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## THE AZERBAIJANIAN POET MAHSATI GANJAVI'S OEUVRE AND MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

The article deals with the role of Mahsati Ganjavi in the history of Azerbaijanian culture and music, as well as to analyze the works of Azerbaijanian musicians dedicated to Mahsati Ganjavi and study its connection with music culture. A number of research cases and field for studying creativity of Azerbaijanian poetess has been inductively generalized at the theoretical level as a representation of the literary approach. Mahsati Ganjavi, one of the most skilful rubai masters of 12<sup>th</sup> century Azerbaijanian poetry, is known as one of the progressive poets of the period. Her poems express deep love for man and his feelings, and reflect such qualities as sincerity, naturalness, vitality and imagery. It is important to study issues related to music in the work of Mahsati Ganjavi, to expand the study of Mahsati's work in terms of studying the role of Mahsati as a poet and musician in the music culture of the Middle Ages, and revealing her views on music reflected in her poems. This is the first attempt to understand that these works prove once again that the deep connection between poetry and music in the works of Mahsati Ganjavi shows itself and conveys her musical poetic world to our contemporaries.

**Keywords:** *Mahsati Ganjavi, poetry, music, rubai, romance.*

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## ТВОРЧИСТЬ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОЇ ПОЕТЕСИ МЕХСЕТІ ГЯНДЖЕВІ ТА МУЗИКА

**Метою дослідження** є вивчення ролі Мехсеті Гянджеві в історії азербайджанської культури й музики, а також аналіз творів азербайджанських музикантів, присвячених Мехсеті Гянджеві, та розгляд її зв'язку з музичною культурою.

**Методологія дослідження.** Немало дослідницьких напрямів, які мали на меті вивчення творчості азербайджанської поетеси, індуктивно узагальнено на теоретичному рівні як репрезентація літературного підходу.

**Результати.** Мехсеті Гянджеві, одна з найкращих майстринь рубаї азербайджанської поезії XII ст., відома як одна з прогресивних поетес того часу. Її вірші виражають глибоку любов до людини та її почуттів, а також відображають такі якості, як щирість, природність, життєвість і образність. Означений широкий опис людської краси та почуттів у віршах Мехсеті Гянджеві засвідчує відданість поетеси життю й гуманізму. Її вірші — вираження щирих почуттів, живих, справжніх людських стосунків.

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Важливо розглянути питання, пов'язані з музикою, у творчості Мехсеті Гянджеві, розширити вивчення її творчості з точки зору вивчення ролі аналізованої персони як поетеси і музикантки в музичній культурі Середньовіччя, означити її погляди на музику, відображені у віршах. Згідно з дослідженнями, Мехсеті Гянджеві акомпанувала собі на сопілці, читаючи рубаї, які вона складала на поетичних зібраннях. У цьому контексті вона відома як одна з найталановитіших музикантів свого часу. Залучення до музики також вплинуло на її поезію. У своїх віршах вона описувала музичні інструменти, а також музичні жанри за допомогою поетичної виразності. Згадуючи про музичні твори, присвячені Мехсеті Гянджеві, слід зазначити, що їх тема та зміст є ліричними. Ліризм, притаманний усім творам поетеси, також відображається в музичному втіленні її творів та особистості.

**Новизна.** Це перша спроба зрозуміти, що ці твори ще раз доводять: глибокий зв'язок між поезією та музикою у творах Мехсеті Гянджеві проявляється і передає її музичний поетичний світ нашим сучасникам.

**Практичне значення.** Інформація в цій статті може бути корисною для студентів, учених, дослідників азербайджанської літератури.

**Ключові слова:** *Мехсеті Гянджеві, поезія, музика, рубаї, романтика.*

**Problem statement.** In 2013, the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mahsati Ganjavi was celebrated worldwide by UNESCO. The 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the poetess Mahsati Ganjavi, who contributed to the development of Azerbaijani poetry, was marked with great solemnity by the order of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. With the support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, events dedicated to the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mahsati Ganjavi were held in the French capital and a number of cities in 2013–2014. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation opened the Ganja Mahsati Ganjavi Center, published Mahsati Ganjavi's Rubai (translated by Nigar Rafibeyli), research works on the poetess (Rafael Huseynov's "Mahsati Ganjavi" – in 7 languages), a CD of songs written to her words (Pika Akhundova – to Mahsati Ganjavi) songs and romances) were introduced, exhibitions were organized. All this gives impetus to the study of Mahsati Ganjavi's legacy.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The books such as "The new return of Gozel Mahsati. Mahsati Ganjavi songs. Mahsati Ganjavi's rubai in Rafael Huseynov's Persian translations and Rizvan Sadirkhanov's compositions" by Rafael Huseynov; "Mahsati Ganjavi. Rubai" translated by N. Rafibeyli and H. Yusifli (2013). "The world of music of Mahsati Ganjavi" by Sevda Gurbanliyeva are valuable sources in this direction.

**The purpose of the article.** The research is based on the historical-theoretical method. At the same time, the scientific-theoretical views of various researchers were accepted as a methodological basis.

**Discussion.** The Azerbaijani school of poetry, which reached the peak of its development in the XI–XIII centuries, was famous for such well-known masters as Nizami Ganjavi, Abul-ula Ganjavi, Afzaladdin Khagani,

Falaki Shirvani, Mujiraddin Beylagani. Persian, which was preferred by both the Turkic-speaking Seljuk rulers and the Atabeys and Shirvanshahs as a language of instruction in their palaces, owes its development and improvement to the Azerbaijanian poetic school, and especially to the great Nizami. Nizami's "Khamasa", one of the most valuable pearls of world literature, is considered the peak of the Eastern Renaissance. Along with Nizami, the work of his great contemporary Mahsati Ganjavi was an important stage in the development of Azerbaijanian culture in the study of the Middle Ages. It is no coincidence that Nizami's poem "Khosrov and Shirin" contains lines about Mahsati. This is due to Nizami's value to her poetry. At the same time, the work of Mahsati Ganjavi in medieval Azerbaijanian culture, along with enriching Azerbaijanian poetry, also influenced the musical culture.

Very little is known about the personal life of Azerbaijanian poet Mahsati Ganjavi. According to research, Mahsati Ganjavi was born in about 1089 in Ganja and lived there until the end of her life – 1160. Mahsati Ganjavi was of Azerbaijanian origin. Her real name was Manija, and she took the name Mahsati as a literary pseudonym. In the sources, the meaning of the word "Mahsati" is interpreted from Persian as "Boyuk khanum", "Ay khanum". She was well educated and well acquainted with Oriental literature and music. She lived in the Kharabat neighborhood of Ganja. She is known as a multi-talented poetess, a beautiful musician, a drummer, and a singer with a beautiful voice. Mahsati took part in poetry meetings and halls of Ganja, demonstrated her literary talent in the palace of Sultan Mahmud and Sultan Sanjar.

R. Huseynov writes about it: "Almost all creative activity related to Ganja environment, Mahsati visited Balkh, Merv, Nishapur in different years. Mahsati was famous as a poetess during the reign of Sultan Muhammad and his son Muqisaddin II Mahmud, and later she was invited to the Sultan Sanjar Palace as a guest during her visit to Marwa" (Huseynov, 2013a, p. 5).

Information about the life of the great poetess is mainly taken from the 13<sup>th</sup> century epic "Mahsati and Amir Ahmad", the manuscripts of which are kept at the Azerbaijan Institute of Manuscripts, Istanbul and London. Recent research by Azerbaijanian literary critics shows that the author of the "Epic" is the 13<sup>th</sup> century Azerbaijanian poet and scientist Abdullah Jovhari Zargar Tabrizi, and the heroes here, including the poet Amir Ahmad, Ganja Shah Sultan Muhammad and Ganja Shah Sultan Mahmud II were real personalities. It is no coincidence that the motives of this saga formed the basis of plays written about Mahsati. At the same time, the motives of this saga were used in operas dedicated to Mahsati.

"Khalil Yusifli, the compiler of the book "Mahsati Ganjavi. Rubai" and the author of the foreword, writes that there are different opinions about this saga: Medieval sources did not present Mahsati as a historical figure

based on the epic “Amir Ahmad and Mahsati”, on the contrary, an as-yet-unknown author composed a saga based on the legends of the poetess, a historical figure, and her poems. In this saga, not only a certain part of the Rubai referred to by Mahsati herself, but also some poems recited in the language of other characters belong to this beautiful Azerbaijani poetess. This is confirmed by the poems of Mahsati, who have recently been found in a number of authoritative sources” (Mahsati Ganjavi, 2004, p. 35–36).

In world poetry, Mahsati Ganjavi is known as a powerful master of rubai. According to various sources, she has about two hundred rubais and several lyrical poems. “Rubai has always been loved as one of the most popular genres of Eastern poetry. The rubai, which covers a wide range of topics, has been written since the eighth century, and few poets have been found in the Middle East in the last 13 centuries who have not tried to write rubai. However, the greatest fame in this vast sea of rubai was the fate of two poets, who were considered the best masters of rubai: Omar Khayyam and Mahsati Ganjavi” (Huseynov, 2013b, p. 5).

For 9 centuries, Mahsati’s “rubai”s have been imitating people’s tastes and refreshing their souls for generations. She awakens the love of life with her philosophical depths, encourages people to be optimistic and inspired by the beauties of the world. “Mahsati rubais have a unique philosophical weight. The poetess’s thoughts on man, human destiny and time also turn into delicate verses. Mahsati is one of the first ambassadors of free thought in Azerbaijani poetry. In her rubais, she described the most sensitive sociopolitical concerns of the time, whipped injustice, hypocrisy, inequality, and the shortcomings of the time” (Huseynov, 2013c, p. 6).

Mahsati created beautiful examples of the poetic genre of Shahrashub (Shahrangiz), mainly praising simple workers, masters of various professions and arts. She became famous as a representative of the new urban poetry, which glorified the images of artists, poets and singers in her poems.

Mahsati was a member of the Sufi Akhi sect. It is known that Sufis often used figurative language to protect themselves from the persecution of orthodox Muslim clerics. According to the traditions of this sect, Mahsati also preferred to use the word figuratively. In purely Sufi poetry, the covenants shown to the understanding of God are equated with love, and God himself is called a friend and companion. A Sufi is likened to either a lover or a drunkard. According to this terminology, the state of ecstasy of the Sufi is called the place of concentration, the place where the representatives of the sect are concentrated, the tavern. Most Sufis attend their meetings instead of the mosque, replacing the reading of hadiths with listening to poetry in the ruins, reciting oriental verses, and dancing. For this reason,

in Mahsati's poems, hospitality, music and dance parties, wine and love are praised, which is one of the main features of Sufi poetry.

The study of the relationship of Mahsati Ganjavi's work with music culture can be approached in two ways: first, the study of Mahsati's work as a musician and his views on music based on her work and research dedicated to her; second, to analyze the musical works of composers based on Mahsati's work. Research in both directions reveals interesting results. The basis of Mahsati Ganjavi's work is rubai. It is known from researches that Mahsati memorized the languages of these rubais in her time. At the same time, Mahsati herself, known as a skilled musician, enlivened the assembly of poets by playing and singing her poems to the accompaniment of a flute.

At the same time, it is possible to learn Mahsati Ganjavi's views on music from the study of her rubais. For example, in Mahsati's poems, she likens the ripple of beautiful girl's hair to a dance. In another rubai, when she says, "Zülfün təzənə, neydir o şümşad qamət" she likens the figure of a beautiful girl to a ney instrument with a long proportionate structure. Tazana is a plectrum for playing stringed instruments, which the poet compares to beautiful hair. One of Mahsati's rubai also reflects the singer's ghazal singing in the assembly. Describing the assembly of kings, the poet shows that the chang and ney are always played. Mahsati mentions musical instruments such as chang, ney, barbat and rubab in her poems. We come across the names of all these musical instruments within a rubai.

Concepts such as mey and wine are widely used in Mahsati's ghazals. However, we believe that Mahsati's work should be interpreted in the context of Sufism. There are direct signs of this in her poems.

As can be seen, the information that reflects the musical culture in Mahsati's rubai is valuable as one of the sources of information about the musical life of that period.

In the twentieth century, the work of Mahsati Ganjavi attracted the attention of composers. We can mention three operas dedicated to Mahsati Ganjavi called "Mahsati", the first of which belonged to Ertogrul Javid and remained unfinished; the second opera was composed by composer Elnara Dadashova in 1996, but was not staged; The third opera was created by Pika Akhundova and staged in 2019 at the Azerbaijan State Opera and Ballet Theater. The librettos of the mentioned operas are connected with the life of Mahsati Ganjavi. The composers created a plot line using the motives of the epos "Mahsati and Amir Ahmad" about the life of Mahsati. From this point of view, the events in the mentioned operas are connected with the love of Mahsati and Amir Ahmad, their way of life, their environment, the culture of the time, their receptions in the royal palaces, the poet's creative achievements. However, there are some differences between the saga and

the opera libretto. We can note this based on the libretto of P. Akhundova's opera "Mahsati".

The opera begins with a love affair between Manija and Amir Ahmad. As it is known from the content of the saga, Amir Khatib, the son of Ganja Khatib, fell in love with her and came to her house in Kharabat district of Ganja. Amir Ahmed sees Mahsati here surrounded by 40 delicate girls. They play ney, chang, tambourine, sing and dance. It describes Mahsati writing poetry, playing many instruments, singing, and taking music and dance classes.

Manija's question to the poet as musician and chess player reached the Ganja Sultan, she was invited to the palace. At one meeting, Sultan Sanjar's attention was drawn to a quote she had made abruptly about a sudden snowfall: "Göylər sənə gümüşü xalça göndərib ki, atının nalı bulanmasın" ("The heavens have sent you a silver carpet so that your horse's hooves will not get dirty"). After hearing this rubai, the Sultan rewarded the poet with the title "Ma-histi" ("Greatest") and accepted her into his close circle.

The story tells more about the lives of Mahsati and Amir Ahmad. They move away from the palace and into different cities. Mahsati is respected everywhere as a poetess. They live to old age and die. In the opera, these stories are abbreviated, and Manija's meeting with Sultan Sanjar in the palace is given in a slightly modified form. So, when Sultan Sanjar offered Mahsati to stay in the palace, she rejected. Enraged, the king threw her into prison. Amir Ahmad was arrested and punished when he secretly came to see Mahsati in prison. They both perish and are reunited in a world of spiritual dreams.

Apparently, the main goal of the composer was to depict the happy moments of the poetess's life and death in a one-act opera. In the libretto, the main conflict points of the epos "Mahsati and Amir Ahmad" were selected and formed the basis of the dramatic plot line.

In general, in the operas, the authors sang about Mahsati's life and career in accordance with their thinking and musical style. From this point of view, although the musical content of operas is different, they belong to the genre of lyrical-dramatic opera due to their general character.

It should be noted that Mahsati's life and work are also reflected in the plays. Music plays an important role in these works. Among them: music written by Shafiqa Akhundova for Mammadhuseyn Tahmasib's play "In the world of rabbis", music written by Mammad Alakbarov for Kamala Agayeva's performance "Mahsati". Examples of song genres predominate in the music recorded for the performances. This is not accidental, because Mahsati Ganjavi's rubais are musical in terms of their poetic features. Therefore, the content of the rubais seems to pave the way for their musical embodiment. From this point of view, we can include the music written by the composers

for theatrical performances in the list of musical works dedicated to Mahsati Ganjavi.

The words of Mahsati Ganjavi have been written to number of vocal works. The song “Bu Dunya” written by composer Ogtay Kazimi to the words of Mahsati Ganjavi is widely spread in the repertoire of singers. Mahsati’s famous rubais were used in this song.

We can show 5 romances composed by composer Rizvan Sadirkhanov to 14 rubais translated poetically from Persian into Azerbaijanian by literary scholar Rafael Huseynov. The romances written by R. Sadirkhanov to the words of Mahsati are as follows: “Hicrinlə...”, “Məhsətiyəm”, “Həmdəm olduğumuz”, “Mələklər...”, “O Ay camalına...” (Songs of Mahsati Ganjavi).

Composer Pika Akhundova’s romances to the words of Mahsati Ganjavi — “Ey gül”, “Mənim tək yanan harda var”, “Könlümə yar oldu bu gecə dilbər”, “Soruşma”, “Rəhm eylə”, “Şəhla gözlüm” should be noted. On the occasion of the 900th anniversary of Mahsati Ganjavi, a CD of romances written by P. Akhundova to the words of Mahsati was published by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. These romances were successfully performed by People’s Artist Samir Jafarov at a concert in Reims and Mulhouse, France.

The poetic features of Mahsati’s rubais are fully reflected in the field of vocal lyrics — romances. The composer’s melodies of different content and colorful character sound very harmonious and fresh. The emotional, heartfelt melodies of the romances are vocal in nature. The musical form of the romance attracts attention with its interesting features in terms of melody, harmony, rhythm, and national features. Their research provides a basis for revealing the main features of the vocal style of composers, revealing their artistic qualities. The melodies created by the composers are very readable, impressive and memorable. Vocal melodies of romances as a means of lyrical expression embody the inner feelings, ideas and thoughts of the poet Mahsati.

It is worth to note two choral works based on Mahsati’s rubai. Composer Faig Nagiyev’s “Şamın nalesi” and Sevda Gurbanaliyeva’s “Kharabat” (Ruin) choirs attract attention with their interesting features in terms of the unity of words and music. Faig Nagiyev’s “Şamın nalesi” uses two rubais, which reflect the burning of a candle in the content of the capella chorus. The choir is remarkable in terms of musical solution. The composer created a unique image of the flame of the candle, using the performance of choral sounds to embody the burning of the candle in the music.

The choir “Kharabat” composed by Sevda Gurbanaliyeva on the basis of Mahsati’s poems brings to life the image of the poet and embodies her delicate poetic thoughts. It is no coincidence that the choir is called “Ruin”. Thus, this neighborhood mentioned in Mahsati’s biography is known as a

neighborhood of famous artists in Ganja. S. Gurbanaliyeva writes about this: “The creative environment resembling the spirit of Ganja’s Kharabat neighborhood, conversations of people of science, literature and art, and Sufi meetings held here played an important role in the growth of Mahsati Ganjavi as a famous poetess and musician” (Gurbanaliyeva, 2013, p. 10). The “Kharabat” choir used two of Mahsati’s rubais, both of which are dedicated to the description of Kharabat and its spiritual and cultural significance in people’s lives.

As can be seen, the musical works written in the words of Mahsati Ganjavi are different by genre, covering musical-stage works – opera, music for theatrical performances, as well as vocal music genres – songs, romances and choirs. In these works, using the works of Mahsati Ganjavi, the image of the poet, the atmosphere of her time, her thoughts and feelings were revived.

Especially in vocal works, the peculiarities of Mahsati Ganjavi’s work are in harmony with the main stylistic features of the composers. An analysis of the vocal works written in Mahsati’s words in terms of subject matter and genre diversity allows us to reveal the main features of their musical language. From this point of view, it is important in the study of the interaction of poetry and music to discover and generalize the peculiarities of vocal works by studying the basics, melodic and form structure features.

**Conclusions.** Mahsati Ganjavi, one of the most skilful rubai masters of 12<sup>th</sup> century Azerbaijanian poetry, is known as one of the progressive poets of the period. Her poems express deep love for man and his feelings, and reflect such qualities as sincerity, naturalness, vitality and imagery. Such a wide description of human beauty and feelings in Mahsati Ganjavi’s poems is not accidental and shows the poetess’s commitment to life and humanism. Her poems are an expression of sincere feelings, lively, real human relationships.

It is important to study issues related to music in the work of Mahsati Ganjavi. It is important to expand the study of Mahsati’s work in terms of studying the role of Mahsati as a poet and musician in the music culture of the Middle Ages, and revealing her views on music reflected in her poems. According to research, Mahsati accompanied herself on the flute while reciting the rubai she composed at poetry gatherings. In this sense, she is known as one of the most talented musicians of her time. Her involvement in music also influenced her poetry. In her poems, she described musical instruments, as well as musical genres, by means of poetic expression. Speaking about the musical works dedicated to Mahsati Ganjavi, it should be noted that their theme and content are lyrical. The lyricism inherent in all of Mahsati’s works is also reflected in the musical embodiment of her works and personality. These works prove once again that the deep connection

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between poetry and music in the works of Mahsati Ganjavi shows itself and conveys her musical poetic world to our contemporaries.

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