-Muslims in their midst. Chief among these are circumcision, the Muslim wedding, the Islamic funeral rites, and certain key Muslim festivals and holidays (such as *Eid al-Fitr* the breaking of the fast at the end of the holy month of Ramazan).³

As can be imagined, the incorporation of most of Central Asia into either Russia or China (a process which was completed in the nineteenth century) and the consequent influx of either Russians or Chinese into the area has resulted in a significant clash of cultures. Although overt attempts to “throw off the yoke” have been infrequent and unsuccessful, latent animosity towards the “foreigners” is fairly widespread. As a result, there is little social contact between the indigenous peoples and those who represent the dominant ethnic groups in the Soviet Union and China (i.e. Russians and Han Chinese). This lack of racial harmony merely serves to aggravate a situation which is already difficult for the respective governments to handle.

As far as Moscow and Beijing are concerned, Central Asia is a politically strategic area for several reasons. Both countries conduct nuclear tests in the area. Furthermore, both have amassed large armies along their mutual border, suspicious that the other might try to invade or annex some of their territory. Central Asia is also rich in natural resources, both agricultural and mineral. In addition, there is the potential for the overflow of Islamic fervor from Iran and Afghanistan, countries which have strong historical and cultural ties with Central Asia. The current state of ethnic unrest in the USSR and the rapid population growth

³ For more in-depth information on the current status of Islam in Soviet Central Asia, please see Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1985); Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejray, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1967); Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1985).

of the Soviet Central Asians provide additional cause for Moscow to be uneasy about the area and its inhabitants.⁴

Who are the Uzbeks?

Before looking at their music, it will be helpful to understand who the Uzbeks are and where they have come from, historically speaking. The 1989 Soviet census gives a figure of 16,686,240 Uzbeks living in the USSR.⁵ Approximately two-thirds of these Soviet Uzbeks live in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (also known as Uzbekistan, meaning “land of the Uzbeks”). The second largest concentration of Uzbeks is in northern Afghanistan, adjacent to Soviet Central Asia. Prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979, there were anywhere from 500,000 to 1,650,000⁶ in Afghanistan, but many of these have now either fled as refugees to Pakistan or been killed in the war. The third largest grouping of Uzbeks is in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region (also known as Sinkiang) in the People’s Republic of China. This group is significantly smaller: in 1986 there were only about 14,000. However, there are also 6,300,000 Uighurs (1986 figure) who are very closely related linguistically to the Uzbeks, in Xinjiang. In addition, there are expatriate Uzbeks in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and various Western countries, including the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia. The total world population of Uzbeks, then, is probably somewhere around 18 million.

The Uzbeks are relative late-comers on the scene in Central Asia. The area was originally inhabited by Iranian-speaking peoples. Under Cyrus (who reigned 559-529 BC) and Darius I (who reigned 521-486 BC), much of Central Asia was incorporated into the Persian empire. Several centuries later, the armies of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) invaded the region, capturing Samarkand (known at that time as Maracanda).

The origin of the Turkic peoples in what is now Mongolia and Siberia is clouded in obscurity, due to the absence of reliable historical records. They first appeared on the scene as a distinct and significant political force in 552 AD, when they established their own empire, known as the Gokturk Empire, which stretched from the Ural Mountains to Mongolia.

Islam was brought to Central Asia by the armies of the Umayyad Caliphate, which had subjugated most of the area by 715 AD. Soon, Mawarannahr (Arabic for “the land beyond the river”) became recognized as a major cultural centre in the Muslim world, as Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand became the home of many distinguished scholars and scientists, including Al-Khwarizmi, (783-847 AD) “the father of Algebra” and Ibn Sina (980-1037 AD), the great philosopher, physician and poet who is known in the West as Avicenna. Gradually, the influence of Islam grew as more and more Central Asians became Muslims. However, there continued to be political change, as the power of the Arab Caliph was subsequently replaced

⁴ The major implications of the clash between Russians and Muslims in the Soviet Union are dealt with in Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London: Croom Helm, 1983); and Michael Rywkin, *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (London: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1982).

⁵ Ann Sheehy, “Russian Share of Soviet Population Down to 50.8 Percent,” *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR* 1.42 (1989): 2.

⁶ Different sources give different estimates; see, for example Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (London: Kegan Paul, 1983) 286.

by that of the Persian Samanid dynasty and various Turkic dynasties (such as the Qarakhanids).

As if from nowhere, the Mongol armies of Chingiz Khan (1167-1227 AD) burst onto the scene in Central Asia in 1219, en route to their goal of world conquest. This brought about a great disruption of the whole way of life in the area and further ethnic intermixing in the population. After Chingiz Khan's death, his empire was divided up amongst his sons. One of them, Chagatay (after whom the classical Turkic language was later named), ruled over what is now Uzbekistan. At the same time, another part of the Mongol Empire, known as the Golden Horde, was being ruled by Khan Uzbek (1282-1342), from whom the Uzbeks were later to take their name, which means "one's own lord." However, at this time, the Uzbeks had not emerged as a group distinct from the other Turkic peoples in the area. They were merely part of the large Turkic contingent of the Golden Horde which had been converted to Islam under Khan Uzbek.

As the central power of the Mongol Khan waned, a new conqueror arose in Central Asia: Timur (1336-1405), who belonged to a Turkicized Mongol tribe. From his capital of Samarkand, he too set out to subjugate the world. By 1402, his domain stretched from Anatolia to northwest China. In his wake, the Timurid dynasty ruled in Central Asia for the next century.

The Uzbeks truly emerged as a separate group under Muhammad Shaybani Khan (1451-1510), a Turkic prince descended from Juchi, the founder of the Golden Horde. Shaybani's father, Abul Khayr (1413-1469), had led the Uzbeks south from the steppe region that the Golden Horde inhabited as a result of the desire to adopt a more sedentary way of life. Under Shaybani, the Uzbeks captured Samarkand, the former capital of the Timurids. The Shaybanid dynasty ruled most of Turkestan until the mid-seventeenth century, after which time the Uzbek Empire disintegrated, so that for the next 200 years, the area was at times part of the Persian Empire and at other times ruled by rival Turkic khanates. By the nineteenth century there were three major khanates in Central Asia, centred in the cities of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand, all of which today lie in Soviet Uzbekistan.

Meanwhile, to the north, the Russian Empire had been steadily expanding ever since 1480, when Ivan III (1440-1505), the grand prince of Muscovy, had thrown off the Mongol-Tatar yoke. By the early eighteenth century, the Russians had reached the Kazakh steppe. The expansion continued into the nineteenth century as the major cities of Turkestan fell one by one to the armies of the tsar: Tashkent in 1865, Bukhara in 1868, Khiva in 1873, and Kokand in 1875. By the end of the century, Russian power was consolidated throughout all of Central Asia.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought even more change to the area. The Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva, which had been under Tsarist protection, were proclaimed to be People's Republics in 1920 and the Governorate-General of Turkestan became an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1924, in an effort to stem Pan-Turkic sentiments, the whole of Soviet Central Asia was divided up into five territories, each eventually becoming a Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR): the Kazakh SSR, the Kirghiz SSR, the Tajik SSR, the Turkmen SSR, and the Uzbek SSR. During these tumultuous years following the advent of Soviet power in

Central Asia, many Uzbeks fled south to Afghanistan, there to join their relatives living south of the Oxus River (now known as the Amu Darya).⁷

The many different ethnic strands that have been woven into the Uzbek nation over the years have resulted in a rich multi-layered tapestry. The heritage of the original Iranian population of the area is still felt; the Uzbeks are probably the most Persianized of all the Central Asian Turks and are actually culturally closer to the Tajiks than to any of the other Turkic peoples. Another layer is represented by the various Turkic and Mongol tribes which inhabited the area prior to the Shaybanids. The third element is that of the Shaybanid Uzbeks themselves. Although there are certain groups in Uzbekistan today which trace their lineage to only one of these elements, most Uzbeks can probably count all three in their heritage. This diversity is reflected in the variety of physical appearance among the Uzbeks, reflecting both Caucasoid and Mongoloid traits.

A final note should be made on the concept that the Uzbeks have of themselves as a nation. Although they have been distinguished from other Turkic peoples since the time of Shaybani Khan, the situation prior to the Communist takeover was not as straightforward as the present regime would have us think. On the supranational level, there was still a clear consciousness that all the peoples of Central Asia were Turkestanis or, even more basically, just Muslims. At the same time there was an awareness on the subnational level of belonging to a particular tribe. In a sense, these two levels of ethnic identification were even more important than that of being an Uzbek or a Kazakh or a Kirghiz. Another means of distinguishing between people was on the basis of lifestyle. The oasis dwellers, primarily Tajiks and Uzbeks, were known as Sarts and were distinguished from those who clung to a more tribal, pastoral way of life. Seen in this light, the attempt by the Soviets to sharply delineate the Central Asian peoples appears to be somewhat artificial, reflecting the need for a political strategy of “divide and rule” more than it does a cultural awareness amongst the peoples. However, the strategy has been successful, so that now each Central Asian group, including the Uzbeks, can point to a language and culture that are its own unique possession. Part of that cultural heritage of the Uzbeks is their music, to which we now turn.

The Larger Context of Uzbek Music

Music is a vital part of any culture, acting as a means of achieving some sense of group identity and demonstrating the ethos of the culture to others. Music is one of the most effective means of portraying to outsiders what a specific group thinks and feels about itself and the world around it. This can be reflected in the musical styles employed, the practices of performers, and the structure of the melodies, rhythms, and lyrical content. Since non-Western societies usually tend to have more of a group identity than the rampantly individualistic West, their music is usually more uniform and traditional, with an emphasis on established patterns handed down through the years. This is contrary to the constant desire for “progress” and “innovation” which we observe not only in our music, but in all aspects of our Western culture. This traditional orientation can be observed in Central Asian music, and indeed in all music of the Islamic world, since Muslims tend to lay much emphasis on the family and the community (whether it is a village or an entire ethnic group). However as the

⁷ For more in depth account of the history of the Uzbeks, please see Akiner 266-74.

Muslim world is increasingly influenced by Western culture (especially in the Soviet Union), young people especially are becoming attracted to music which sounds more “modern.”

Although the specific focus of this paper is Uzbek music, the similarities between the music of all the Central Asian peoples are great enough that we will begin our examination by looking at Central Asian music in general, noting specific applications to Uzbek music as they arise. In general, whatever is said of Central Asian music can be said of Uzbek music, except where differences are noted.

The music of any culture is a complex combination of several different factors. The first of these is the original, indigenous music of the area, that which had developed before significant contacts were made with other cultures. Among the Uzbeks and indeed all the Central Asian peoples, this level of musical development is very difficult to discern, since there has been so much prolonged interaction with so many other cultures, although one could probably find elements of this if one knew where to look and what to look for. One possible example of this earliest foundational layer of musical culture may be discerned in some of the music of the Uzbeks’ “cousins,” the Turkmen, whose music is markedly different from that of the other Central Asian peoples. Several distinct features of this music include the absence of percussion and dances, and the presence of polyphony (the harmonic co-occurrence of multiple melodic lines), whereas most Middle Eastern music is monophonic (thus having a single, unaccompanied melodic line). It has been thought that, due to the Turkmen’s isolated desert habitat, they were largely untouched by subsequent invasions of the area so that their musical style has been less influenced by external sources than the music of the other Central Asian peoples. Whether or not this is the case, that there was a musical culture in the area in the first millennium BC is evident from reference to music and images of musicians and musical instruments found in writings, sculpture, terra cotta figurines, artifacts, and murals dating from this period which have been unearthed by archaeologists.

The second element involved in the formation of a musical culture is that of the borrowing of certain musical traits from other cultures as a result of casual contact through trade or migration. Since Central Asia has been at the crossroads of the various surrounding major cultural areas for centuries, there has been a constant exchange of cultural ideas between the East and the West that has taken place in this area. This has strongly affected the development of the Central Asian musical culture, as there has been interplay with the Middle East (especially the Arabs and Persians), China, India and, more recently, Russia. Not only has there been external influence on Central Asian music though. The effect has worked the other way also and there is evidence from as early as the Chinese Han dynasty (c.200 BC-220 AD) of Central Asian instruments and musical styles being used in the Chinese emperor’s courts. In fact, the official government music bureau of the T’ang dynasty (seventh to ninth centuries AD) listed Bukhara and Samarkand as two of the sources of the ten officially sanctioned musical styles being played in the royal courts at the time.⁸

The third and final aspect of a given musical culture is the process of acculturation. This involves the close, continual contact of two cultures (e.g. as a result of one group invading another), and can often result in the mutual influence of both cultures involved. This process

⁸ William P. Malm, *Music Cultures of the Pacific, the Near East, and Asia*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977) 153-54.

occurs through four distinct means: adaptation, acceptance, enculturation, and assimilation. Adaptation involves “fitting foreign traits and complexes into the pattern of the indigenous culture, so that the traits and complexes remain as clearly discernible foreign elements.”⁹ Acceptance involves “the taking over of foreign traits and complexes without change, the indigenous music usually continuing to exist side by side with the new foreign music.”¹⁰ Enculturation occurs when “the foreign musical culture is acquired in schools and through hearing recordings and radio broadcasts.”¹¹ Finally, assimilation involves the “replacement of the indigenous culture by the foreign culture,”¹² so that the former is supplanted by the latter and hence is essentially lost. All of those processes have been at play in Central Asian music as a result of contact with the two major cultural forces that have shaped the area: Islam and Communism. We will look first at the role that the former has played in the development of Central Asian music. The influence of the latter, under the Russians, will be considered later on in this paper.

The most obvious influence in Central Asian music is from the Middle East, so that it can truly be said that this music lies well within the so-called “Pan-Islamic tradition” (a term used to describe the unity of Islamic culture, especially from Morocco to Iran, which is reflected in many specific shared cultural elements, one of them being musical style). Despite all this external influence, however, there has emerged a fairly strong, uniform musical tradition that is distinctly Central Asian. The music of the area has a number of distinct styles and characteristics that reflect the specific culture of the area and set it apart from the music of other Islamic peoples. We will examine the similarities first and then take a look at the differences.

Several aspects of Middle Eastern music are evident in Central Asian music. For one, the basic instrument types (including their names) are very similar to those found elsewhere in the Islamic cultural basin. Furthermore, the microtonal structure of the instruments, and hence the music played on them, as well as the vocal accompaniment, is fairly uniform throughout the Middle East (microtones are tones that are not an exact number of semi-tones apart, such as we have in our Western musical scales). This obviously gives the music a considerably different “feel” than Western music. The prevalence of minor keys and Middle Eastern scales often gives the music a reflective, haunting, melancholic atmosphere.

As far as musical style goes, shared characteristics include homophony and complex heterometric structures (heterometry refers to the presence of more than one meter or time signature in a musical piece). The homophonic aspect of the music has resulted in a type of “parallel organ,” where added voices duplicate the melody at a higher pitch (usually a musical “fourth” or “fifth”) to produce a simple “harmony.” Thus, Middle Eastern music is either monophonic or homophonic, but never polyphonic, as our Western music is. If there is any sort of “harmony,” it is never a “counter melody,” but only an extension of the original

⁹ Johanna Spector, “Musical Tradition and Innovation,” *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 472.

¹⁰ Spector 473.

¹¹ Spector 473.

¹² Spector 473.

melody line, which is always dominant. Another aspect of Uzbek music which is true throughout the middle East is the existence of two distinct classes of music: folk music and the classical “art” music, built largely around the *maqam*, a common feature of Islamic music (to be explained below).

Yet another Middle Eastern component of Central Asian music has to do with the actual performance of the music. Until recently, this was done either individually or in small ensembles, but the Soviets, as part of their “cultural engineering,” have “collectivized” the Central Asians’ music as well as their agriculture, resulting in the institution of the more “socialistic” forms of large orchestras and choruses, elements which are foreign to traditional Middle Eastern music. Other aspects of Middle Eastern musical performance found in Central Asia include nasal, throaty, guttural singing styles, and glottal trills (trills achieved by using the glottis).

A final characteristic of Middle Eastern music that was evident in Central Asian music until recent times was the absence of a written musical notation system. Originally, music was passed down from father to son, or from teacher to pupil, using a complex oral system of notation consisting of hundreds of terms and patterns describing all aspects of the specific musical piece, including the meter (or time signature), mode (or type of musical scale), melodic pattern, and even the type of sound required. Obviously, a good memory was required along with much rote repetition, in order to retain all this information. However, written notation has been introduced to Central Asian music in recent years. This was begun by Njaz Mitzabashi Kamil, who invented the so-called Khorezm notation in the nineteenth century. This system was based on the eighteen frets (spacings on the fingerboard) of the *tanbur*, a popular Central Asian instrument, but the idea never gained great popularity. However, the Soviets have established the Western musical notation system as part of their organized system of “socializing” Central Asian music, along with the altering of the structure of the traditional Central Asian instruments so that they can play music based on Western scales which can then be written with Western notation (this process will be discussed below).

However, despite all the above similarities to Middle Eastern musical culture which have been cited, there are a number of unique and distinctive aspects of Central Asian music, chiefly in the area of performance practices. Some of these are the inclusion in songs of whistling, shouts, spasmodic inhaling, sighs, sustained vibrato notes, shrill singing in the upper register of the human voice, singing with the mouth closed, singing extremely low tones on the syllable “gu,” and singing which resembles a flute. In general, among the Tajik and Uzbek singers, the tessitura (the part of the register in which the melody lies) is high, and the melody to be sung is usually melismatic and microtonal (melisma involves the extension of one syllable over several notes, such as in a cadence). In addition there are frequent vocal embellishments (e.g. trills, mordents, etc.). Instrumental performance includes the practises of glissando, vibrato, snapping the fingers on the soundboard of the instrument, and the production of trembling, wavering, and whining sounds with the help of a bow. All of the above techniques are used on stringed instruments. In addition, it is very common to hear the vocal melody line in a song doubled on either a wind or a stringed instrument, so that voice and instrument are in unison. Instruments may also echo the voice or provide short “fills” between the vocal lines.

Narrowing the focus, one finds that there are three distinct musical subcultures in Central Asia, those of the Kirghiz and Kazakhs, the Tajiks and Uzbeks, and the Turkmen. Thus, there is a marked similarity between Uzbek and Tajik music, despite the fact that they come from two distinct ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, within Uzbekistan, there are four distinct local musical styles, those of the regions of Surkhandarya-Kashkadarya, Bukhara-Samarkand, Khorezm, and Ferghana-Tashkent. The differences in musical styles and practises in each region reflect the differences in the lifestyles of the inhabitants of these areas. Thus, in the Surkhandarya-Kashkadarya region, where a nomadic way of life existed much longer than in the other regions, songs about pastoral work are predominant. In the Bukhara-Samarkand region, however, the population is more sedentary and urbanized, thus allowing for the development of highly sophisticated “art” music. Performers tend to be more professional in this area. The urban lifestyle provides opportunities for regular social gatherings to listen to music and poetry. In the Khorezm region, the accordion, imported from Germany in the nineteenth century, is used widely! Finally, the Ferghana Valley region has two distinctive musical traits. One is *ichkari*, songs sung by women (this is not found elsewhere in Uzbekistan, since music is generally a male-dominated activity). Another feature is an “art” song style called *katta ashula* (meaning “large songs”). These are sung *a cappella* in a highly emotional atmosphere. Two or three singers create special acoustic effects through the manipulation of a tray or dish held in front of the mouth. At times, they may alternate in their singing or even compete with one another, although the last verse is sung in unison.¹³

It should be noted here that the influence of Uzbek music is not merely restricted to Uzbekistan. In Afghanistan, it is one of the three most popular types of “art” music, along with northern Indian and Iranian music. A mixture of Uzbek and Tajik music was also popular in the teahouses of northern Afghanistan prior to 1979.¹⁴

This overview should serve to show that Central Asian music in general (and more specifically, Uzbek music) is very complex and sophisticated, something which will become even more apparent as we examine Uzbek music in more detail in the remainder of this paper. This is due in part to the constant import and export of musical ideas from the surrounding cultural blocs which have made contact with the Central Asian peoples, as has been mentioned above. Another reason for the advanced development of Uzbek music is the fact that Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva were, for several centuries, amongst the “Ivy League” of the Muslim world and the feudal courts of the various dynasties which ruled in the area attracted many influential musicians who helped to fashion the distinctive “art” music of the entire Middle Eastern cultural basin during the medieval Islamic period. Thus, these flourishing centers provided one of several major climaxes of Middle Eastern culture. A final reason for the high level of musical development is the fact that the Uzbeks early on gave up a nomadic lifestyle to adopt a more settled, urbanized way of life, thus facilitating the rise of professional music and musicians.

Instrumentarium

¹³ For a good description of regional styles of Uzbek music, please consult Faizullah Karamatov, “On the Regional Styles of Uzbek Music,” trans. Mark Slobin, *Asian Music* 4.1 (1972) 48-53.

¹⁴ Two articles to consult on the role Uzbek music plays in Afghanistan are John Baily, “A System of Modes Used in the Urban Music of Afghanistan,” *Ethnomusicology* 25.1 (1981) 1-39 and Mark Slobin, “Music and the Structure of Town Life in Northern Afghanistan,” *Ethnomusicology* 14.3 (1970) 450-57.

The indigenous instruments of the Uzbeks are, in most cases very similar, if not identical, to those of the other Central Asian Muslims and, in fact, are variants of musical instruments found throughout the Middle East. However, the Uzbeks have a greater variety of instruments than the other Central Asian peoples. Representatives can be found from all three of the major instrumental groups: stringed instruments, wind instruments, and percussion instruments. The stringed instruments include both spike fiddles and lutes. In the former class are the *qobuz* and *ghijjak*, both of which are played with a bow. Among the lutes are the two-stringed *dutar*; the three-stringed *tanbur*; the two-stringed *dombira*; the *rabab*, a two-stringed lute played with a plectrum (pick); and the *setar*, a three-stringed lute with additional sympathetic strings, which is played with a bow (sympathetic strings are resonating, drone-like strings). One could also include in this stringed group the *chang*, a 48-string dulcimer, played with a plectrum.

The wind instruments are primarily woodwinds, although there is one brass instrument. Among the woodwinds are the *nay*, and the *sibizgha*, both transverse flutes (played to the side); the *quray*, a longitudinal flute (played frontally); the *qoshnay* and the *balabam*, both clarinets; and the *surmay*, an oboe. The single brass instrument is the *karnay*, a six and a half to eight foot long brass trumpet. It should be noted that several of these instruments, especially the *surmay* and the spike fiddles, produce very plaintive, nasal and at times, whining sounds, qualities often matched by Central Asian singers.

There are a number of percussion instruments also, including the *dol*, a drum; the *naghara*, which are kettle drums played in pairs; the *doira*, a large drum fitted with snares (similar to our Western snare drum); the *qayraq*, which are stone castanets; the *qoshuq*, which are spoon castanets; and finally, the *safail*, which are short metal rods with circling metal jingles. Drums play a major role in Central Asian music and are rarely absent from a song, especially a folk song. One other instrument is found in the area which does not seem to fit into any of the above categories: the *changqobuz*, a type of jaw's harp (or "Jew's harp," as we would call it).

The instruments were traditionally made of a variety of materials, mostly wood, but also gourd or coconut covered with animal skin (the body of the *ghijjak*), cane or reed (the *qoshnay* and the *sibizgha*), and copper or brass (the *karnay*). Strings could be made of either animal gut or metal and bows of horsehair. It is interesting to note that the construction of some of these instruments is very similar to that of certain Chinese instruments. In fact, the *tanbur*, *qobuz*, *rabab*, and *chang* have almost identical counterparts in China, due to the activity of Chinese traders who took Central Asian instruments back to their homeland in earlier centuries.

The instruments may be played either solo or in ensembles. Solo instruments vary according to the geographical region and the musical style. For instance, the dominant instrument in the Surkhandarya-Kashkadarya region is the *dombira*, whereas in the Khorezm region, the *dutar* and *balabam* are the most popular. Among the Uzbeks in northern Afghanistan, prior to 1979, the *damburachi* (skilled *dombira* players) used to play in the *chaykhanas* (teahouses) on market days and religious holidays to the exclusively male clientele of the market. Sometimes they were accompanied by one or two singers to form a small "band." The *doira* is also a popular solo instrument and a skilled player can play complex rhythmical patterns in various permutations and combinations, so that audiences may sit and listen for literally hours. The

doira is often used to play dance rhythms and a variety of sounds can be obtained by hitting different parts of the drum, so that one gets the effect of several drums.

The instrumental ensembles were originally of two basic types: the classical ensemble and the military ensemble. The classical ensemble consisted of professional musicians who played “art music.” Among the Uzbeks and Tajiks, these ensembles usually consisted of a *nay*, a *tanbur*, and a *doira*, but other instruments could be added to play the *shashmaqam* (a Central Asian musical suite, to be explained below). The military ensembles were larger, usually consisting of two *surmayas* (which played the melody), one pair of *naghara* (which kept the beat), and two *karnays* (which improvised fanfares throughout the musical piece). *Karnays* were always played in pairs and had no set musical score to follow. These ensembles were maintained in the above form for 300 years, before the Soviets began to introduce changes.

One of the most interesting facts about these instruments is that they are microtonal. Thus none of them corresponds to the Western chromatic scale, though several of them correspond to the Pythagorean chromatic scale, devised by Pythagoras (c. 580-500 BC), a Greek mathematician and philosopher who came up with a whole system of musical scale formations based on numerical relationships. These modes also form the basis of the Gregorian liturgical chants, whose mystical feel is not unlike that of much Middle Eastern music.

Until recently, most Central Asian music was performed either by soloists or in small ensembles. There was a good reason for this: virtually none of the instrumental tunings corresponded with any others. There were some similarities, particularly within the major groups (i.e. winds and strings), but only certain combinations were possible, unless one enjoyed discord! This may be due in part to the fact that Middle Eastern instruments in the past were structured on the basis of ancient magical and cosmological measurements and thus were not designed specifically for acoustical or musical accuracy.

However, this state of affairs was not acceptable to the Soviet policy of collectivization in all areas of life. Therefore, in order to facilitate the growth of larger ensembles and even choral music among the Central Asians (as has been mentioned, two very foreign, European influences), the tunings of the instruments needed to be adjusted. In addition, the timbre of certain Central Asian instruments was discovered to be unsuitable for large ensemble playing. All of this necessitated the complete reconstruction of most of the instruments. This process began in 1933 and continued for several decades. An American ethnomusicologist who visited Tashkent in 1971 was able to observe these reconstructed instruments and the process by which they are produced and was quite impressed with the end products, which were apparently true works of craftsmanship, some of which were judged by Uzbek musicians to be superior to the original instruments.¹⁵

Uzbek Folk Music

Uzbek folk music basically falls into two categories: vocal and instrumental. The folk songs will be examined first. There is a broad diversity of folk song genres that have developed over

¹⁵ For a Western account of the contemporary musical situation in Uzbekistan, please see Mark Slobin, “Conversations in Tashkent,” *Asian Music* 2.1 (1971) 7-13.

the years, many drawing on everyday life experiences. Thus, there are work songs, wedding songs, funeral laments, love songs, lullabies, children's songs, songs of social protest, historical narrative songs, epic songs and magical and medicinal songs.

The work songs reflect the primary occupations of the Uzbeks, including songs to sing while sowing, harvesting, threshing, weaving, or working with metal, among many others. The examples given below all come from a book written by Viktor Beliaev, a prominent Soviet musicologist. Thus, they have probably been selected to support the contentions of the present regime that the Uzbek people were horribly oppressed under the old feudal social structure and hence were constantly looking forward to a better social order, an aspiration only fulfilled under the Soviets. One such work song is "Charkh" ("Spinning Wheel"), which protests the injustices suffered by women under the institution of polygamy:

My spinning-wheel throws off the thread,
Foretelling some misfortune!
May polygamy be cursed,
With daily fights of rival wives!
My spinning-wheel throws off the thread
Foretelling some misfortune!¹⁶

Another song in this category is "Padachi" ("Shepherd's Song") in which the shepherd rants and raves about his cruel *bai* (landlord):

I herd the flock in July,
My sheep are exhausted from heat,
The bai assigned me a fine of three thousand,
Damn this kind of work!¹⁷

There are also ceremonial songs for significant "rites of passage". The wedding songs "Yar-yar" ("Dear, Dear") and the laments "Yighi" ("Funeral Lament") are two examples of this type of song. Actually there are many different "Yar-yar" songs, all characterized by the standard refrain of "yar-yar," but each containing different stanzas. Here is one example:

My father gave away
A star in the sky, yar-yar!
Not recognizing his daughter,
My father sold her, yar-yar!
Instead of his daughter,
Let him plant a pistachio tree, yar-yar!
If it grows up,
Let him count it as a child, yar-yar!
My earring fell
Among noisy reeds, yar-yar!
An untested youth

¹⁶ Viktor M. Beliaev, *Central Asian Music*, trans. Mark and Greta Slobin (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1975) 258-59.

¹⁷ Beliaev 258.

Got my sister, yar-yar!¹⁸

There are also different types of “Yighi” songs, some sung in an improvisational manner, others sung by professional mourners. Here is an example of the latter:

A hawk took flight high above the earth; woe!
He flew from my hands to the sky like an arrow.
I am left quite alone, I regret my friend.
Tears flow all day from my eyes like a river.
Woe unto me! How shall we live?¹⁹
(At this point, the singer begins to weep)

There are many types of love songs, often utilizing similes from nature to describe the one to whom or about whom the song is sung. One example of this is “Aydek tulibdir” (“Full as the Moon”):

My love has a face like the moon,
My love’s eyebrows are like the dark night.
She is like a rose among other girls,
And her glances are like spring flowers!
But oh! My friend is strict with me,
My meetings with her are forbidden.
My life’s sweetness is taken from me,
How unhappy are those who love!²⁰

Love songs are often sung in *lapar* style. This is a humorous dialogue between a boy and a girl, often competitive in style, so that the participants must demonstrate their wit to each other and the spectators. “Qara Sach” (“Black-haired One”) is a good example of this style of song:

(boy)

They say you have long hair,
My dear sister, yar-yar,
Black-haired sister, yar-yar,
Show me your hair,
Let me see it just once, yar-yar!

(girl)

Why do you want to see my hair,
Dear brother, yar-yar,
Sweet brother, yar-yar,
There are wigs in the bazaar,
Haven’t you seen them, yar-yar?

¹⁸ Beliaev 262

¹⁹ Beliaev 264

²⁰ Beliaev 268-69.

(boy)

They say you have black eyebrows,
My dear sister, yar-yar,
Black-browed sister, yar-yar,
Show me your eyebrows,
Let me see them just once, yar-yar!

(girl)

Why do you want to see my eyebrows,
Dear brother, yar-yar,
Sweet brother, yar-yar,
Haven't you seen
Swallow's wings, yar-yar?²¹

The song continues, according to the above pattern, with the girl's black eyes being likened to doe's eyes and her rosy cheeks being likened to rosy breads in the bazaar. This form of competitive singing is found in other types of songs in Central Asia as well (e.g. satirical songs criticizing some aspect of society), and is often sung along with gestures, mime, or even dancing. If a dance is involved, a doira may provide solo instrumental accompaniment.

As in any culture, there is also an abundance of lullabies and children's songs. Here is an example of the former, called "Alla" ("Lullaby"):

Rock-a-bye,
A branch of a red rose,
The sandy steppes and your mother adore you,
The sweets on a plate adore you,
And your aunt Nizjan.²²

"Baychechak" ("Snowdrop") is a good example of a children's song:

My snowdrop bloomed.
The cauldron is full of sour milk.
If you don't give me sour milk
Your cauldron will fall apart.
The snowdrop grew up
On hard soil.
The snowdrop struggled up
Through loose soil.²³

²¹ Beliaev 273-74.

²² Beliaev 264-65.

²³ Beliaev 266.

Two compositions of the revolutionary poet and musician Hamza Hakimzade Niyaziy (1889-1929) serve as good examples of songs of social protest, although the lyrics are obviously Marxist in content. The first is “Yasha Shura!” (“Hail to the Soviets!”):

Don't give up; look, the Soviets
Have awakened you.
For every drop of blood you shed
You receive freedom, enlightenment and knowledge.

Hail to the Soviets! Hail to the Soviets!
This is your epoch,
May you glory, worker's son,
Be carried around the whole world.

When you remember that you were
A slave under the czar,
Your joy will be boundless,
Your happiness endless.

Labor, the time for work has come,
This is no time to be careless.
Let the old life rot,
With its kulaks and gendarmerii.

Let only black crows
Winter in the gardens of the old order
And in the gardens of the new life
Let young hearts rejoice.

Hail to the Soviets! Hail to the Soviets!²⁴

The other song is “Hoi Ishchilar!” (O, Workers!”):

O, workers,
Oppressed workers,
Away with the bais, exploiters!
Don't give up your freedom,
Hail to the workers!

Seize your rights, workers,
Your time has come!
Enough of former suffering,
And oppression!

Arm yourselves, workers!
Let the world be yours,

²⁴ Beliaev 319-20.

Enough of suffering
Age-long slavery!

Hail to the workers!²⁵

There are also songs that are historical or epic narratives. An example of the former is “Andijan Zilzilasi” (“The Andijan Earthquake”):

They said everywhere that Andijan
Was the second Byzantium;
And now, after its tribulations,
The prime of Andijan is past.²⁶

Central Asia is renowned for its lengthy epic narrative songs. The epic narrative is a combination of historical and legendary material. Basically, these narratives are poems put to music and they may take several nights to perform, involving lengthy memorization on the part of the singer. Sometimes these epics are sung unaccompanied and sometimes the singer may play a *dombira*. There are basically two types of epic songs, *dastan* and *dast*. In the former, the singer recites the entire content of the song, but the material is generally not grouped into stanzas. A single melodic line is repeated continuously throughout the entire song, although there may be variations in the repetition. At the end of each excerpt of the tale, the singer will conclude with a cadence. The most popular epics of this type are concerned with the Central Asian hero Koroghli, a brave warrior who fought against Arab invaders. The second type of epic narrative, the *dast*, is a mixture of spoken prose (the background and setting for the story) and sung poetry (the monologue or dialogue of the characters). This type is in strophic form, having distinct verses and stanzas. Some popular examples include *Farhad and Shirin*, *Layli and Majnun*, *Tahir and Zuhra*, and *Shahsenem and Gharib*. The majority of the epics in this category are stories of lovers. It is interesting to note that the first two of these stories have been made into operas by modern Uzbek composers, at the encouragement of Soviet authorities. Some of these stories, along with those of Koroghli, can be found in similar form among other ethnic groups in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Following is an excerpt from *Shahsenem and Gharib*, in which Shahsenem rejoices in the return of her beloved Gharib:

My bright falcon returned, my beloved,
Greetings, I rejoice at your arrival.
The fire of love is kindled in my heart,
Greetings, I rejoice at your arrival.

I could not gaze enough at my beloved's beauty,
Everyone wishes his friend good health.
Every step of yours gladdens me,
Greetings, I rejoice at your arrival.

²⁵ Beliaev 320-21.

²⁶ Beliaev 278-79.

Fate separated us,
Listen to my sighs, my pleading.
Let my soul be a path for the dust of your feet,
Greetings, I rejoice at your arrival.

Your close friend calls you Shahsenem,
My tears flow in pining for you.
My friend, you rewarded with joy from the start,
Greetings, I rejoice at your arrival.²⁷

It is interesting to note that this form of the epic narrative has been used recently by the Afghan Uzbeks to protest the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Thus, at least in Afghanistan, it is still a viable form of communicating a contemporary message.

Religious songs most certainly exist, but in light of the present political situation in Central Asia, it would be very difficult to find lyrics to them. Music is not used in orthodox Muslim worship, but it plays a significant role in the worship of the Sufis, especially in the *zikr*, a ceremony which involves the continual repetition of the name of Allah in order that the practitioner may enter into a trance-like state of meditation.

Before moving on to discuss the musical aspects of these folk songs, something should be said about the literary structure of the lyrics. Two common features employed are rhyme and parallelism. Most songs are strophic, the stanzas sometimes being couplets, sometimes quatrains, and sometimes more complex groupings (e.g. five or six lines). Sometimes there is a refrain and sometimes a short phrase (e.g. “yar-yar”) is repeated at intervals throughout the songs.²⁸

The melodies of these songs are basically of two types: ascending/descending or descending. These can occur together in the same song or separately. The rhythms are often syncopated and may involve several different alternating time signatures, including such irregular meters as 5/4, 5/8, and 7/8, in addition to the more common 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 3/8, and 6/8. The scales used may be major-like, minor-like, pentatonic (based on five tones), or chromaticized, although none of these modes corresponds to Western scales.

In addition to folk songs, there is an abundance of instrumental folk music as well. This category includes *raqs*, dance tunes played most often on the *surmay*, frequently accompanied by rhythmical hand clapping or a drum, such as the *doira* or *naghara*. These dances are commonly performed on public holidays and festive occasions. This instrumental duo of oboe and drum is popular throughout the Middle East at activities as diverse as weddings and sporting events. Thus, the Uzbeks play music at wrestling matches, tightrope walking events and the horsemanship game *ulak* (known in Afghanistan as *buzkashi*). Dance tunes are also employed at social events such as weddings or the birth of a child (the celebration of the latter is called a *tui*). In addition, there are also soldiers’ marches (from the time when military

²⁷ Beliaev 291-92.

²⁸ For a more detailed explanation of Uzbek prosody and strophic structure, see Beliaev 281-84.

band were in existence), called *sarbazcha*, which feature strict military-like rhythms and bright melodies played by *sarbaz* (soldiers) on *nays*, *surnays*, *karnays*, and *nagharas* .

The Maqam and Shashmaqam

The *maqam* and *shashmaqam* form the basis of Uzbek classical “art music” (in contrast to folk music). Thus, they are the forms studied and performed by the professional classical musician. The *maqam* (plural, *maqamat*) is, “in Islamic music, a set of pitches and of characteristic melodic elements or motives, and traditional patterns of their use forming a system for the melodic and tonal construction of performances.”²⁹ It is essentially a system of musical modes used throughout the Islamic world.

Maqamat are found throughout the Middle Eastern cultural basin and are fairly uniform throughout the Arab world, so that Central Asian *maqamat* differ little from others. Muslim literature enumerates more than 100 of these modes, differing primarily in the musical intervals that they employ and hence in the mood and atmosphere that they convey. Each *maqam* is governed by certain rules related to the range of the notes, the direction of the melody (ascending or descending), the type of melody, the rhythmic forms used, and the tempo. Even such things as the beginning and ending notes and the embellishments (e.g. trills) permitted are predetermined and fixed. The *maqam* seems to be a musical expression of ancient origin. Among Persian speakers, like the neighbouring Tajiks, it is called a *dastgah* .

Each musical performance is based on a specific *maqam* which is announced at the beginning of the performance, so the audience knows exactly what to expect. The *maqam* is established at the outset and, although modulations to different *maqamat* and even some limited improvisation may occur, the performers always return to the original *maqam* at the end of the piece. Thus the general musical form is predictable and familiar to the listeners, yet there is enough allowance for rearrangement, elaborations, and “variations on a theme” to make each performance unique and interesting.

Each *maqam* is basically divided into two part. The first is called *mushkulat* (meaning “difficulty”) and is entirely instrumental, while the second is called *nasr* (meaning “prose”) and is both vocal and instrumental. The *mushkulat* is further subdivided into five movements. The first is *tasnif*, meaning “composition” or “melody”. This is followed by *tarjeh*, which means “repetition”. *Gardun*, signifying “change of fate” or “heavenly arch,” comes next and is followed in turn by *mukhammas*, meaning “multiplied by five”. The final movement is *saqil*, a slow piece whose name means “heavy.” Furthermore, each movement in the *mushkulat* is composed of two alternating substructures, called the *khana*, a variable movement, similar to a verse, and the *bozquy*, an unchanging repeated theme, similar to a refrain. These two structures together make one musical cycle and there may be as many as seven cycles in each movement of the *mushkulat* . These two structures are played in different registers throughout the movement, starting out with an introduction in the lower musical register, called *daramad*, and gradually ascending to the higher register, until the climax of *awj* is reached, after which a descent is made to the lower register again, so as to bring a sense of calm after the emotional “high” that is achieved. Thus, this sort of music can be very dynamic and textural. One basic exception to this pattern is the *gardun* movement, which

²⁹ “Maqam,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1977 ed.

consists of irregular and changing meters and rhythms. The *mushkulat* primarily serves as the introduction to the *nasr* and is performed by string and wind instruments, the *tanbur* being predominant among them.

The *nasr* has four long vocal sections, the *sarakhbar* (a vocal overture), the *talqin* and the *nasr* (both melodic pieces), and the *ufar* (a finale, played and sung to a dance rhythm). Between each section, a short instrumental piece is played to introduce the next section. Each *maqam* retains essentially the same musical form, but the text may vary from performance to performance. Of course, different *maqamat* vary from each other, so the different components (e.g. *khana*, *tasnif*, *mushkulat*, *nasr*, etc.) will vary from *maqam* to *maqam* .

Below is an example of *maqam* lyrics:

Happy is the one who knows the limits of the law.
He who understands the meaning of words will be rewarded.
The friend who is wise and devoted shows the true path.
If you love hopelessly, sighs are of no use.
If your heart has broken, tearing your clothes is of no use.
If your heart has cooled, then it is of no use.
If you want happiness, don't tempt fate.
If there's no love in your heart, don't hide yourself away.³⁰

The word *shashmaqam* is a suite of six *maqamat* , which is what the name means. Unlike the *maqam*, the *shashmaqam* is peculiar to Central Asian music. It originated in Bukhara between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, but the musical traditions that it evolved out of are much older. It forms the basis of the Tajik and Uzbek classical "art music." The original Bukharan grouping of six distinct *maqamat* was comprised of *buzrak* ("great mode"), *rast* ("true mode"), *nawa* ("melodic mode"), *dugah* ("Second mode"), *segah* ("third mode"), and *iraq* ("from Iraq"). However, other *shashmaqamat* were developed in other parts of Turkestan, notably the Khorezm region and the area of Tashkent and Ferghana. The latter grouping is actually called a *charmaqam*, since it only consists of four *maqamat* . It is considerably freer in style, allowing more melodic and rhythmic variation. An additional element of the *shashmaqam* is the fact that modulation occurs within each *maqam*, so that a "branch *maqam* " (called a *shuba*) results. As can be seen, the *shashmaqam*, with all its divisions and subdivisions, can be very time consuming, taking hours to perform.

The Bakhshi

Musical performers in Central Asia perform a variety of functions. Among them are the *damburachi*, a skilled dombira player; the *sha'ir*, a musical poet who performs the epic songs; the *hafiz*, a professional singer; the *khalfa*, a folk musician; and the *bakhshi* . Of all of these, the *bakhshi* is definitely the most interesting.

The term *bakhshi* actually denotes two functions in the Central Asian culture, that of a shaman as well as that of a musician.³¹ Over the years, two different occupations have

³⁰ Beliaev 294-95.

emerged bearing this title, but it is likely that there was originally only one category, that of a magician/minstrel. This dual role seems to date back to antiquity. The *bakhshi* in Central Asia today may be either a singer of epic poetry or folk songs who accompanies himself on a *dutar* or *qobuz*, or a shaman who performs healings and exorcisms as a result of working himself into a trance, which is partially brought about through playing the *qobuz*. This latter meaning of the word probably has its roots in *bakhsy*, the word for “magician” among the Kazakhs and the Kirghiz. The Turkmen people see the *bakhshi* only as an epic singer, whereas the Kazakhs and Uighurs use the term to designate a musical shaman. The *bakhshi* may function in both roles amongst the Kirghiz and Uzbeks. “Among the Uzbek... the term *bakhshi* means a shaman, doctor, savant, sage, or scholar, and the *qobuz* either may or may not be used. In the Khiva area *bakhshi* also has the meaning of minstrel.”³² Depending on where the *bakhshi* is operating, the *qobuz* may or may not be used. As would be expected, the magical side of the *bakhshi* is more apparent in Afghanistan, where folk Islam (Islam mixed with elements of animism and shamanism) is more predominant than in the Soviet Union. This section of the paper will be primarily concerned with the shamanistic aspect of the *bakhshi*.

The *bakhshi* originally played a similar role to the shaman of Siberia, but his religious and social functions have largely been taken over by the *mullah* (the Muslim priest), leaving him with the duties of healing, exorcism, divination, recovering lost animals, producing rain and other related functions. A *bakhshi* may be either male or female. This section will briefly examine the practices of a male Afghan Turkic *bakhshi*. The material is taken from the observations of several anthropologists who visited a *bakhshi* in 1968. Whether or not these musical shamans still function among the Afghan Turkic peoples, over twenty years later, is unknown. Equally unknown is whether or not they play any role in Soviet Central Asian society. What follows then should be taken as applying primarily to Afghan Central Asia.

Bakhshis are not the only ones involved in the area of healing, exorcism, and divination; there are certain Muslim holy men and even some *mullahs* who do this also, but the *bakhshi* is unique due to his musical methods of curing. Most orthodox *mullahs* distrust them, however, and they are mocked by men (most of their patients are female). The office of *bakhshi* is passed on primarily by inheritance. Female *bakhshis* differ from their male counterparts in that they use no musical instruments and their cures are not performed solo, but involve musical responses from other participants.

The male *bakhshi* has three ways to heal an illness which does not submit to normal treatment (charms and medications). It should be noted that most sicknesses among these people are regarded as having demonic origins, so a healing is often also an exorcism. The night before he is to perform the healing, he will chew on a piece of goat’s flesh, which will result in him having a dream explaining to him which method to choose. The first method is called *alas*, named after the torch which is used in the cure. The *bakhshi* circles the patient’s head with the *alas* while he utters magical incantations. The *jinn* (evil spirit) is transferred to the torch which is then discarded. The second method is called *qasidakhan*, which basically involves the *bakhshi* giving a magical incantation (similar to a mantra) to the patient, who then recites

³¹ The material in this section was taken from Mark Slobin and Micheline and Pierre Centlivres, “A Muslim Shaman of Afghan Turkestan,” *Ethnology* 10.2 (1971) 160-73.

³² Slobin and Centlivres 161.

it until he is cured. The *bakhshi* may also give the patient a *tawiz*, a written formula purported to drive out the jinn.

The third method is called *bakhshibazi* and is the most interesting from a musical point of view. The *bakhshi* enters a trance as a result of playing a *qobuz* and singing to the spirits of various patron saints and Qur'anic personalities, invoking them to help him. The cure goes through several distinct phases, involving several melody changes. The *bakhshi* may stop playing, get up and begin to hit the patient with his *qobuz* or, once he is actually in the trance (called a *masti*), he may begin to utter inarticulate groans and cries, possibly as a result of the influence of either the "good" spirit that he has invoked or maybe even the "evil" spirit that he is attempting to exorcise. The treatment actually involves a transferral (called a *kuchira*), as the *jinn* is transferred from the body of the patient to the body of the *bakhshi* or an organ of a sacrificial animal. The process may also involve incantations, shouts, ventriloquism, invocation of the spirits by name, and various ascetic practices, including self-flagellation, stepping on sharp knives, or holding red-hot pieces of iron. As the *bakhshi* comes out of the trance, he begins to play his *qobuz* again and returns to the original melody of the chant (most of which is gibberish intermingled with various Islamic phrases and words). Sometimes it is necessary to continue the healing for several evenings. This may involve the sacrifice of a lamb, whose blood is then applied to the parts of the body in need of healing.

The Russo-Soviet Influence

Although Russia has only played a major role in Central Asian culture for a little over a century, it is necessary to evaluate this influence, both prior to and since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, if one is to properly understand the contemporary state of Uzbek music.

The Russian influence on Central Asian music over the last century and a quarter has centered primarily around Tashkent, due to the large concentration of Russians in that city. As a result of the presence of military and bureaucratic personnel in Tashkent at the close of the nineteenth century, the Russians formed a music society, including a choir and an orchestra, and put on concerts and operas, often featuring visiting European artists. Thus, Tashkent grew to be a major musical center of imperial Russia. Gradually, both the Russians and the Uzbeks were influenced by each other's music. August Eichhorn, a military conductor in Tashkent in the 1870s and 1880s, composed several musical pieces with Central Asian themes, including "A Tashkent Girl," "In the Wide Turkistan Plains," and "A Moonlit Night in the Ruins of Samarkand". Eichhorn harmonized Uzbek melodies so that they could be performed on stage. The composer Glinka used a popular Uzbek melody called "Iskandar Khan" ("Alexander the Great") as the basis for the "Persian Chorus" in his opera *Ruslan and Ludmilla*. Conversely, Russian music had an influence on the Central Asians. The prominent Uzbek poets Muqimi (1851-1903) and Furqat (1858-1909) both desired that their people would acquire aspects of Russian culture. In fact, Furqat wrote:

Even if it takes twenty or thirty years
For our grandsons to master the secret of this music,
Furqat will consider himself comforted hundredfold.³³

³³ Beliaev 313.

As events led up to the Bolshevik Revolution, according to Beliaev, unrest among the Central Asians began to be expressed through the medium of songs of social protest and revolution. One such example is “Mardiklar Vaqiasi” (“Song of the Mardikars”), which tells the story of Uzbeks who were herded at gunpoint into railway boxcars and shipped off to Russia to perform hard labor as part of the war effort of Tsar Nicholas II. Mary Shamsudinova, a poet and musician, was instrumental in protesting discrimination against women in Kazakhstan and in speaking out regarding the emancipation and equality of women. It was also at this point that Hamza Hakimzade Niyaziy emerged as a revolutionary poet and songwriter. Many of the protest songs of this period were in the march-like rhythms characteristic of Russian revolutionary songs of the time, rather atypical of traditional Central Asian music.

Central Asian music has experienced many significant changes since the inception of Communist rule. This is all part of the overall policy of the Soviets to “socialize” the ethnic minorities of the USSR. However, it is difficult for an outsider to get an accurate picture of what the real state of ethnic music in the Soviet Union is. What follows is the result of consulting both Soviet and Western sources on the subject. Obviously, both types of sources have their respective biases. In addition, it should be noted that all of the sources dealing with the state of music in Soviet Central Asia which were consulted for this paper date from before the Gorbachev era of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Therefore, the picture given below is typical of the situation prior to the beginning of political reform in the USSR and it is not known exactly how recent changes have affected Uzbek music.

The present state of not only Uzbek music, but also the music of all the Central Asian people in the Soviet Union, has been largely shaped by the Communist ideology of the State.³⁴ The Marxist-Leninist view of art is that it is a reflection of the sociopolitical consciousness of the people. Thus art is not so much created in the mind of the artist (a “bourgeois” notion!) as it is inspired by the observation of the external environment. The artist is hence more of a reporter than a creator. Furthermore, in the Marxist utilitarian view of things, art must be linked up with the cause of the “social transformation of society”; it is to be a tool of the people to effect the ongoing “revolution of the working class.” The practical outworking of this approach to art is the policy of “Socialist Realism,” developed by the Russian author, Maxim Gorky; in order to be sanctioned by the State, all Soviet art (including music) must conform to Marxist ideology and the current “Party line.” It must deal with “real life situations” in such a way as to educate the people in proper Communist doctrine. Only recently, under Gorbachev, has this policy been relaxed somewhat, thus allowing more artistic freedom. However, certain subjects, such as religion, are either still taboo or strictly censored.

There is an interesting musical corollary to the evolutionary theory of society espoused by Marx and Lenin. It is proposed that “musical evolution” begins in the “spontaneous generation” of “folk creativity” and then ascends upward to more complex forms of “professional” music. Thus the latter (which would include the classical art music of the Central Asians, such as the *maqam* and *shashmaqam*) is validated by its origin in the former (such as the Central Asian folk songs). However, there was a time when there was controversy among Soviet musicologists as to whether the *maqam* was a product of folk

³⁴ For a good explanation of the influence of Marxist ideology on Uzbek music, please consult Theodore Levin, “Music in Modern Uzbekistan: The Convergence of Marxist Aesthetics and Central Asian Tradition,” *Asian Music* 12.1 (1980) 149-58.

creativity (the music of “the people”) or of the feudal courts (and hence unacceptable to “the proletariat”). Eventually, the former view was adopted, perhaps because it was realized that to deny this major part of the Central Asian cultural heritage could be more of a hindrance than a help to the program of change. In a system where ethics and “truth” are based on “what is good for the State,” this can be done rather easily! Although it would not be openly admitted, one suspects that the Russians probably view their ethnic music (whether a folk song accompanied by a *balalaika*, or an opera written by Tchaikovsky) as being somewhat higher on the evolutionary scale than the music of the Uzbeks, Tajiks, or Kazakhs.

A further evidence of the Communist view of art is apparent in the desire to develop a specific, identifiable cultural heritage for each of the ethnic nationalities recognized by the Soviet State. As the official policy states, art must be “nationalist in form, socialist in content.” This is further expressed in the following quote by a Soviet Uzbek musicologist:

Years of building socialism in Uzbekistan have been accomplished by the development of Uzbek music along new paths engendered by the new means available in Russian and Western classical music. The approach to using local styles was important in this period for the formation and development of Soviet Uzbek music. Composers adapted specimens of folk music of various regions as an integral part of Uzbek musical art. This is a natural occurrence. It is connected to the historical, necessary development of the spiritual wealth of the people and partly to the process of gradual convergence of local styles into a single whole: a national musical art.³⁵

In order to effect this “nationality-consciousness,” the Soviet musicologists have had to deny many similarities between the music of the different Central Asian peoples as well as the links to Middle Eastern music in general. The Soviet tactic is to “divide and conquer” the whole area of Central Asia and thus prevent any form of “pan-Turkism” or “pan-Islamicism,” rallying forces which, if they gained momentum, could eventually prove to be a considerable threat to Moscow’s control of the area. However, recently, some Central Asian musicians have been challenging this “nationality-consciousness” by pointing out the ties between the music of the various republics concerned. Thus, the awareness of deeply-rooted common musical origins and traditions that has re-emerged poses a threat to the cultural architects in Moscow.

This underlying Marxist philosophy has resulted in a number of strategies that the Soviet government has implemented in order to engineer the transformations of the Central Asian musical cultures. One of the major tactics of Moscow has been to update the musical education system. Thus, many music schools have been introduced, along with a conservatory in Tashkent, where students are taught both national folk music and Western classical music. Graduates from these facilities have gone on to compose distinctive Central Asian operas, often taken from traditional literary sources and using traditional melodies, but “Westernized” in the sense that choirs and orchestras are used. Sometimes, Uzbek texts may even be put to Russian melodies.

³⁵ Karamatov 53.

Others end up working with opera companies or orchestras, comprised of either native or Western instruments. These educational facilities are basically structured after European music conservatories, the curriculum, instructors, and methods of instruction being Western, not Eastern. Often, Western music is presented as an ideal which “national music” should conform to, not so much in the musical style, but in certain characteristics, such as harmonization and orchestration, neither of which are typically Central Asian. In order to teach appreciation for Western music, students may very likely have to play pieces by Bach or Mozart in an orchestra of indigenous folk instruments, all of which have been tempered (as mentioned earlier, the instruments have actually been reconstructed so that they can be tuned to coincide with Western tonal intervals) and consortized (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass versions of these instruments have been created, something which is also foreign to Central Asia). Students study the ethnic music from a Western viewpoint, using Western terminology. All in all, it is a clever attempt to squeeze non-Western music forms and styles into a nice, neat, synthesized, homogeneous Western package.

In light of this, it is interesting to observe the past attitudes of various Soviet musicologists regarding Central Asian music in general and Uzbek music in particular. Admittedly, these are not so widely expressed now, but perhaps the sentiments that gave rise to them are still brewing below the surface. In the past, some Soviet writers have viewed Uzbek music as being too “feudal” and “backwards,” and thus in need of updating, especially in order to conform to Soviet policy. This was especially seen in the melancholic nature of various local instruments (and hence the style of music that they played, especially since most of it was originally played in a minor key), as well as in the specific vocal techniques used (described earlier on in this paper). These were judged to be unsuitable for the optimistic Socialist order. It was thought that as society changed along Marxist lines, music would change also. Thus, as the superior Russian Communist economic system was introduced, the equally superior Russian musical styles of composers like Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov would be adopted as well.

Other Russian musicologists have wondered at the resistance of local people to avail themselves of the opportunity to study and adopt Western music styles. Some have even denounced the Uzbeks and other Central Asian nationalities for deliberately preferring their indigenous forms over Western forms; the *maqam* is more popular than the ballet, the *dastan* is favored over the song about the local factory, and other such evidence abounds of rejection of the elevated Western ways! There has been criticism that the national music can only be understood by the natives and that Central Asians are stubborn in their preference for indigenous musical traits. Understandably, Central Asians, especially musicians, resent this. It is further evidence of the vast cultural gulf between the Russians and the Central Asians. Failure to bridge that gap is in many ways due to the Russians’ intolerance, national pride, lack of cultural sensitivity, and refusal to try and appreciate the local culture, as is evidenced in the attitudes and viewpoints mentioned above. What is described as stubbornness is actually due to cultural disharmony. “Two cultures may be so different that there are virtually no musical bridges between them, and an individual or group, trying to go over to the new culture, has to abandon his own and start over from the beginning.”³⁶ Such is the case in Central Asia.

³⁶ Spector 481.

Moscow has employed several other strategies in order to effect musical change. One of these involves field collectors who go out to both rural and urban settings to systematically collect examples of ethnic music. This is done partly for archival purposes, but more so to furnish raw material for the “official” (i.e. Western-trained) government-endorsed composers to write “socialist realist” music based on the traditional national music. Thus, only music that is suitable to this end is collected. Music that is to be preserved must conform both lyrically and musically to the Soviet ideology. Thus, for example, religious lyrics and music that does not conform to the Western chromatic scale are not acceptable. In Uzbekistan, the official agency which collects, preserves, and studies the indigenous music is the Institute for Research in the Arts in Tashkent.

Another major strategy is the dissemination of this “reconstructed music” to the public through the media of “folk” orchestras and choruses, the record industry and radio. In addition to the music school, the Soviet government has also constructed opera houses and ballet theatres and has created symphony orchestras and choral ensembles. This seems to reflect in part the collectivist policies of Socialism and in part the musical preferences of the Russians. In order to do this, some major changes had to be made, in particular the aforementioned reconstruction of almost all the folk instruments in order to make them compatible for large orchestral groupings.

The earliest recordings of Central Asian music were made by European record companies in the first decade of this century. There was a small recording industry in Russia prior to the Revolution and some recording was done of various non-Russian ethnic minorities, but nothing like what has taken place since 1917. The All-Union Record Company (known as *Melodiya*) now handles all recording and manufacturing and there are several factories throughout the Soviet Union, including one in Tashkent. The Tashkent factory produced 15 million recordings in 1970, the majority of this production being in the area of indigenous music. There are four categories of music produced: traditional folk music (called *narodnaya muzyka* in the Soviet Union), acculturated popular music (like our pop music) in the local language, traditional *maqam* music, and Western-styled art music by local composers. Of these, the first two are the most popular and the second is the biggest selling category, and is especially popular among the young people (more will be said about this below). Records tend to be more popular among the Uzbeks than in other ethnic groups in the USSR. As a result, *Melodiya* has made more recordings of Uzbek music than of any other non-Slavic nationality. There are many record shops in Tashkent and other cities in Uzbekistan. Uzbek records can also be found in other large cities in the Soviet Union.³⁷ Uzbek music is broadcast daily on the radio in Uzbekistan, and one may hear a *shashmaqam* played by a traditional small ensemble or the work of a Western composer played by a large orchestra of reconstructed instruments, such as the Uzbek Orchestra of National Instruments.

As far as overall impressions of the contemporary situation go, an American ethnomusicologist who visited Uzbekistan in 1971 reported that although things have changed for the better in recent years and Uzbeks now seem to play a large role in the development of musical culture at local level, nonetheless, the ultimate reins of control are

³⁷ Two good articles to consult on the history of recording in Central Asia, in the context of the Soviet Union and Asia respectively, are Pekka Gronow, “Ethnic Music and Soviet Music Industry,” *Ethnomusicology* 19.1 (1975) 91-99 and Pekka Gronow, “The Record Industry Comes to the Orient,” *Ethnomusicology* 25.2 (1981) 251-84.

still in the hands of Moscow.³⁸ The Soviets are still the ones who are “setting the agenda.” They have a long term goal and program to make Central Asia a cultural display window of the benefits of Communism to the nearby developing Asian nations and though their subtle strategy may appear to be slow, they are pressing on determinedly towards that end. Thus, the Soviets' desire is not to help develop the indigenous music of the local population, but rather to advance the cause of World Socialism. Hence, the primary impetus behind these changes comes from non-Uzbek sources. Only time will tell if this strategy will really work.

Before closing this paper, mention should be made of the contemporary music scene in Uzbekistan. As noted above, the most popular type of music, especially amongst young Uzbeks, is what we might term contemporary or pop music. Using instruments such as synthesizers, electronic drum machines, and electric guitars, as well as more traditional instruments, pop groups in Uzbekistan play music that is distinctively modern and yet undeniably Central Asian. Although Western instruments and features such as bass lines and harmonies are employed, the music sounds much closer to contemporary Middle Eastern (i.e. Turkish or Iranian) music than it does to Russian music. As has happened in other areas of Central Asian culture, such as language and literature, this seems to indicate that the Uzbeks, while admittedly benefiting from modern technology and other aspects of Western culture, are more concerned with developing and advancing their own culture than with conforming to Moscow's agenda. If these trends continue, the plans of the regime to use Central Asia to accomplish certain political purposes may backfire.

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³⁸ For a detailed account of this visit, please consult Slobin, “Conversations.”

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