

ICTM Study Group on Maqām

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Formation history

A strong interest to study *maqām* (pl. *maqāmāt*)—the classical music of the Islamic world—appeared before the formation of the Study Group on Maqām in the framework of ICTM. This interest existed inside other study groups and among ICTM researchers/members. Some researchers presented papers about various *maqām* musics during ICTM conferences and symposia devoted to traditional music. Articles, reviews, and news on this topic were published in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* and *ICTM Bulletins*. Thus many specialists studied the phenomenon of *maqām*, even though this work was not undertaken as part of the activities of an independent ICTM study group.

A turning point in the history of studying *maqām* happened in 1987. In October that year, the third symposium of the International Music Council titled “Living traditions of peoples of Near East and Middle East in modern musical culture” took place in Samarkand (Uzbekistan, USSR). Like previous Samarkand symposia in 1978 and 1983, this one was devoted to the professional music of oral tradition and its core part—*maqāmāt*. A group of participants concerned with *maqām* raised the idea of coordinating their efforts in studying this phenomenon in different countries of the Near and Middle East, Northern Africa, and Southern Europe. On the one hand, initiators took into account the necessity of characterizing the historical and regional peculiarities that had developed in these traditions; but on the other hand, they recognized the importance of highlighting the general traits and processes of development that were common amongst them.

The main initiator in establishing a Study Group on Maqām was the well-known German ethnomusicologist Jürgen Elsner (b. 1932), a specialist on Arab *maqām* and professor at the Institute of Musical Studies of the Humboldt University in Berlin (German Democratic Republic). A person having identical ideas was Uzbek–Soviet ethnomusicologist Fayzulla M. Karomatov (1925–2014), chief of the Department of Contemporary Music and Folklore of the Institute

of Arts Researches of the Ministry of Culture of Uzbekistan.¹ In order to develop common approaches to studying *maqāmāt*, these two scholars, representing Western and Eastern traditions of knowledge, co-authored an article about *maqām* that surveyed various notions of *maqāmāt* in European and Oriental traditions and methods of studying it in different regional and national musical cultures (Karomatov and Elsner 1984). Both became co-chairs of the Study Group on Maqām when it was established.²

The first meeting took place in 1988 in Berlin, where the Study Group on Maqām was constituted and at the same time acknowledged officially by the ICTM Executive Board. From that time until now, ten study-group symposia have been held in different places around the world.

The term and notion of *maqām*

What does *maqām* mean in the context of contemporary musical cultures and ethnomusicological understanding, including the points of view of ICTM members and the Study Group on Maqām? There are various opinions, views, and conceptions about *maqām*, held by musicians and ethnomusicologists in different countries over many decades. Although the word *maqām* and its plural form *maqāmāt* can be encountered in medieval written sources in Arabic, Persian, Tajik, Turkic, and other languages, as a special musical term, it appeared in European musicology at the beginning of the twentieth century. A key problem recognized by some scholars is how to “overcome” and unite the variety of meanings of the *maqām* phenomenon in different regional and ethno-national traditions, and develop a unifying, common understanding. For the first time

1 Cf. brief information about Karomatli (Djumaev 2015) and a more detailed article by Elsner and him (2016). Note that the names Karomatov and Karomatli refer to the same scholar. In this chapter, I use one or the other form, depending on which was used in the quoted publication. He officially changed his name from Karomatov to Karomatli in 1995.

2 Karomatov was co-chair until 2011.

in the framework of activities of the Study Group on Maqām, this problem was raised and deeply explored theoretically by Jürgen Elsner in his papers and articles.³ The idea of the *maqām* principle suggested by Elsner received detailed development in his contribution “Some remarks on the interregional dimension of the *maqām* principle.”⁴ Summarizing the results of studying *maqām*, Elsner described the contemporary level of our understanding of this complicated phenomenon and its obscure and unstudied sides:

In the past several decades, music traditions founded on the *maqām* principle have increasingly experienced worldwide attention and appreciation. This fact became particularly apparent when [the] *maqām* music-making tradition in various countries was recognized in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Major achievements have been observed in research outcomes undertaken on this musical heritage. Among others, significant monographic studies, comparative investigations and conferences have brought about quite a lot of knowledge and insights into the history of the music cultures of North African countries, the Near and Middle East, Central and Southeast Asia in particular and into the *maqām* music-making tradition in general. These outcomes are remarkable and motivating, and yet there is still a lot in the dark that requires in-depth studies to find out facts, evaluations and classifications in the primary viewpoint. Many local and regional classical music traditions of the respected countries as well as the folk genres, integrated or fused into them, are either not yet collected or meagrely studied and vaguely described. Furthermore, enlightenment and comprehensive study of the history of specific regional traditions are actually still in their infancy. The importance of the elucidation of their original roots and basis, for instance, in terms of interregional suggestions and acquisitions—except for the barely differentiated international comparisons of factual and historical circumstances—has not yet been given due attention. (Elsner 2014:1)

In its narrow sense, the term *maqām* (pl., *maqāmāt*) designates the Arabic *maqāms*. But at the same time, it is broadly used by musicologists as a common term for all similar classical musical traditions with local ethnic and regional diversities. Each of these traditions has its own written form according to ethno-national pronunciation and phonetic rules: *maqom* and *maqomot* in

Central Asia (specifically in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), *mugham* and *mughamat* (in Azerbaijan), *muqam* and *muqamat* (in Xinjiang, China, among Uyghur people), etc. The nearest analogies are Indian *ragas* and *Sufyana kalam* or *Sufyana musiqi* (in Kashmir), which had close historical ties with some regional *maqāmāt* forms, specifically with Bukharian *Shashmaqām*.

Each regional and ethno-national tradition of *maqāmāt* has its own history of development, system of terminology, notions, etc. They reflect individual peculiarities formed over many centuries. But at the same time, all of them have much in common. For example, in Central Asia, *maqāmāt* create an important subject in Soviet and post-Soviet musicological studies, with their own contradictory histories. An ongoing special interest in this topic is found in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which are the main owners and keepers of this tradition in the region. Other areas deal with *maqāmāt* as objects for comparative studies with their own national musical tradition (in Kazakhstan) or as a small (rather than a leading) part of their heritage (in Turkmenistan).

From the 1950s, Soviet musicologists in Uzbekistan and Russia (such as, Viktor M. Beliaev, Fayzulla Karomatov, Tamara S. Vyzgo) introduced to their studies on Uzbek *maqāms* a new definition: “professional music of oral tradition.” This notion was popular in academic musicological works during the Soviet period, and is nowadays used to a certain degree by authors writing in Russian in the territory of the former USSR. In the 1960s and 1970s, the term *maqāmāt* (and *maqomot* and *maqom* in national phonetic transcriptions) was used with a very broad meaning designating “genres of *maqomat*” or “cycles of *maqomat*” for the “republics of the Soviet East” or “peoples of the Soviet East” (Karomatov 1978:10–11). The same meaning with an even broader application of the term *mughamat* originated during the same period in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus region. In the 1980s, the term *maqāmāt* occupied its more precise, regional space in Central Asia, and this meaning still survives today. The term covers various traditions and schools of *maqom* music, spread throughout the region of Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia, basically in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. According to contemporary musicological understanding, *maqom* art includes the following well-known kinds of regional *maqom* music: the Bukharian *Shashmaqom*, Khorazmian *maqoms*, Fergana-Tashkent *maqoms*, Uzbek (or all-national) *Shashmaqom* (in Uzbekistan), *Shashmaqom* (all-national) in Tajikistan, and others (cf. Matyakubov 2013:5; Djumaev 2018b).

More recently, *maqāmāt* has become an important official symbol of national cultural identity in independent Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. It received priority status in the current national cultural policy in the both states.

3 His report on the first meeting of the Study Group on Maqām which took place from 28 June to 2 July 1988 in Berlin was under the title “Zum *Maqām*-Prinzip: Tongruppenmelodik als Grundlage und Baustien musikalischer Produktion / The *Maqām* Principle: Melodics of tonegroups and building stone for musical production,” and was published in the proceedings of the conference (Elsner 1989b). In the 1970s, Elsner started to develop the idea of the *maqām* principle, for the first time, on the basis of Egyptian *maqām*.

4 Presented at the International Seminar and Special Lectures, “Synthesis of raga and maqam in Kashmiri musical culture,” held in Srinagar, India, 20–21 June 2013. This article has remained unpublished. I am very much obliged to Jürgen Elsner for sending it to me and allowing to use it (email to author, 23 November 2019).

New national state programmes for the development of this kind of art were adopted. UNESCO supported several projects for its development and preservation, and proclaimed it as intangible cultural heritage (cf. Djumaev 2018b). At the same time, there are many unclear and unstudied points in the historical past and at present concerning *maqāmāt* throughout the Islamic world and beyond—in the new centres of *maqām* music in the USA, Israel, and European countries.

Conferences and symposia

Up until now, the Study Group on Maqām has held ten symposia (meetings and conferences), focusing on various aspects of the subject. The majority of the proceedings have been published by the host organizations in different countries. Some symposia were briefly described in reports of the study group and published in *Bulletins*. Consequently, I will not consider the details of all events, but instead refer to existing materials (reports, proceedings in printed or electronic formats).

The first meeting of the Study Group on Maqām took place from 28 June to 2 July 1988 in Berlin with the topic “Maqām – rāga – melodic lines: Conceptions and principles of musical production.” About thirty scholars from different countries presented their papers on various aspects of the topic. The published proceedings of the meeting, edited by Jürgen Elsner (1989a), contain seventeen articles demonstrating wide views and approaches to the various *maqām* traditions. We can mention some titles of the articles published in this volume to give an idea of the content of the meeting: “The *Maqām* Principle: Melodics of Tonegroups as Base and Building Stone for Musical Production” (Jürgen Elsner), “‘International *Segāh*’ and Its Nominal Equivalents in Central Asia and Kashmir” (Harold Powers), “The Modal System of Azerbaijani Art Music” (Jean During), “Some Islamic Non-Arabic Elements of Influence on the Repertory of *al-Maqām al-‘Irāqī* in Bagdad” (Scheherazade Qassim Hassan), “Afghan Regional Melody Types and the Notion of Modes” (Hiromi Lorraine Sakata), “The *Maqām* Principle and the Cyclic Principle in the Uzbek-Tajik *Shashmaqām*” (Angelika Jung), “Musical Determinants of *Maqām* in *Sufyana Kalam* of Kashmir” (Jozef Pacholczyk), and “Is There a Muslim *Raga* Phenomenon in Hindustani Music?” (Regula Burckhardt Qureshi).⁵

The second “working meeting” of the study group took place once more in Germany, in Gosen near Berlin on

23–28 March 1992, with the general theme “Regional traditions of *maqām* in history and present time.” The proceedings were published in two volumes, thanks to the efforts of editors Jürgen Elsner and Gisa Jähnichen (1992). They consist of twenty-nine scholarly articles, with critical comments. The majority of *maqām* traditions of the Islamic world were considered during the meeting. About half of papers were presented by scholars from the former Soviet Union. This happened for the first time in what has become a tradition of the study group. As a result, many reports were devoted to Central Asian traditions of *maqāmāt* (especially *Shashmaqām* in Uzbek and Tajik versions), Uyghur *muqams*, and Azerbaijani *mughams*.

The third symposium of the study group was held in Tampere and Virrat, Finland, on 2–5 October 1995, upon invitation from the Department of Folk Tradition of the University of Tampere (figure 1). The selected topic was “The structure and idea of *maqām* in different regions East and West: Historical approaches.” A short report and a list of presentations were given in the *Bulletin* (Elsner 1995). The proceedings of the meeting were later published by the host institution (Elsner and Pennanen 1997). In his editor’s preface, local coordinator Risto Pekka Pennanen marked some features of scholarly content of the volume and how it was distinct from previous meetings:

The studies vary greatly in both approach and scope, but they focus mostly on the history of *maqām* musics. There are themes such as history of music theory, change in a music culture in a historical period, and comparative analysis of historically related music cultures.

This volume places an emphasis on geographical areas and music cultures that have not been extensively dealt with in the two previous meetings of the study group in Berlin (1988) and Gosen (1992). There are Ottoman classical traditions and fusion music based on Ottoman, Western and local Balkan musics. (Pennanen 1997:6)

The fourth symposium of the study group took place from 18 to 24 October 1998 in Istanbul, Turkey, with the main topic “The *maqām* traditions of Turkic peoples.” The conference was arranged by invitation of the director of the Conservatory of the Technical University in Istanbul, the composer Yalçın Tura. Two dozen scholars from eleven countries participated in the meeting with the papers mainly connected with the *maqām* music of Turkic peoples (cf. Elsner 1999). For the first time in the scholarly activity of the Study Group on Maqām, the Turkic “component” of the *maqām* phenomenon was especially considered by the international community of *maqām* researchers. The proceedings were published by the host institution and included twenty-one papers by participants and three papers which were not presented at the meeting (Elsner and Jähnichen 2006).

5 The volume starts with Elsner’s article in both German and English; the German title is “Zum maqam-Prinzip: Tongruppenmelodik als Grundlage und Baustein musikalischer Produktion”. The articles published in Russian have summaries in German.



Figure 1. Participants of the third symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Maqām. Tampere, October 1995 (photo courtesy of Risto Pekka Pennanen).

The fifth symposium of the study group was held in Samarkand and Bukhara, Uzbekistan, from 26 to 30 August 2001, in the framework of the third international music festival “Sharq taronalari” with support from UNESCO. The main topic was “International comparison of *maqām* and related phenomena.” The meeting gathered many scholars from the former Soviet republics, European countries, USA, Near and Middle East (cf. Elsner 2001). The proceedings of the symposium were published in Tashkent (Elsner and Jähnichen 2008).

The sixth symposium of the study group took place from 24 to 29 September 2006 at Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, China, on the invitation of the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The main topic was “*Muqām* in Xinjiang/China and outside:: History and present.” The programme included two additional topics: “Manifestation of *maqām* in different countries and regions” and “Preservation and transmission of *maqām* in the 21st century.” There were 75 participants from nine countries. As noted by Jürgen Elsner in his report:

The most important point of the Urumqi *maqām* meeting was the voluminous information on local and regional varieties of the *muqām* and the multifarious studies on it done by Chinese and Uyghur scholars. (Elsner 2007:37)

The proceedings were apparently published by the host.

The seventh symposium took place from 15 to 17 March 2011 in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. It was a part of the 2nd international musicological symposium on *mugām* within the framework of the international festival “Space of *mugām*” (14–21 March 2011). The main topic was “The *mugām* of Azerbaijan and related traditions in Middle East” (cf. Elsner 2011). Twenty-two scholars from twelve countries presented their papers during the meeting. As noted in the report on the symposium:

The discussion was dedicated to questions of the relationship between the *maqām*-principle and the *mugām*, to the construction and formation of *mugām* music, to the evidences of personal style in *mugām* performing arts. Proceeding this way, the result of the conference was very impressive. (Elsner 2011:42)

The eighth symposium of the study group took place from 8 to 11 November 2012 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, upon the invitation of the Academy of Music in Sarajevo and the Musicological Society of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The symposium took place at the Academy of Music in conjunction with the 8th international symposium “Music in society” (cf. Elsner 2013). The general topic of the symposium was “*Maqām*: Historical traces and present practice in Southern European music traditions.” This topic expanded the usual themes and problems mostly connected with regions of Central Asia, and the Near and Middle East. The twelve contributors “offered new insights and knowledge on some aspects of the influence



Figure 2. A group of participants of the ninth symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Maqām. Ankara, December 2014 (photo by Alexander Djumaev).

of Ottoman music culture in the Mediterranean region and especially in parts of the Balkans” (Elsner 2013:77).

The ninth symposium was held in collaboration with the Study Group on Music in the Arab World. It took place from 17 to 21 December 2014 upon the invitation of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Yildirim Beyazıt University Conservatory for Turkish Music in Ankara (figure 2). The general topic of the joint symposium was “*Maqām* traditions between theory and contemporary music making.” Thirty-three papers were presented by scholars in different forms: lectures, presentations, and panel discussions. The proceedings were published by the host, the Yildirim Beyazıt University Conservatory for Turkish Music, consisting of twenty-one papers giving a picture of the main scholarly interests in this topic (Elsner, Jähnichen, and Güray 2016). I was elected as chair of the study group at this symposium.

The tenth symposium took place from 28 June to 1 July 2018 in Shaki, Azerbaijan, upon the invitation of the Union of Composers of Azerbaijan and its chair, People Artist of Azerbaijan Franghiz Ali-zadeh, and the head of the Executive Authority of Shaki region, Elkhan Usubov (figure 3). The local organizer was an ICTM member and active member of the Study Group on Maqām, Suraya Agayeva, an Azerbaijani musicologist and senior researcher at the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. The symposium was held in the framework of the traditional Shaki “Silk road” ninth international music festival. The general topic was “The *maqām/mugām* traditions and the global changes in

the contemporary world.” In proposing this theme, we took into account that current dynamics of change in the contemporary world demand a new, special attention to *maqām/mugām* traditions. As other cultural and humanitarian values, *maqām/mugām* traditions are in a historic period of turmoil. Various factors influence directly and indirectly the authentic music traditions, thereby developing positive and negative tendencies. All of these tendencies should be studied by the international community of *maqām/mugām* researchers. Thirteen scholars presented their papers during two days, and participated in discussions with other participants and guests of the symposium (cf. Djumaev 2018a). The proceedings of the symposium are being prepared for publication by the host.

Our eleventh symposium, under the title “*Maqāmāt* in the history of Islamic civilization: Interrelations and interactions,” was planned for May 2020 in St. Petersburg at the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. But, unfortunately, due to the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, this event had to be postponed. It is planned to be online on 11–13 November 2021, hosted by the same institute in Saint Petersburg. The symposium abstracts will be published by the Ibn Sina Islamic Culture Research Foundation (in Moscow), and the host plans a publication resulting from the event.



Figure 3. Participants of the tenth symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Maqām. Shaki, June 2018 (photo courtesy of Alexander Djumaev).

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