HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

MUSIC FESTIVALS AS AN IMPORTANT DIRECTION OF UZBEKISTAN'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

U.A.Sattorov
Lecturer, Oriental University

Abstract. This article analyzes the role and significance of the Bakhshi Art, Maqom, and Sharq Taronalari festivals in preserving, developing, and promoting Uzbekistan's rich intangible cultural heritage on the international stage. The study pays particular attention to the reforms implemented during the years of independence aimed at advancing national culture and arts, as well as supporting the traditions of oral folk creativity, maqom music, and the art of baxshichilik (epic storytelling). Furthermore, the article examines the history, objectives, functions, and organizational processes of the International Bakhshi Art Festival, the International Maqom Art Forum, and the Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival, which are regularly held in Uzbekistan. The research highlights the importance of these festivals in safeguarding national cultural heritage, transmitting it to younger generations, fostering intercultural dialogue and cooperation among nations, and showcasing Uzbekistan's cultural potential to the global community. In addition, the study explores the contribution of these festivals to the protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, as well as the strengthening of intercultural communication in accordance with UNESCO principles. The research is based on an analysis of relevant legal and regulatory documents, scholarly studies, academic literature, and periodical publications related to the field.

Keywords: Bakhshi art, Maqom art, Sharq Taronalari Festival, Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, International Cultural Cooperation, Folklore, Traditional Music, Intercultural Dialogue, Culture of Uzbekistan.

In the context of globalization, relations between states in international affairs are no longer limited solely to political and economic dimensions; they are also increasingly developing through cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy serves as an important instrument for introducing a nation's values, arts, and historical heritage to the global community. After gaining independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan placed special emphasis on restoring and developing its national culture, as well as promoting it on the international stage. In this process, international music festivals have begun to play a strategic role in the country's cultural policy.

Cultural diplomacy is an important component of the concept of "soft power" and serves as a significant tool for strengthening a state's international reputation. Music festivals, in turn, function as practical platforms in this process. They showcase national culture, facilitate international creative exchange, promote tourism and cultural relations, and strengthen mutual trust between states. During the years of independence, Uzbekistan has been consistently hosting major international music festivals, including "Sharq Taronalari," the International Maqom Festival, and the International Art of Bakhshi. These festivals are not merely cultural events but strategic platforms that contribute to shaping the country's international image.

On February 26, 2019, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted Resolution No. PQ-4214 "On Measures for Preparing for the Organization of the Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival." The "Sharq Taronalari" International Music Festival has been held in ancient Samarkand since 1997 on the initiative of Uzbekistan. It is the largest international music festival held in the Central Asian region. The festival is organized every two years and has become an important cultural event that brings together artists from various regions of the world in Samarkand. The first festival, held in 1997, was attended by 243 performers from 31 countries, an international jury composed of 11

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

members, representatives of UNESCO and the International Music Council, as well as government officials from 16 countries. The second festival was held in 1999, followed by the third in 2001, the fourth in 2003, the fifth in 2005, the sixth in 2007, the seventh in 2009, the eighth in 2011, the ninth in 2013, the tenth in 2015, the eleventh in 2017, and the twelfth in 2019.

The suspension of this international festival for a certain period was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The thirteenth edition of the "Sharq Taronalari" International Music Festival was subsequently reorganized. Held on August 24–29, 2024, this festival brought together more than 400 artists and scholars from around 80 countries worldwide. Winners of the "Sharq Taronalari" International Music Festival are determined in two categories and are awarded diplomas, statuettes, and monetary prizes by the Organizing Committee. At the "Sharq Taronalari" International Music Festival, participants who gain recognition from independent jury members, representatives of creative unions, foundations, and other organizations, as well as from the audience, are awarded special diplomas and monetary prizes in various nominations, including "Youngest Participant," "Best Audience Choice Participant," "Best Instrumental Performer," and other categories.

Interest in this festival has been growing year by year. The festival is considered one of the first major international events in Uzbekistan organized in cooperation with UNESCO. Moreover, it has also initiated the tradition of holding several other festivals in various cities of the country under UNESCO patronage, such as the Bakhshi, Maqom, and Lazgi festivals.

Maqom art is considered one of the highest achievements of Eastern musical thought. As a musical system, it is not only an aesthetic phenomenon but also a product of philosophical and spiritual reflection. The Shashmaqom, Khorezm Maqoms, and Fergana–Tashkent maqom traditions are of particular scholarly significance due to their complex compositional structures, poetic texts, and performance styles. International maqom art forums contribute to strengthening the position of maqom within the global cultural space. Within the framework of these festivals, the organization of scientific conferences, creative meetings, and master classes creates opportunities for the scholarly study of maqom art and its wider popularization among the younger generation.

In accordance with the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures for Further Development of Uzbek National Maqom Art" adopted in 2017, the Center of Uzbek National Maqom Art was established. From September 6 to 10, 2018, the First International Maqom Art Festival was held in the city of Shahrisabz under the auspices of UNESCO, with the participation of solo performers and folklore ensembles from 75 countries around the world. On June 27–30, 2024, the Second International Maqom Art Forum was held in Zomin under the patronage of UNESCO, ISESCO, and TURKSOY. This second international cultural event brought together participants from around 80 countries worldwide.

Since 2019, the International Bakhshi Art Festival has been held with the aim of preserving and developing the unique examples of Uzbek national bakhshi and epic storytelling art, widely promoting it, strengthening feelings of respect and appreciation for this art form among the younger generation, reinforcing friendship and brotherhood among different peoples, and further expanding the scope of creative cooperation and cultural-spiritual relations at the international level. The Resolution No. 304 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures for the Further Development and Improvement of Bakhshi and Epic Art" was adopted on April 27, 2018. In addition, the Resolution No. 946 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures for the Organization of the International Bakhshi Art Festival" was adopted on November 22, 2018. These resolutions were adopted with the aim of developing bakhshi and epic storytelling art in the country, promoting it at the international level, and preserving intangible cultural heritage.

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

On April 5–10, 2019, the awarding ceremony of the winners of the first International Bakhshi Art Festival, held for the first time in the city of Termez, took place. This cultural festival was attended by more than 160 representatives from 74 countries of the world, including prominent cultural figures, representatives of folk art, performers of oral folk creativity, and media professionals. On September 17–20, 2021, the second International Bakhshi Festival was held in Nukus, the capital of Karakalpakstan. The international cultural event was attended by representatives of prestigious organizations such as UNESCO, ISESCO, TURKSOY, the Executive Committee of the CIS, and the International Research Center for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, as well as more than 100 representatives of folk art, cultural figures, and media professionals from various countries around the world.

On May 6–8, 2023, the third International Bakhshi Festival was held in the city of Guliston. To further enhance the festival's attractiveness, gastronomic tourism activities were also organized for participants, including exhibitions of world and national cuisines as well as handicraft products. On the third day of the festival, an epic storytelling evening was also held. On April 26–28, 2025, the fourth International Bakhshi Art Festival was held in the city of Khiva under the auspices of UNESCO and ISESCO. It brought together nearly 200 bakhshi performers from more than 40 countries. Within the framework of the festival, the "Second Forum of Turkic World Culture" and international scientific-practical conferences titled "Bakhshi Art in New Uzbekistan: Modern Research and Prospects" were also organized. Renowned international folklorists delivered presentations on pressing issues related to the further development of the field.

During the scientific-practical conference, a resolution concerning the prospects of bakhshi art was adopted. Various exhibitions dedicated to bakhshi art were also presented, showcasing national musical instruments, costumes, handicrafts, visual and applied arts, as well as examples of sculpture. International music festivals contribute to enhancing Uzbekistan's international cultural prestige, ensuring the global recognition of its national cultural heritage, expanding intercultural dialogue, increasing interest in national values among young people, and strengthening international cultural cooperation.

In conclusion, music festivals are of great importance in the development of Uzbekistan's cultural diplomacy. They serve to promote national culture at the international level, strengthen the country's image, develop intercultural communication, and support the growth of tourism. Further improvement and advancement of these festivals in the future will contribute to strengthening Uzbekistan's position in the global cultural arena.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining 26.02.2019 yildagi ""Sharq taronalari" xalqaro musiqa festivalini o'tkazishga tayyorgarlik ko'rish chora-tadbirlari to'g'risida" PQ-4214-sonli qarori. // https://lex.uz/en/docs/-4216465
2. Musiqa hayot kabi abadiydir. Samarqandda "Sharq taronalari" xalqaro musiqa festivali boshlandi. // Xalq so'zi. 1997-yil 27-avgust.
3. Bugun Zomin milliy tabiat bog'ida II Xalqaro maqom san'ati anjumani boshlandi. // https://dunyo.info/uz/reportazh-ia-dunyo/segodnya-v-nacionalnom-parke-zaamin-otkrylsya-II-mezhdunarodnyy-forum-iskusstva-makom
4. O'zbekiston Respublikasi Vazirlar Mahkamasining qarori, 26.04.2018 yildagi 304-son. // https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-3711930
5. O'zbekiston Respublikasi Vazirlar Mahkamasining qarori, 22.11.2018 yildagi 946-son. // https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-4072873

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

6. Xiva shahrida bo‘lib o‘tgan IV Xalqaro baxshichilik san’ati festivali Afrika OAV diqqat markazida. // www.dunyo.info/uz/mir-ob-uzbekistane/hiva-shaxrida-bўlib-ўtgan-IV-halқaro-bahshichilik-sanati-festivali-afrika-oav-diққat-markazida