

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN TANBUR PERFORMANCE IN UZBEK MUSIC: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TASHKENT–FERGANA, SAMARKAND–BUKHARA, AND KHOREZM TRADITIONS

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Abstract

The tanbur is one of the most significant string instruments in Uzbek traditional music and occupies a central place in maqom performance. Despite sharing common historical roots, tanbur performance traditions have developed distinct regional characteristics across Uzbekistan. This study examines the performance styles of the Tashkent–Fergana, Samarkand–Bukhara, and Khorezm schools, focusing on technical, stylistic, and cultural differences. Using comparative and descriptive research methods, the article analyzes the influence of local musical traditions on tanbur performance. The findings reveal that each region has preserved unique performance techniques, melodic structures, and interpretative approaches while contributing to the richness of Uzbek musical heritage.

Keywords: tanbur, Uzbek music, maqom, regional traditions, performance practice, Tashkent–Fergana, Samarkand–Bukhara, Khorezm.

Introduction

The tanbur is one of the oldest and most respected musical instruments in Central Asia. Throughout centuries, it has played a vital role in the development of Uzbek classical music, particularly within the maqom tradition. Different regions of



Uzbekistan have developed their own approaches to tanbur performance, shaped by historical, cultural, and artistic factors. Among the most influential performance schools are the Tashkent–Fergana, Samarkand–Bukhara, and Khorezm traditions. Each school reflects distinctive musical aesthetics and performance practices. Understanding these regional differences is essential for preserving national musical heritage and promoting cultural diversity within Uzbek music. The aim of this study is to investigate and compare the regional characteristics of tanbur performance in these three major musical centers.

Materials and Methods

This research employs qualitative and comparative methods. The study is based on:

Analysis of scholarly literature on Uzbek music and maqom traditions;

Examination of audio recordings and performance examples;

Comparative analysis of regional performance techniques;

Historical and cultural interpretation of musical practices.

The collected data were categorized according to performance style, technical execution, repertoire, and artistic interpretation.

Results

The analysis demonstrates significant regional distinctions in tanbur performance.

Tashkent–Fergana School The Tashkent–Fergana tradition is characterized by lyrical expression, smooth melodic movement, and emotional subtlety. Performers often emphasize melodic elegance and flexibility. Ornamentation is delicate, and rhythmic structures tend to support expressive interpretation.

Samarkand–Bukhara School The Samarkand–Bukhara school is closely connected with the Shashmaqom tradition. Its performance style is distinguished by strict adherence to classical forms, balanced phrasing, and sophisticated ornamentation. Tanbur players in this region demonstrate technical precision and deep respect for traditional maqom structures.

Khorezm School The Khorezm tradition is notable for its energetic

performance style, dynamic rhythms, and expressive articulation. Compared with other regions, Khorezm tanbur performance often features greater rhythmic intensity and distinctive melodic patterns. The regional repertoire includes unique maqom interpretations that reflect local cultural identity.

Comparative Characteristics

Feature	Tashkent–Fergana	Samarkand–Bukhara	Khorezm	Musical Character
Lyrical	and expressive	Classical and balanced	Dynamic and energetic	
Ornamentation	Delicate	Sophisticated	Rich and vigorous	Rhythm Flexible
Structured	Strong and active	Performance Style	Emotional Formal	Expressive
Repertoire Focus	Folk-classical synthesis	Shashmaqom tradition	Khorezm maqom tradition	

Discussion

The identified differences reflect broader cultural and historical developments within Uzbekistan. The Tashkent–Fergana school evolved under the influence of lyrical folk traditions, while the Samarkand–Bukhara school maintained strong connections with classical court music. The Khorezm tradition developed a unique musical language shaped by regional cultural interactions and artistic innovation. Despite these distinctions, all three schools share a commitment to preserving the artistic values of the tanbur. Their coexistence enriches Uzbek musical culture and demonstrates the adaptability of traditional performance practices across different social and historical contexts.

Modern educational institutions and cultural organizations play an important role in preserving these regional traditions. Documentation, academic research, and professional training contribute to the continuity of tanbur performance heritage.

Conclusion

The tanbur remains a fundamental instrument in Uzbek musical culture. The Tashkent–Fergana, Samarkand–Bukhara, and Khorezm schools represent distinctive



yet interconnected traditions of performance. Their differences in technique, repertoire, rhythm, and artistic interpretation illustrate the diversity of Uzbekistan's musical heritage. Preserving and studying these regional traditions is essential for maintaining cultural identity and ensuring the transmission of traditional musical knowledge to future generations. Further research may explore contemporary transformations of tanbur performance in the context of globalization and modern musical education.

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