

Reciprocal Relationships of Afghanistan Music and Central Asian Countries

Islamuddin Firoz

Professor, Fine Arts Faculty of Kabul University

Abstract: Afghanistan has always been a major crossroad between east and west, and from the earliest periods of history, its relationships with other cultures have existed in many fields such as politics, commerce, arts, culture and so on. Today, also as a land which has linguistic and cultural relationships with other neighbors, Afghanistan as a crossroad between Asian countries can play a significant role and its cultural and artistic activities can be important in the development of relationships. Afghanistan on its north and northwest sides has good relationships with central Asian countries, in that their language, religion, ethnicity and race are the same. There are even similarities between their musical melodies and musical instruments. PamiriFalak, Uzbek Qushiqs, Goroghli singing, Nawayee singing, Turkmen Idiyams, Moqams, songs, dances, musical instruments and more show the musical similarities between them. Bakhshis and Shamans work to maintain the Afghan Uzbeks and Turkomans musical antiquity and genuineness as a musical symbol of the commonalities between Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries. Poets like Amir Sher Ali Nawayee and MakhdoomQuli, as well known in Central Asian countries, are popular among Afghan Uzbeks and Turkomans ethnicities also. Music learning and transmission among the tribes is based on traditional system, orally from ancient time until the present. The results also show that the music of northern side of Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries have a lot of similarities and it represents the common culture between them.

Keywords: Music, Culture, Dance, *Muqam*, Melody, Musical Instruments, Songs

1. Introduction

The north and northwest of Afghanistan has a wide range of traditional music genres.

The citizens of these regions, mostly *Tajik*, *Uzbek*, *Turkmen* ethnics as well as *Kirgiz*, *Kazak* minorities, are living together but their music color and musical instruments are of various types.

Each part of these regions has its own folk music and folk musical instruments. The music of the northern side of Afghanistan is very colorful, alluring and melodious, similar to Central Asia.

They have numerous types of songs for different occasions, festivals and seasons, for example: dance songs, labor songs, festival and celebration songs, mystical songs and songs for different seasons. Their music style is one of the best known in Afghanistan because of its ancient forms, *Muqams*, and the large number of distinctive musical instruments. In many areas their music, especially the songs that relate to specific events, has been carefully well-kept since ancient times, for example, mythical stories such as *Goroghli*, which is popular throughout central Asia. In Afghanistan and central Asia musical instruments such as *Dambora*, *Ghichak*, *Qabuz*, *Dotar*, *Qushqarcha*, *Dafand* *Nay* are slightly different in their shape and forms. Folk music of northern Afghanistan is untouched in regard to their melody, sound and performances, similar to Central Asian folk music.

This article discusses these points and shows Afghanistan's musical characteristics and its similarity to Central Asian countries.

The Historical relationship of Afghanistan and Central Asia

As a country that has borders with Central Asian countries, Afghanistan has had long-standing cultural, political, and historical relations from ancient times to the periods of the *Samanids*, *Ghaznavids*, *Seljukis*, *Khwarazms* dynasty, *Timurids* and *Babure* empire to the present. What further contributed to the strengthening of these relationships is poetry and music, which has been closely related in history, and has been the language of empathy and peaceful coexistence between these countries. Poets and scholars such as *Roodaki*, *Farrokhi*, *Farabi*, *Abu Ali Sina*, *Mowlana Jalal al-Din*, *Nasser Khosrow*, *Jami*, *Maraghei*, *Alishir Nawae*, *Shahrokh*, *Ulugh Beg*, *Babur* and others, with the works they created had a great influence in the development and consolidation of these relationships.

The poem " *boyeyjoyemolianaiadhame*" by *Rudaki Samarghandi*, a great poet of the *Samanid* era, was read in the presence of *Amir Nasr Ibn Ahmad Samani*, who remained in Herat for a long time. This poem is evidence of this deep relationship (Shahrani, 2009, pp.83-89-93). Similarly, during the *Timurid* era, a time of major interaction between the cultures of Central Asia and Afghanistan, music flourished. Relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan also developed when *Shahrok* (*Timur's* son), transferred his capital from Samarkand to Herat. Since then, the city has become the center of the *Timuris* art and cultural activity, and music has flourished along with other arts. After *Shahrokh*, his son *Ulugh Beg*, like his father, was an enthusiastic supporter of arts and science, and he himself was a poet and scientist. During the forty years of his rule, Samarkand was one of the greatest centers of science and industry in the 9th century. The multicultural environments in Herat and Samarkand, and the support of *Timur* and his son *Shahrokh* and his wife *Goharshad* to artists, provided a platform for the growth

and prosperity of all arts, especially music. *UlughBeg* had a high knowledge of astronomy and mathematics, also studied music and compiled five books. *AlishirNawaaee* was a musician and painter, even while he was one of the greatest scholars and thinkers and important political figures. He wrote many poems in both Farsi and Turkish languages, for which reason he is famous as "*zolesanain*", which means "bilingual: a person who knows two languages." His surname in Turkish poetry is "*Nawaaee*" and in Persian poems is "*Fanni*" (Feroz, 2016, p.397).

In this period the art of music grew well. The musicians had more skills and many pieces of music were created by skilled composers. The treatise written by *Maulana Abdul Rahman Jami* in music is one of the most important works of this period in teaching art and music. *Abdul QadirMaraghei* also composed music and music books and trained many students.

The music of this period can be considered as a product of common cultures in Central Asia and *Khorasani*, which was formed at that time. This indicates that Afghan and Central Asian music was in a common cultural corridor during this period (Kargar, 2005, p.80).

Afghanistan's traditional music

Through history, Afghanistan's traditional music has followed two paths. The first one is the *Khorasani (Moqam)* music which continued until the end of the *Timoris* period and the second one is the Indian *Raga* music which was gradually formed during the Babur Empire period in Afghanistan. The reason for these two paths is because Afghanistan is located on a special geographical crossroad of Asia. Therefore, Afghanistan has acted as a cultural bridge through which the different cultures have engaged with each other, also enriching the relations between them. Also regarding the geographic location of Afghanistan, *OlivieraPintu* explains the role of Afghanistan as a transit corridor of cultures and says: "that Afghanistan as a corridor for the transit of the cultures of the numerous societies of Central Asia has necessarily been a place for musical juxtaposition too, which has roots from India, Iran, Pakistan and other far and near societies of the area around it. She also introduces Afghanistan as a musical country with several developed regional and stylistic branches" (Oliviera, 2016, pp.14-18). Nowadays, the ancient music which was common in the central Asian countries, are still being used in the north and northwest of Afghanistan and have not lost their original purity. But in some cases especially in *Muqams* which was basically six *Muqams* in the central Asian countries, you can see seven, eight or more *Moqams* in Afghanistan. All in all, music in Afghanistan has been orally – *sinabasina* – transferred from one generation to the next. In other words, the art of learning music among the people of this nation has been one of the most important methods of learning and sharing music to the next generations. The traditional music of Afghanistan has been developed and expanded under these principles. The *Gorughlum* musicians, either in the central Asian countries or in Afghanistan, have been the primary proponents of the oral transference system (*sinabasina*) of music. This group of musicians have influence as the speakers/narrators and composers among the people. They teach music and stories

with the tact and skills they have learned through history and became the best creators of music and poetry. The *sinabasina* system of music in Afghanistan has been dependent on the oral customs, the historic circumstances and the national traditions which have been created from the powerful skills of the *sinabasina* custom (Ghlibwa, 2009, p.35).

2. Music of north and northwest tribes of Afghanistan

1. Uzbeki Music: Music of Afghan Uzbeks is well known for the extent of its musical diversity. Native musical instruments, traditional *Muqams* and their folk songs which are based on the nation's folklores, are the soul of Uzbek Music. Uzbeks are popularly well known for their songs and music. *Qushiqs* (life carols), *Lapar* and *Yal la* songs are admired among Uzbek people. In Uzbeki music, the Carols are sung by local singer or with a chorus. Uzbeki vocal songs usually started with *Muqam*(mode). Prevalent *Muqams* in Afghan Uzbeki music, known as: *Bayat*, *Oshaq*, *Shahnaz*, *Gulyar*, *Delkharash*, *Mustahzad*, *Geria*, *Dogah*, *Gulazaar*, *Araq*, *Nawa*, *Ada*, *Nasr Oshaq*, *Mughulcha*, *chul-e-Araq*, *OparAraq*, *Bozurg*, *Rast* and *Segah*, are additionally well recognized in central Asian music. In Uzbek music the poet *Ali SherNawayee* and other classical poets are popularly used in singing. Courage, love and athletic stories have a special place in Uzbek Music. Their music is performed in form of vocal music, instrumental music, group music, ceremonial music, seasonal songs, work songs, and so on (Madadi, 2011, P.90).

The prevalent and popular musical instruments in the folk music of Afghan Uzbeks are: *dambora*, *gheechak*, *qushqarcha*, *zirbaghali*, *tassak*, *zang*, *qabuz*, *nay*, *dafand chang*.

These instruments are used in solo and chorus music performances because of their energetic and fascinating sounds. Furthermore, there are some Uzbek folk songs which are performed by singers without musical instrument. Folk music of Uzbek people is specifically divided into two parts. The first type is for the particular time and situation, for example, *YaarYaar* and *Olang* songs for marriage ceremonies, *Yeighi*, *Aaytam* and *Shah Hussein* for mourning ceremonies, *Alaahi* and *Yaazi* for harvesting time, *Hoshim* or *Hosh-Hosh* songs at the time of milking and *Alah* song (lullaby) for babies. In Uzbek culture there are individual folk songs for rain, Ramadan and etc. These songs are sung *a Capella* (without instruments) with special sounds and rhythms.

The second type of folk music is not related to any particular special occasion, ceremony, situation or time. They can be sung any time, for example: *Qushiqis*, *Teermas*, *Yalas*, *Ashulas* and various songs similar to them.

Musicians who sing the songs in the praise of heroes and other characters from epic stories are called *Bakhshi* or *Shayar* (poet). *Goroghli*, *Auwazkhan* and *Alpamish* are the most ancient and fascinating epic stories of the Uzbek people. Epic stories are performed only by male performers with the accompaniment of *dambora* or *qabuz*. *BadihaGoi*

and *Badiha Sarayi* are good examples of the music of Uzbek people. In the *Badiha Sarayi* style two musicians sing the same song with instruments in the form of question and answer which becomes a beautiful poetic conversation. The content of *Badiha Sarayi* singing is based on the praise of artists, the host and the rest of the guests for their presence (Osmani, 2015, p.148).

Songs and dances of women in traditional festivals: On festive occasions women used to dance mostly with the accompaniment of *daf* and *chang*. Traditional group dance is also renowned and prevalent among Uzbek women.

Furthermore, in the festival of *Samanak* (celebrated during spring season in which they cook wheat grass porridge) women sing and dance in the praise of *Samanak*. This tradition is followed by the females of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as well. During the cooking of *Samanak*, Bibi Aton (a female story teller) reads stories from the book of *Samanak* in the company of young girls and women in courtyard along with dancing and singing. During their celebration of *Samanak* they use *daf* and *chang* as the primary musical instruments. Other forms of dancing such as *Qashuqbaazi* and *Pyalabaazi* are popular among women also.

Men are dancing mostly at night parties to the accompaniment of *dambora*, *tasak*, and sometimes *ghichak*, traditional music instruments.

The names of these dance forms are related to the *Dambora* songs such as *Joli*, *galabagh*, *Qushpanja*, *Chulmasst*, *Joraquzim*, *Oulitermasaaz* and others which are famous melodies of *Dambora* players.

The Uzbek's popular songs are the *Juraquzeem*, *QushiqMardum*, *Makeeli*, *Chapagardan*, *Galabagh*, *Kamal aqijaan*, *Qaissari*, *Sheberghani*, *Almaidikhanom*, *Oraqcheelar*, *Nay nay*, *Lalakhani*, *Chupanikhani* and others (Feroz, 2018, p.309).

2. Turkmen Music: The Afghan Turkmen's music has several forms including *Panjbahr*, *Charbait* and so on. These musical forms have seven original *Muqams* such as *Shirwan*, *Doshirwan*, *Haftshirwan*, *Nawahi*, *Nalish*, *Qarriq* and *Raqsqadim*. The Turkmen's musical instruments are *Qabuz*, *Qashqarcha*, *Dutar*, *Dambura*, *Daf*, *Ghichak*, *Zirbaghlai*, *ZangandNai*. The *Dutar* is a common musical instrument among Afghan Turkmen and central Asian countries. This instrument is an acoustic wooden string instrument with two strings made of silk and a body made of berry wood. There is another type of *Dutar*, in which the strings are made of metal and also has four frets (Madadi, 2011, p.92).

In the Turkmen music, folk musicians and instrumentalists are known as *Bakhshi*. These folk musicians and instrumentalists perform on different occasions and celebrations including parties, marriage ceremonies and so on, this tradition of *Bakhshi* carrying on since ancient times to till present. *Aidiem* (folk literature) is considered the most important oral literature of Turkmen tribe, which includes rhythmic and versified speeches in the praise of love,

bravery, beauty of nature and animals especially the horse. *Bakhshi* sing these carols in a specific and distinguished style, these songs and carols showing and representing the opinions, bravery, faith, generousities and psyche of Turkmen people. Turkmen folk music forms are: *Chopani* singing, *Par* singing, *hodisinging*, *mawlodi* singing, *lale* singing, *zikh/raize*, *naqelkhani*, *ghazal* singing and *nawaye* singing (Osmani, 2015, P.62).

The Turkmen epic and folk stories, including *Goroghly*, *Mikhel Baba* and *Jalali Sarh* have historical and ancient roots which show social and historic relationships of Turkmen people. (Chadoyak, 2016, P.62). Afghan Turkmen music has remained pure and untouched from ancient time until the present, which has its own beauty and appeal. Turkmen musicians successfully compose beautiful and complicated songs with very basic and primary musical instruments which elicits the admiration of today's music experts and scholars (*Ibid*, P.63).

3. Music of Badakhshan: Badakhshan has been divided in two parts: one is in Afghanistan and the other is part of Tajikistan. There are various similarities in their culture, arts and music. At present Badakhshan's primary musical instruments are *Pamiri Rubab*, *Daf*, *Nay*, *Dambora*, *Ghichak*, *Qushqarcha*, *Tal(taasak)*, *Zirbaghali* and *Chang* which is played only by women.

The primary and most popular music forms in Badakhshan are *Hokmi* or *Pandaamiz*, *Nyaishi*, *Qassidakhani*, *Falakkhani*, *Bazmi songs*, *Jashni songs* and *Mossomi songs*. *Falak* is one of the most charming and popular *moqams* in Badakhshan music. Besides *Falak*, some other famous songs in Badakhshan's music are *Rahpai* (song for dance), *Dargilak* (emotional songs) and *Seeknak* (songs for worship) (Sakata, 1983, p.90).

The present music of Badakhshan is also known as *Pamiri* music, present since ancient times and with a very close relationship with ancient *Muqams*. These *Muqams* are recognized as *Shash Muqam* (six *moqams*) in Tajikistan. The *Pamiri* music is prevalent in *Ashkashim*, *Sheghnan*, *Wakhan*, *Yaftal*, *Jurm*, *Darwaz*, *Zibak*, *Baharak* and even *Kashem* and *Takhar*.

According to Danilo, a French research scholar: "Badakhshan is situated in the high mountains north of Pamir and is one of the hardest to access areas of the world. In this region several types of the oldest and purest central Asian music are being nurtured. Here we find music that does not have any similarity to the Arabs, Indians and Mongolians. As well, the usage of notes in melodic themes has no influence of Indian and Iranian music, but one can see the influence of the Italian Renaissance period" (Danielou, 2003, P.6).

In fact, Badakhshan is where one can find the oldest music examples of Afghanistan and Central Asia, because of its location far distant from external music cultural effects, surviving up to the present untouched. *Madah-khani* (eulogy singing) exists in all area of Pamir without any changes in lamentation and mystical celebrations. The people of Badakhshan respect this genre of music. Songs in the form

of poems of praise, tribute, and mysticism are executed individually and collectively by panegyrists. Panegyrists, singers, and instrumentalists are those who have taken the music in trust from ancestors and from generation to generation, the execution of this music is done only by elegy singing panegyrists and not permitted by any other artists. Panegyrists execute their religious songs in poems modeled from Sham's book, *Mawlana-e-Balkhi*, *Hazrat Naser Khesraw Qabadyani* and other mystics, for accompanying these texts they use *Robab Pamiri*, *Daf* and *Zirbaghali*. One other genre of music is Qasida singing which is used in religious, lamentation occasions. *Qasida* is performed in three sections: the first is named *Tarchini*, picking on the lower frets; the second section is *Rabpai* or two beats which is more flowing and soft; the third and final section is named *Aouj-eMaqam* (Feroz, 2018, p.101).

Falak singing: *Falak* is one of the most well-known, beloved forms of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. *Falak* is a Persian word meaning "sky" but in metaphorical terms it means "fate" or "luck" (Sakata 1983, P.54). Titles like *Zahiri* (sad) and *Gharibi* (being away) explain subject of *Falak*. *Falak* has several types such as; *Zahiri Falak*, *Qataghani Fakhari*, *Falakraqs*, *Chopani Falak*, *Pichapich Falak*, *Bazm Falak*, *Aram Falak*, *Rawani Falak*, *Paran Falak*, *Abshari Falak*, *zenana Falak*, *Rostaqi Falak*, *Ailaqi Falak*, *Kordaki Falak*, *Dashti and Kohi Flak*.

Daf Bazm: *Daf bazm* is executed in an open area by three *daf* players and two or three singers. The one who sings the opening is called *Rawanigo* and the one who sings the song is called *Khwanenda*. The execution of *Daf Bazm* begins with the *Daf* players reading the *Rawani* together. Then as the song grows louder, one of the *Rawani* tellers give his *Daf* to another and he begins to dance in the square which is called *Para* or *Paigasht*. As the excitement increases, a flute player starts to play and others clap together, then the performers sing the poem in a very slow rhythm that is called *Zarb*. The *Zarb* (beat) is always starts very slow and in the next section the song changes to a quick rhythm, usually in 7/8, which is called *Paran*. The fourth section is called *Shumar* which starts with a quicker rhythm and participants engaging in a type of circle dancing (Ibid, P.147).

Special songs in wedding party: During the course of the wedding, there are eight special songs. They first sing *Sar Tarasha* (head shaving song), then *Yak Dana Morwari* (one pearl), *Shah Mubarakbad* (groom congratulation), *shahhamzebani* (the groom is handsome), *shahemadar safari* (our groom is on the journey), *shahhemaamad* (the groom came), *shah daramadkhane* (the groom enters the house), and *shahemakhooshamadi* (our groom is welcome), sung one by one in order until the groom arrives at his house. (Qasimi, 2011, P.9).

Goroghlikhani: In Badakhshan the *Goroghli* are usually sung during long winter nights. The story tellers perform the *Goroghli* stories in verse with *dambura* and vocals using in different *Moqams*. Each part of the *Goroghli* is called a *Shakha* (branch), sometimes numbering up to 32 branches.

Most musicians of Badakhshan are amateurs who are connected to the community. With them music is a kind of

family vocation, where they have been playing and performing for generations. *Dambura* and instruments are often seen at houses, tea shops and other places. These musicians are more and more often uneducated and are old men, but they compose many songs. Musicians learn the music by rote or imitatively, learning their local folk songs that their hearers are familiar with. Because of this, their playing is less technically adept. Each song starts with one or two lines of poetry, and without rhythm (Ibid, P.19).

The Qirghiz people reside in one section of Badakhshan, Afghanistan's Qirghiz people live a nomadic way of life ways, supporting themselves with hunting. They have a very primitive civilization, but they have voices of exceptional quality and sing songs when carrying a bride and groom or in celebration of special parties or mourning ceremonies (Feroz, 2018, p.337).

3. Conclusion

It must be said that because of the geographical location of Afghanistan with Central Asia, they have various similarities linguistically, religiously, ethnically and culturally since ancient times. What is most involved for in creating these relationships, is culture and art; specifically, music which has historically been used as a common language and it has still retains its same popular and regional values. On the other hand, the similarity of music between Afghanistan and Central Asia is a common and valuable aspect, that remains strong along with other rituals.

It is finally observed that Afghan and Central Asian music are based on melodies, styles, methods and musical instruments which also have minor differences as well. A few poets such as *Nasir Khesrow*, *Mawlana*, *Nawayee*, *Makhdum Qali* are very popular amongst Afghan Uzbeks and Turkmen as well as in Central Asian countries. Their poetry in the form of *Musiqi Bazmi* (music of celebration), *Madahi Khani*, *Qaseeda Khani*, *Falak Khani*, *Guroughli Khani* and folk dance have various similarities in Central Asian countries and Afghanistan.

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