

SANUBAR TURSUN AND HER “GLOBAL MOMENTS”

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Abstract

It is often said that those prominent personalities in the recent history of music and dance heritage contribute significantly to the cultural landscape of a nation or community. These peaks are not isolated cultural entities but leave unique and irreplaceable “global moments” on the map of music history. Unlike the “global moments” highlighted in European music historiography, exemplified by figures such as Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, these individuals gain global significance through transcending local experiences, crossing cultural boundaries, and connecting to the global network via their creative performing activities. This micro-historical perspective is essential for understanding global music history. This paper will explore the “global moments” created by prominent figures in a nation’s music scene, focusing on the Uyghur musician Sanubar Tursun. Renowned for her profound artistry and deep connection to her cultural roots, Sanubar Tursun has become a vital bridge between the local and the global. By composing music to the poems of Tagore, Abai Qunanbaiuly, Yesenin, and others, she not only celebrates the literary and cultural heritage of various countries, eras, and ethnicities but also creates a rich mosaic of musical dialogues. Her work exemplifies how an artist can transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, fostering a global appreciation of diverse musical traditions and thus creating unique and irreplaceable “global moments.”

Keywords

Sanubar Tursun, Uyghur musician, Rabindranath Tagore, multiethnic translation, global moment

INTRODUCTION

Contacts and encounters between various musical cultures represent nodal points in the network of global music history—what Bohlman refers to as the “global moments.” In his book, *Introduction: World Music’s Histories*, Bohlman identifies three important “global moments”—technology, missionaries and colonies, and the World’s Fairs (Philip V. Bohlman 2013: 1–20)—to examine moments of global encounters between some musical practices. Viewed from a macro-historical perspective, these factors provide essential tools for exploring the interconnections among global music cultures, offering a narrative framework rich in ontological connectivity. However, the historical tapestry within this framework is woven by the musicians and their musicking, who navigate the historical warp and weft of the world.

Notable figures such as Bach and Mozart are widely recognized as masters of European classical music, leaving a lasting impact not only on the history of classical music but also on global perceptions and value systems surrounding music. Their influence extends deeply into global music education systems and performance practices, establishing them as a “global moment.” However, when we broaden our perspective, it becomes clear that every community, nation, and ethnic group has its own distinguished figures in the history of music and dance—individuals whose creative brilliance has illuminated the cultural peaks of their societies. This raises an important question: can these figures, too, leave behind a distinctive and even irreplaceable

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“global moment” on the historical map of music? How do they transcend local experiences, cross-cultural boundaries, and connect their creative and performative practices to the global network of music-making? Understanding these processes is a crucial dimension of approaching global music history from a micro-historical perspective.

This paper will discuss the “global moments” of a prominent ethnic figure by examining the case of Uyghur musician Sanubar Tursun, who has composed music based on the poems of Tagore, Abai Qunanbaiuly, Yesenin, and other poets from different places and backgrounds.

SANUBAR TURSON

Sanubar Tursun (Figure 1) is a well-known Uyghur female musician, born on 7th January, 1971, in Yining (Ghulja, 伊宁), Xinjiang, into a musical family. She was the seventh in the family of 11 children. Her father, Tursun Memet, was a skilled performer of various Uyghur instruments, especially the dulcimer (Chang, چاڭ), and was also an instrument maker. He became a member of the Yili Military District Cultural Troupe when it was founded and then joined the Xinjiang Provincial Military District Cultural Troupe in 1956. In 1959, as a member of the People’s Liberation Army’s cultural and artistic performance troupe, he participated in the 10th anniversary celebration performance of the founding of the People’s Republic of China in Beijing. The state leaders who watched the performance included Chairman Mao, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and so on. During this performance, he earned the honorary title “Tursun Chang” for playing the dulcimer covered with silk, an act that garnered applause from all musicians present.

All 11 children in the family play the tambur, dutar, or sing songs. Five of them have pursued careers in music. From a young age, Sanubar was immersed in Ili folk songs and the 12 Muqams in her family environment. She recalls her father always playing instruments with them and her mother singing some Muqams to lull them to sleep. The learning process in their home focused on ear training, self-teaching, and imitation. Sanubar’s elder brother, Nur Muhemmet Tursun, who played the tambur and the setar, created unique playing techniques and styles during his long practice, transforming these traditionally accompanying instruments into solo instruments. His performances have been appreciated by the Uyghurs worldwide.



Figure 1: Cover design of Sanubar Tursun’s album *Arzu* (Songs of the Uyghurs) distributed by “Proper Music.” Picture in the public domain.

Following in her father’s footsteps, Sanubar began her career as a professional musician specializing in the dulcimer. She graduated with a major in a dulcimer from Xinjiang Arts University in 1994 and initially worked in the arts troupe of a steel company before joining the Xinjiang Muqam Art Troupe in 1999. In addition to the dulcimer, she nurtured a passion for singing

while accompanied by the dutar and formed her own band during this time. Although she composed many songs, she eventually grew dissatisfied with the limitations of single melodies and developed a desire to learn the musical knowledge necessary for polyphonic composition and orchestration for ensemble works. She first studied music theory at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and was later admitted to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 2009 to study composition, at the age of 38.

“She is someone who has devoted her youth to music—a true musician.” This was a note I recorded during my first interview with her in September 2014. She shared that during her studies at the Shanghai Conservatory. She was given many opportunities to perform in international collaborations. Gradually, she realized that when she performed for foreign audiences, they expected her to play the most “authentic” Uyghur music, while the conservatory's education required her to be “symphonic.” After several years of exploration, she found her way back to simplicity and steadily preserved the Uyghur music styles.

In 2008, the renowned pipa player Wu Man invited her and her younger brother to record the album “Borderlands” by Smithsonian Folkways, which was released in 2011. They subsequently undertook a concert tour under the same title. Collaborators for this event included the famous Tajikistani dutar player Sirojiddin Juraev, as well as the Italian musician Andre Pixini, among others. In 2013, her album *Arzu* (Songs of the Uyghurs) was released internationally, featuring muqam and Xinjiang folk songs. As the disc’s liner notes say,

“Stylistically Uyghur music lies somewhere between the Central Asian heartland and the sound worlds of Mongolia and China. In many ways it is closely related to neighboring Central Asian urban traditions” (Proper Music Group Website, 2025).

This series of events has earned her international recognition and invitations to perform in concerts organized in Konya, Paris, London, Geneva, Toronto, and other places.

However, the “global moments” around which this paper is centered are not Sanubar’s dissemination of Uyghur folk songs in the international arena. Instead, they focus on her exploration of composing songs to the poetry of foreign poets that resonate with her audience, expressed in her rich Uyghur style of songwriting. Through these compositions, she invites us into micro-cosmic “global moments” of cultural mobility.

THE NETWORK OF GLOBAL CULTURAL MOBILITY: BETWEEN SANUBAR AND TAGORE

The first time I heard Sanubar sing *Kongula Nasihat* (كۆڭلۈمنى تېسەمل قىلىدۇ) in the Uyghur language, which means *Peace, My Heart*, I didn’t realize at all that it was a song composed to lyrics by a foreign poet. Because the Uyghur audience at the concert was able to sing along with her, I initially assumed it was an authentic traditional folk song. When I learnt that she had composed the song in 2006 using a poem by Rabindranath Tagore, Sergei Yesenin and Bella Ahmadolinná, Venezuela’s Burelli Rivas, and the Kazakh poet Abai Qunanbaiuly. She also used poems by lyricists from other ethnic groups in China.

POEMS	BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE POEMS' AUTHOR	THE ORIGINAL POEMS' LANGUAGE	TITLE OF THE POEM	TITLE OF THE SONG	YEAR OF COMPOSITION BY SANUBAR
Rabindranath Tagore	1861-1941	Bengali	nameless	Kongulga Nasuhat (Peace, My Heart)	2006
			Ziyan-ni toldurush	Bahar kiler(Spring is Coming)/ Tozup yene echilar guller (The Ever-Blooming Flower)	2008
			Kilidu muhabbat yashlighim bilen	Kilidu muhabbat yashlighim bilen (The Love That Locked My Youth)	2020
Sergei Aleksandrovich Yesenin	1895-1925	Russian	unknown	Naxsha bolup yashay yiningda (Living by Your Side Like a Song)	1999
Bella Ahmadolinna	1937-2010	Russian	unknown	Birelmeymen sanga (I Cannot Give You My Love)	2000
Rahile Bekri	1973-	Uyghur via Chinese	unknown	Oghlumgha soz (Wise Words)	2018
Abai Qunanbaiuly	1845-1904	Kazakh	Eyittim Salam Kalamkax	Eyittim Salam Kalamkax (Confession to You, Black Eye brows)	2020
Régulo Burelli Rivas	1917-1984	Spanish	Ey Hayat Soyimenseni	Ey Hayat Soyimenseni (Hymn to Life)	2020

Figure 2: The poem titles are in Uyghur and have been retranslated from their Chinese translations, making it impossible to trace the original text. The English translations in parentheses were provided by the author to aid non-Uyghur readers' understanding. (Overview in table format by the author.)

Thus, Sanubar's musical practice goes beyond previous understandings of her as not only a singer and inheritor of traditional Uyghur music, but also as a musician who transcends local experiences, crosses cultural boundaries, and accesses global networks with her own composing-performing activities. This raises several questions: Why did Sanubar compose songs to foreign poems? How did these foreign poems find their way into her reading? And why are her compositions accepted and loved by the Uyghur people?

The first question can be more easily answered. To my knowledge, as a singer-songwriter, Sanubar has composed more than 100 songs so far, of which more than 40 tunes are popular in the Xinjiang region and are even loved by listeners as authentic folk songs. She has a great love for poetry, which, along with nature, serves as a key source for her creativity. Whenever she feels an impact of the minds and a resonance of emotions while reading poetry, she picks up the dutar and starts playing and singing straight away. She told me, "I first read Tagore's poem in 2006, and the poem hit me as if I had written it myself. I had the melody in my head as I read it" (Tursun, Sanubar, and Xiao Mei, 2024). From this, it can be seen that although the authors of poems have national boundaries and the poems are expressed in specific languages, the content, meter, and emotions of poetry can be appreciated and sung across cultural boundaries by people from different countries and ethnic groups.

The second question to address is how foreign poetry entered her reading? Sanubar told me that she read those foreign poems neither in their original languages nor in Chinese. Her ability to perceive meters in the poems depended entirely on the Uyghur translations (ibid.). Through my

research, I learnt that the foreign poems Sanubar read in Uyghur were mainly secondarily translated from Chinese.

One notable example is *Kongulga Nasuhāt*, the Uyghur version of Tagore's poem, which appeared in an anthology titled *Wounded Hearts: Selected Outstanding Foreign Poetry*, translated by Perhat Ilyas (ئىلى پىرھات) and published in March 1998 by the Xinjiang People's Publishing House. The translator was born in Ili in 1964 and studied at the Central Minzu University in Beijing from 1982 to 1987, after which he returned to Xinjiang as a teacher. After 1990, he worked as an editor for the Xinjiang People's Publishing House and the Uyghur edition of *Selected Translations of World Literature*. In addition to that, he has also translated works by Hui and Han writers. Perhat Ilyas' experience is not an isolated case; during my research, I have learnt that many foreign and non-Uyghur works have been translated into Uyghur primarily from Chinese translations. Thus, to answer the second question, therefore, we also need to examine the context of Uyghur text translations of Sanubar's compositions to foreign poetry.

Tracing the written history back, Uyghur authors presented two remarkable works to the wider world almost simultaneously in the 11th century—the philosophical poetic drama *Blessed Wisdom* (Qutadġu Bilig), written by Yusuf Khass Hajib (ھاجىپ خاس يۈسۈپ) in Kashgar in 1069–1070, and the encyclopaedic dictionary of Turkic Languages (*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*), completed by the linguist Mehmud Qeshqiri (مەھمۇد قەشقەرىيى) in Baghdad in 1072–1074. Subsequently, for a considerable period of history, poets in Uyghur society mainly adopted a creative tendency to emulate classical poetry, with a gradual decline in their contacts with the outside world. From the 1920s to the 1950, Uyghur literature came into contact with Russian literature, and in the 1940s, with Kazakh literature. After 1949, there was a massive influx of Chinese and Soviet literature, resulting in the emergence of several Uyghur translators. This brought Uyghur literature “from an ‘isolated island’ that had been silent for so many years to the oceans” (Talat Ibrahim, 2012). Since its inception in 1979, the *Selected Translations of World Literature* (Uyghur Edition) has been published as a monthly journal featuring 12 issues per year, translating foreign poems into Uyghur, with all translations being re-translations from Chinese sources.

If poetry translation embodies a process of cross-cultural communication, it is at the same time a means of communication, as it tells which nations interact with each other. To explain why Perhat Ilyas chose to translate Tagore's poems, it is necessary to mention the process of how Tagore's poetry entered the Chinese consciousness. According to the introduction to the 1922 edition of *Stray Birds*, translated by Zheng Zhenduo, Tagore's poetry first reached the Chinese world in 1922. In that publication, the translator mentioned that there were six collections of Tagore's poems published in English: (1) *Gardener*, (2) *Gitanjali*, (3) *Crescent Moon*, (4) *Fruit-Gathering*, (5) *Stray Birds*, and (6) *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, which were supplemented and reprinted in 1933 and 1954. Subsequently, a large number of different translations of Tagore's poems in the Chinese world have been based on these six collections (Zheng Zhenduo 1922:4). Since *Kongulga Nasuhāt*, the poem that Sanubar chose to set to music, features a title she inscribed based on the poem's content, and because Perhat Ilyas' translation only bore the serial number 42 without a specific title, it remains unclear which of Tagore's original poems inspired her song. Unable to contact the translator for the time being, I went through all six collections of Tagore's poetry but could not find the original poem. Finally, I found a book published in 1997 titled *Chinese Translation of Tagore's English Poetry* by Wu Yan, a senior translator from Shanghai Translation Publishing House. That book, in addition to the aforementioned six collections, is supplemented with another anthology of Tagore's poems compiled by Tagore's

grandson-in-law Krishna Kripalani in his honour, which contains 131 poems that are numbered instead of titled, in which the poem numbered 42 is none other than *Kongulga Nasuhat*.

Through Sanubar's song, we see that the translation of poetry is like a series of bridges connecting cultures. Tagore's original poem was written in Bengali, which he himself translated into English. And the poem No. 42, after Wu Yan's 1997 Chinese translation, soon had a re-translation into Uyghur. That one poem eventually spanned four languages and was titled by Sanubar, becoming a Uyghur song accompanied by the *dutar*. We can see that translation weaves a network of global cultural flows whereby the poetry is allowed to break down ethnic and national barriers and enter a wider scope.

As to why Tagore is so favoured by Chinese literary translators (Islam, S. Manzoorul, 1995), it is not only because he was the first Asian poet to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, but more importantly because of his great sympathy and love for China, and his tenacity with regard to independence and defiance of colonial hegemony. He travelled to China three times in his life, but that should be another story. Notably, each of Sanubar's compositions based on foreign poems has a story behind it, through which one can learn not only about the process of translation, but also, more importantly, about the literary value of each of the poets featured in their own right, and the social context and ideological conditions under which they were chosen and translated by translators of different nationalities and ethnicities.

THE "LOCALIZED" SINGING

To answer the third question, "Why are her compositions accepted and loved by the Uyghur people?" It is essential to consider both the audience's recognition of her work and the distinctive characteristics of her compositions.

As mentioned above, among the nearly 100 songs she has composed, approximately half have gained widespread popularity in Xinjiang. In 2015, she participated in the Shanghai World Music Festival, where her repertoire primarily featured Ili folk songs and *muqam*, demonstrating her deep understanding of Uyghur traditional music. In recent years, her musical activities have become increasingly frequent. She has held solo concerts in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Urumqi, all of which were sold out. Additionally, she has organized multiple online concerts, each attracting tens of thousands of viewers. Notably, during her Xinjiang tour from January to March 2024, audiences actively participated, with people of all ages attending, creating an electrifying atmosphere where tickets were in extremely high demand. After one of her performances, an audience member commented, "I first heard this song, *Console My Heart*, when I was 19 and could not fully grasp its meaning. Now, at 26, I find myself deeply resonating with its emotions" (Comment on the website NetEase Cloud Music).

From my perspective, despite not receiving formal vocal training at a conservatory, her singing has an undeniable emotional impact. She once told me,

"My voice is neither powerful nor bright, and my vocal range is not particularly wide. However, in my performances, I focus on highlighting the most distinctive stylistic elements of the music and expressing them with sincerity" (Tursun, Sanubar, and Xiao Mei, 2024).

Her mastery of Uyghur musical styles did not happen overnight; rather, it stems from her deep accumulation of traditional musical knowledge, which she has skilfully integrated into her compositions. To better understand her creative style, I will analyse some of its key characteristics.

Many of her works illustrate how she adapts and innovates within the Uyghur musical tradition. The following are three representative examples.

Whether it is the study of musical styles or literary translations, it is important to avoid “swallowing the Western without digesting it.” In China’s modernization process, experience borrowed from abroad is often criticized for its “foreign accent,” but Sanubar’s compositions based on foreign poems transcend local experiences and cultural boundaries, yet remain deeply connected with Uyghur musical traditions. To explain how she has accessed global networks with her own composing-performing activities, it is necessary to inquire into the characteristics of her compositions.

Singing Intonation: 3 — 3 | 4 — 5 | 2 | 4 — 4
 Daily Intonation: 2 — 2 | 4 — 3 | 2 | 4 — 2
del km | taƒ lar | bir | kv ni:

One day, these stones will collapse.

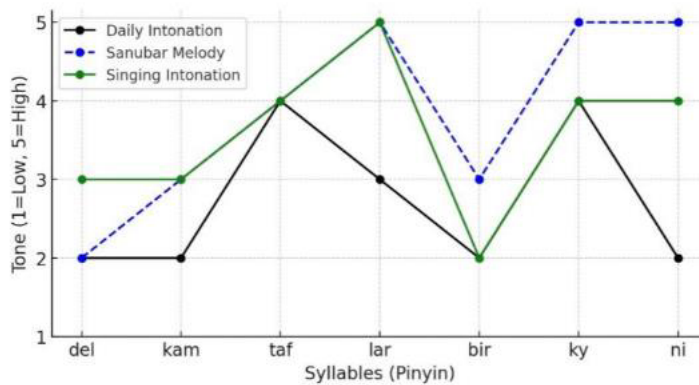


Figure 3: In this example are shown the named differences between singing intonation and daily intonation. (Analytical writing by the author.)

Sanubar’s “compositions” are not written in a textual style, but are sung directly while playing the dutar and letting the melodies flow out of her heart. Naturally, during such a compositional process, she has naturally utilized the musical styles she is most familiar with—a style of Uyghur folk songs, especially Ili folk songs, as well as the style of the 12 muqams, while also absorbing elements of pop music. This arises from the fact that she grew up in an environment with a very strong atmosphere of ethnic customs. Indeed, some patterns can be found in her mastery of musical styles, which are mainly reflected in the following aspects.

1) In the composition of a song based on a poem, the relationship between the tunes and the words is most important. In Sanubar’s compositional process, she starts with the lyrics’ phonetics, paying attention to all the syllables and intonations. In the Uyghur language, intonation is primarily reflected in the rise and fall of vowels and the placement of stress. Sanubar believes the melodies of the muqam music also take the lyrics’ phonetics as an important element, and that is the tradition. Therefore, she focuses on the Uyghur language’s use of the eight vowels in speech. When she encounters certain vowels that would not articulate well in singing, some alterations must be made.

Thus, when she recites or sings the lyrics, she also employs her own distinctive singing intonation. Based on this, I referenced the International Phonetic Alphabet’s notation for pitch patterns

and compared the intonational contours of the first line of Peace, My Heart “كۈنى بىر تاشلار بەلكىم” (belkim tashlar birküni), in daily intonation, singing intonation, and melody (see example in Figure 3).

In addition, the arrangement of syllables, accents, and the meters they form is the core of the rhythmic beats—a key aspect in how the speech tones are shaped into a melody, and even the soul of a song. For example, Sanubar’s arrangement of accents in the first line of Tagore’s *Peace, My Heart* (Kongulga Nasuhah), with four syllables, del-kim tash-lar, |ta ta ta |ta - - |, would be suitable for triple meter. Obviously, the melodic contour basically corresponds to the language intonation, and tonal accents are emphasized by the triple meter rhythm.

For another example, the song she composed to a poem by the Kazakh poet Abai Qunanbaiuly has the first line, eyttim salam kelem kax, “greetings to black eyebrows.” Considering its syllabic rhythm as well as the meaning of its content, the choice of 7/8 time is required. The meters, syllables, and rhymes of each line of the lyrics require different rhythmic beats. Therefore, the lyrics and the melody are naturally intertwined. This is the fundamental reason why Sanubar’s songs have a strong Uyghur musical character.

ايتتىم سالەم قالامقاس
/eyt-tim-sa-lam - ke-lem-kax
Confession to You , Black Eyebrows

3 + 2 +2(1.5+0.5) | 3 + 2 + 2

Figure 4: This second example shows that the lyrics and the melody are naturally intertwined. (Analytical writing by the author.)

2) As a singer-songwriter, the way Sanubar sings is also an important factor in the success of her songs. Sanubar strives for a beautiful vocal expression of every line of words, every word in the melody, and even every letter in each word. Because she composes her melodies while singing, she pays close attention to the meaning and emotion of the lyrics, which requires a high degree of the rendering of the “meter.” For the sake of the meters, the words are not sung in their entirety in order; some redundant parts could even be deleted occasionally to fit better with the tune as it unfolds. In order to better express the meaning of the words, Sanubar will use her facial expression, adjust her vocal resonance to the articulation position of the words, and even utilize her body movements to achieve the best timbral effect and musical expression.

Moreover, I have observed that Sanubar’s audience is not limited to Uyghur listeners—people from other cultural backgrounds also deeply appreciate her music. This is closely tied to the multicultural and multiethnic nature of Xinjiang, a land where diverse communities coexist and interact. In this region, Uyghurs, Han Chinese, Kazakhs, and other ethnic groups live harmoniously, exchanging cultural influences. The interweaving of different musical traditions has provided Sanubar with a rich source of inspiration for her compositions.

In September 2023, while chatting with Sanubar at Xiyou, a well-known live house in Urumqi, we noticed a dombra hanging on the wall. Sanubar recalled that when she was a child, her arms

were too short to play the dutar comfortably, so she often practiced on a custom-made dombra crafted by her father. Unlike the dutar, whose bridge is positioned near the bottom of the soundboard, the dombra has its bridge placed at the centre. When she prepared to play and sing with the dombra, a then student, Zhang Shan, instinctively picked up the instrument and attempted to move the bridge downward to make it resemble the dutar more closely. However, Sanubar adjusted it back to its original position. When Zhang Shan asked, “Why not place the bridge the same way as on a dutar?”, she responded, “Shifting the dombra’s bridge to the bottom would indeed make its tone more similar to that of a dutar, but the proportion between the bridge position and the string length is also crucial. Altering the bridge position would result in inaccurate high notes, so I prefer to keep it as it is and rely on my fingers to adjust dombra’s pitch and timbre” (Tursun, Sanubar, and Xiao Mei, 2023).

This anecdote vividly illustrates how, through years of musical practice, Sanubar has mastered the skilful use of her fingers to bring out the essence of Uyghur music on different instruments.

3) In order to be more suitable for singing in the Uyghur language, Sanubar also needs to make some arrangements of the lyrics. Those modifications are also part of her ongoing understanding of the poems. For instance, for a poem by Tagore translated as تولدۇرۇش زىيانى (which means *Compensation for the loss* in Uyghur), in order to express her own understanding in singing, she chose one line in the lyrics, *Spring is coming*, as the title of the song. Later, according to her further understanding, she chose another line of the song, *Flowers blossom unceasingly*, as a new title for the song.

زىيانى تولدۇرۇش	Compensating for the Loss
بار ھەسرەت ، بار ئۆلۈپ	There is sorrow, there is death,
بار ھىجراننىڭ ناچچىق نازاتى	There is the bitter torment of separation.
باردۇر لېكىن نارام، شادلىقمۇ	Yet, there is also peace and joy,
ھەم نويغاقئۆر نىلاھنىڭ كۆزى	For the eye of the Divine remains ever watchful.
ناقار تىنماي مەڭگۈلۈك ھايات	Eternal life flows ceaselessly,
كۈلەر قۇياش، ناي ۋە يۇلتۇزلار	The sun, the moon, and the stars will smile.
باھار كېلەر رەڭدار تون كىيىپ	Spring will arrive, dressed in vibrant colors,
توزۇپ يەنە نېچىلار گۈللەر	And flowers will bloom again, endlessly.

Figure 5: A translation of the poem *Compensation for the Loss* by Perhat Ilyas. [ئىلىي پەرھا] . 1998. *Wounded Hearts: Selected Outstanding Foreign Poetry*. Urumqi: Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 4. Arrangement and text in the public domain/by the author.

Adaptation is the most significant feature of traditional music. This feature differs from the music existence mode centred on “works” or “texts.” It is enriched through the continuous innovation and variation of performers in repeated musical practices. During my interaction with Sanubar, I once mentioned that her rendition of the muqam was different from the recorded version. She replied,

“When I sing, some traditional muqam performers find it unconventional. This is because muqam singing is typically based on the rhythm of dap (hand drum), whereas I accompany myself with the dutar. Without the constraints of dap, I have more freedom in my interpretation. I also make a conscious effort to emphasize

the most important words in the lyrics. I believe that I don't necessarily have to follow *dap's* rhythm to perform this song. I sing from the heart, and as long as I feel that my approach is valid, I will continue down this path. Moreover, I think that the recorded versions of *muqam* today do not fully capture its essence. *muqam* can be enriched through certain modifications. That's why my performance style differs from that of the Xinjiang Uyghur *muqam* Art Troupe. Up to now, I am the only one who has broken away from this rigid structure. Perhaps this will inspire you to see *muqam* from a different perspective" (Tursun, Sanubar and Xiao Mei, 2024).

In this regard, as Rachel Harris pointed out in her research on Uyghur music,

"I would suggest that prior to the 20th-century emphasis on national canons, the Twelve *Muqam* existed less as an actual body of music, and more as a kind of idealised notion or framework surrounding a much more fluid oral tradition, from which individual musicians would learn and perform different parts, and into which musicians might slot their own local repertoires and compositions" (Harris, 2008: 138).

It is worth mentioning that the original language of the song *Kongulga Nasuhat* was Bengali, and Tagore could not avoid shattering the original meters of the Bengali language when he translated his mother tongue into English, although in his own view, meter is the highest ideal he pursues— "the fundamental principle and the key to unlocking the mysteries of the universe" (Ji Xianlin, 1999: N.p.²).

4) In this regard, some experts believe that Tagore's English translation of his poems, due to the condensation or abridgement in the translation, has lost the original Bengali poems' meters, rhythms, and subtle wording. Yet Tagore himself also realized this, and he wrote in a letter to a friend in this regard,

"Once upon a time, a certain emotional breeze caused a joyful interest in the heart; nowadays, somehow, it is being anxiously experienced again through the media of other languages." According to Wu Yan, Tagore's translation is "a kind of re-experience and re-creation" (Wu Yan, 1997: V).

Then, the Chinese translation of his poems is still a kind of re-experiencing and re-creation. Both Wu Yan's Chinese translation of the poem No. 42 and Perhat Ilyas' Uyghur re-translation of that endeavour to bring the prose-like free-form poem back to metric poem. Like Tagore, Sanubar also attaches great importance to the "meters" of her songs and regards them as the first principle of composition. Thus, we seem to find a chain of metrical shifts: Bengali meters—English prose—Chinese meters—Uyghur singing meters, the return of meters.

² These materials published in Beijing (by the South Asian Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) later in 1984 were used in the Bengali works already by Sisir Kumar Das and Tan Wen. 1965. *Bitarkita Afisfi*. Calcutta: Prama.; And also in Sisir Kumar Das. 1965. "Hostility During China Visit", *The Statesman*, 6th May.

Tagore's original poem in Bengali

তোর আপন জানে ছাড়বে কোরে,
তা ব'লে ভাবনা করা চলবে না।
ও তোর আপালতা পড়বে ছিঁড়ে,
হয়তো রে ফল ফলবে না ॥
আসবে পথে আঁধার নেমে, তাই ব'লেই কি রইবি ঘোমে—
ও তুই বাবে বাবে জ্বলবি বাতি,
হয়তো বাতি জ্বলবে না ॥
সনে তোমার মুখের বাণী আসবে ঘিরে বনের প্রাণী—
হয়তো তোমার আপন ঘরে
পাখা গিয়া গলবে না।
বদ্ধ দুয়ার দেখলি ব'লে অমনি কি তুই আসবি চলে—
তোরে বাবে বাবে ঠেলতে হবে,
হয়তো দুয়ার টলবে না ॥

The English version of Tagore's poem by himself

It maybe that your loved ones will forsake you,
but mind it not, my heart.
It may be that the creeper of your hope will be laid low in the
Dust all torn, its fruits wasted,
but mind it not, my heart.

It may be that the dark night will overtake you before you reach the gate, and your attempts will ever be in vain to light your lamp.
When you tune your harp, the birds and the beasts of the Wilderness will flock around you. It may be that your brothers will remain unmoved,
But mind it not, my heart.

The walls are of stones, the doors barred.
It may be that you will knock oft and again, yet it will not open, but mind it not, my heart.

Chinese version

也许你所爱的人们会抛弃你，但不要介意，我的心呵。
也许你希望的蔓藤会折断落在土里，它的果实都无用了，——但是不要介意，我的心呵。
也许在你到门以前黑夜会赶上你，你想点灯的尝试都落了空。
当你的琴儿弹出音调，山鸟野兽都成群地围绕住你。也许你的弟兄们还是不受感动，但是不要介意，我的心呵。
墙壁是石头砌的，门也闭上了。也许你敲了又敲，可是它不开启，但是不要介意，我的心呵！

Uyghur version

بىلىكىم تاشلار بىر كۆنى،
سەن ياقۇتورغان كىشىلىرى سېنى،
لېكىن كۆڭلۈم سەن بۇنى،
زىنھار-زىنھار نېغىر ئالمىغىن
بىلىكىم كېتەر ئۈزۈلۈپ
ئارزۇ-خۇمىد پېلىكىڭ
يىنىغلىرى ھەم خەسكىڭ،
لېكىن كۆڭلۈم سەن بۇنى،
زىنھار-زىنھار نېغىر ئالمىغىن
بىلىكىم بولۇر قاراڭغۇ
سەن بار غۇچە تويۇڭگە
ئۈز قوڭۇق بىلىن
چىراغ ياقماق ئارزۇيۇڭ
نايلىنار بىر كۆيۈككە
سەن چالغاندا نىسەل كۆي،
نوراپ ئالسا قوشلار زوتلىنىپ
بىلىكىم ئاكا-ئىنىنىڭ شۇندىمۇ
تەسىرلىنمەي تۇرار قارىشىپ
لېكىن كۆڭلۈم سەن بۇنى
زىنھار-زىنھار نېغىر ئالمىغىن
قويۇتۇرلغىن تاملار تاشلاردىن
ئىشكىمۇ نېتىلگەن مەھكەم،
بىلىكىم ئۇنى قانچە چەكسەڭمۇ،
ئېچىلمەس، بىر شەپقەت بولۇپ ھەم،
لېكىن كۆڭلۈم سەن بۇنى
زىنھار-زىنھار نېغىر ئالمىغىن!

Figure 6: This arrangement shows four language versions of *Peace, My Heart*: The original poem and the English version are quoted from <https://www.geetabitan.com/lyrics/index.html>, last accessed August 30, 2024. The Chinese version is quoted from Wu Yan, 1998, *Chinese Translation of Tagore's English Poetry*, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1997: 642. The Uyghur version is quoted from Perhat Ilyas, *Wounded Hearts: Selected Outstanding Foreign Poetry*, Urumqi: Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 6.

Through a single poem, one may reach that which allows everyone to reach the microcosmic global history of music—a so-called global moment brought by Sanubar.

CONCLUSION

Today, with the rapid changes in the global order and geopolitical tensions, populism and trade protectionism are on the rise, which not only challenges the old concept of globalization, but also creates rifts and uncertainties in the world. However, there will always be various forces from the people of different places fostering new forms of promoting the narratives of globalization; the example of Sanubar and her music is a testament to this complex dynamic.

Through her reinterpretation and performance of classical poetry from diverse cultural and geographical origins—India, Russia, Kazakh tradition, and beyond—grounded in the culturally diverse era and homeland that shaped her life, Sanubar has created a vibrant and evolving global moment. Much like the traditions of muqam and other forms of the canon of music, which have gained new meaning and resonance through centuries of transmission and adaptation, Sanubar's music is not merely a preservation of tradition but an active reimagining of it. In this process, Sanubar has transcended her identity as a singer recognized within the Uyghur community, emerging as a significant individual on the global stage.

What is to glimpse through Sanubar's music, perhaps, is not simply a story about setting a certain poem to music, but the vision of one—or even multiple—new worlds. These worlds are not defined by any form of centrism, but by a reconfiguration of transnational connection and

mutual support. In this sense, they resemble golden threads woven across continents—a connective fabric of shared experience and cultural dialogue within the broader narrative of global history.

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