MUSIC AS A MEDIUM FOR SOCIAL MEMORY FORMATION: THE CULTURAL ROLE OF POPULAR SONGS IN SHAPING COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN UZBEKISTAN

Dadayev Shomurod Shokarimovich
Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture
Acting Associate Professor, Department of "National Singing"

Abstract

Music constitutes one of the most enduring and emotionally potent mediums through which societies construct, preserve, and transmit social memory. This study explores the role of popular songs in shaping collective identity and social memory in Uzbekistan. Using an interdisciplinary framework rooted in cultural memory theory, ethnomusicology, cognitive psychology, and media studies, the research investigates how songs encode historical narratives, foster intergenerational continuity, and function as symbolic carriers of national identity. The study adopts a mixed-methods design combining (1) content analysis of 96 Uzbek popular songs (1960–2024), (2) a 2024 sociological survey of 812 respondents aged 16–35, (3) digital platform analytics from YouTube, Spotify and local streaming services, and (4) comparative analysis with South Korea, Türkiye, and Germany. Findings reveal that songs serve not only as emotional triggers but as structured mnemonic systems that embed collective memories through linguistic symbolism, melodic archetypes, and cultural metaphors. A conceptual model—Musical Social Memory Transmission Model (MSMTM)—is proposed to explain how musical texts become instruments of cultural continuity. The implications for cultural policy, music education, and memory studies are discussed in detail.

Key words

social memory; collective identity; music cognition; cultural transmission; popular songs; digital culture; Uzbekistan; ethnomusicology; cultural memory theory

Social memory functions as one of the core mechanisms through which societies negotiate their past, reinterpret their cultural heritage, and maintain symbolic continuity across generations. Maurice Halbwachs' foundational work conceptualized collective memory as an inherently social construct rooted in shared frameworks and cultural signifiers. In the contemporary era—marked by rapid

digital transformation—music has emerged as one of the most persistent and emotionally resonant carriers of collective memory.

In Uzbekistan, popular songs have historically performed multiple socio-cultural functions:

- consolidating national identity,
- transmitting historical narratives,
- reinforcing patriotism,
- mediating generational transitions,
- preserving traditional cultural markers within modern forms.

Despite the deep-rooted presence of musical culture in Uzbekistan, scholarly research on music as a medium of social memory remains limited. Existing works tend to focus on descriptive historical narratives or musical analysis without integrating psychological, sociological, and communication-theory dimensions.

This research addresses these gaps by systematically examining:

1.   How popular songs encode and transmit social memory;

2.   What aspects of identity and historical consciousness are most strongly reflected;

3.   How digitalization transforms the mechanisms of musical memory;

4.   How Uzbekistan's experience compares to global cultural-memory models.

This study is one of the first in Uzbekistan to combine empirical sociological data with digital analytics and musical-cognitive analysis within a single integrated framework.

Halbwachs (1950) introduced *collective memory* as socially conditioned, shaped by group-specific frameworks. Jan Assmann (2011) extended this through the concept of *cultural memory*—institutionalized through texts, rituals, and artistic forms. Connerton (1989) emphasized the performative nature of memory in bodily practices and repeated cultural forms. Research in cognitive science (Levitin, 2006;

Patel, 2008) demonstrates that music activates long-term emotional and semantic memory systems. Blacking (1973) showed that music functions as a social behavior system embedding collective meanings. Scholars argue that songs often carry the discursive structure of national identity (Smith, 2009; Turino, 2018). Patriotic songs, in particular, reinforce myths, symbols, and emotional attachments associated with the nation-state.

Gaps in Existing Research

• Lack of empirical data on youth in post-Soviet contexts;

• Minimal interdisciplinary analysis linking psychology, ethnomusicology, and memory studies;

• Insufficient exploration of digital platforms as memory mediators.

This study builds on and expands these frameworks through a comprehensive analysis focused on Uzbekistan.

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-methods design was employed:

Content Analysis

• Sample: **96 popular songs** from 1960–2024

• Selection criteria: cultural impact, national themes, historical references, digital popularity

• Coding categories: metaphors, historical symbols, patriotism, identity markers, collective emotions

Sociological Survey (2024)

• N = **812 respondents**

• Age: 16–35

• Regions: Tashkent, Fergana, Samarkand, Bukhara, Nukus

• Survey categories: memory triggers, emotional reactions, identity formation, historical recall

Digital Platform Analytics

Data from:

• YouTube

• Spotify

• YangiAvlod Music

• UzMusic App Time period: **2017–2024** Variables: views, shares, comments, demographic engagement

Comparative Analysis

Countries selected due to mature music-memory systems:

• South Korea (K-pop & nation branding)

- Türkiye (Milleyetçi pop)
- Germany (Erinnerungskultur music)

Results

Content Analysis Findings

Thematic Distribution

Theme	Frequency (%)
Patriotism / Homeland	46%
Historical memory	21%
Family and traditional values	19%
Cultural heritage	13%
War and struggle	8%

Symbolic Motifs

Songs frequently employed:

- "Motherland," "soil," "wind of the homeland"
- Metaphors of "roots," "ancestors," "eternal spirit"
- Folkloric characters and mythic imagery

Musical Archetypes

- Pentatonic and maqom-based melodic lines
- Rhythmic marches in patriotic songs
- Emotional ballads in memorial songs

These archetypes contribute to mnemonic retention.

Sociological Survey Results

Memory Activation

- **71%** of respondents reported that specific songs immediately trigger childhood or historical memories.

- **83%** stated that patriotic songs increase feelings of belonging and national pride.

Identity Formation

- **68%** said popular songs helped shape their national identity.

- **74%** believe that music preserves cultural values better than textbooks or films.

Emotional Resonance

- Songs with slow tempo and minor modes evoke deeper memory responses (reported by 62%).

Digital Platform Analytics

Listening Trends (2017–2024)

- "Uzbekistanim" – **29M** YouTube views
- "Vatan" – **11.4M**
- Yalla group classics – **18M+** total

Increase in Engagement

From 2017 to 2024:

- Patriot-themed songs → **136% increase**
- Folklore-modern fusion → **94% increase**
- Songs used in TikTok "memory challenges" → **7× growth**

Digital media thus amplifies the circulation of collective memory.

Discussion

Music as a Cognitive-Mnemonic System

Based on Levitin (2006) and Patel (2008), song memory operates through:

- **Rhythmic entrainment** – emotional anchoring
- **Melodic contour** – long-term retention
- **Lyrical semantics** – narrative encoding

These elements transform songs into "portable memory archives."

Uzbekistan in Global Perspective

Similarities:

- Like K-pop, Uzbek songs use national symbolism for cultural branding.
- Like Türkiye, songs reinforce historical continuity.
- Like Germany, music participates in memorial culture.

Differences:

- Uzbekistan retains stronger folklore-melodic integration.

Proposed Conceptual Model (MSMTM)

Musical Social Memory Transmission Model

1. **Encoding** – cultural metaphors embedded in music
2. **Emotional Activation** – triggered by rhythm & melody
3. **Narrative Consolidation** – memory retention
4. **Intergenerational Transmission** – songs passed down
5. **Digital Amplification** – platform-driven retention
6. **Identity Reinforcement** – symbolic unity

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive theoretical, empirical, and cross-cultural examination of how popular songs function as instruments of social memory in contemporary Uzbekistan. The findings demonstrate that music is not merely an aesthetic phenomenon but a multidimensional cultural mechanism that structures emotional experience, encodes historical narratives, and stabilizes collective identity across generations. The integration of ethnomusicological content analysis,

sociological survey data, and digital platform analytics strengthens the validity of the conclusions and highlights the complex interplay between musical symbolism, cognitive memory processes, and socio-cultural context.

The research confirms that popular songs operate as mnemonic technologies that activate emotional-cognitive pathways essential for the recall and reinterpretation of collective experiences. The prevalence of symbolic motifs such as homeland, ancestry, cultural continuity, and historical struggle reflects the embeddedness of national identity within musical forms. The consistency with which respondents associated songs with personal and collective memories underscores the significance of music as an accessible, emotionally charged archive of social meaning. As digital platforms increasingly mediate musical consumption, the circulation and reinforcement of cultural memory have become more dynamic, participatory, and democratized than ever before.

One of the key contributions of this study is the development of the Musical Social Memory Transmission Model (MSMTM), which conceptualizes how cultural encoding, emotional activation, narrative consolidation, intergenerational transmission, and digital amplification interact to shape the long-term durability of musical memory. This model offers a novel interdisciplinary framework applicable not only to Uzbekistan but to broader memory studies, digital humanities, and cultural psychology research. The comparative analysis with South Korea, Türkiye, and Germany also demonstrates that while the use of music for nation-building is globally widespread, Uzbekistan retains distinctive characteristics—especially its integration of maqom-based melodic archetypes, folkloric imagery, and historically grounded lyrical narratives.

From a policy perspective, the findings underscore the importance of supporting musical heritage as a strategic component of nation-building, cultural diplomacy, and youth development. As younger generations increasingly rely on digital media for cultural learning, intentional efforts are needed to preserve, document, and promote national songs within digital ecosystems. Integrating memory-rich musical content into educational programs may enhance cultural continuity and strengthen identity-consciousness among students.

Despite its broad scope, this study acknowledges certain limitations, particularly the age range of survey participants and the number of songs included in the content analysis. Future research should expand into neurocognitive methods such as fMRI or EEG to examine how musical motifs trigger memory in real-time. Furthermore, exploring the impact of AI-generated music, TikTok-based musical trends, and transnational musical flows will be crucial for understanding how social memory evolves in an era of algorithmic culture. Overall, this research

contributes to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural functions of music in Uzbekistan and offers a sophisticated analytical model that advances international scholarship on memory, identity, and digital-era cultural transmission. By demonstrating that popular songs are not ephemeral entertainment products but enduring repositories of collective consciousness, the study reaffirms music's historical role as one of the most resilient cultural foundations upon which societies build meaning, continuity, and shared belonging.

Practical Implications

• Integration of memory-based songs into school curricula

• Promotion of national memory archives on streaming platforms

• State cultural policies supporting music heritage preservation

• Using music in youth identity-building programs

REFERENCES:

1.   Halbwachs, M. (1950). *La mémoire collective*. Paris: PUF.

2.   Assmann, J. (2011). *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*. Cambridge University Press.

3.   Levitin, D. (2006). *This Is Your Brain on Music*. New York: Dutton.

4.   Patel, A. (2008). *Music, Language and the Brain*. Oxford University Press.

5.   Dadayev, S. (2025, April). PEDAGOGICAL ETHICAL PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS IN HEALTHY EDUCATION OF YOUTH IN MUSIC EDUCATION. In *Russian-Uzbekistan Conference* (Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 82-85).

6.   Gulmuodova, Kumush, and Jumagul Nishonova. "JAMIYAT TARAQQIYOTI MADANIYAT VA SAN'ATNING O 'RNI VA AHAMIYATI." *Молодые ученые* 2.2 (2024): 131-132.

7.   Yusupalieva, D. K. (2020). Development of mutually beneficial cooperation of Uzbekistan within the SCO. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, *5*(85), 901-903.

8.   Yusupalieva, D. K., & Sodirzhonov, M. M. (2017). Mass media in Uzbekistan: development trends, dynamics and prospects. *Modern Science*, (1), 23-25.

9.   Yusupalieva, D. K. (2020). Political role of television in the development of national ideology. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, *6*(86), 665-667.

10.   Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2020). Основные особенности политической системы общества. *Молодой ученый*, (46), 520-522.

11.   Kalkanatov, A. (2023). THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING THE PARTICIPATION OF CULTURAL AND ART INSTITUTIONS AND

ORGANIZATIONS IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES. *Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Art*, 2, 7-10.

12. Kalkanatov, A. (2023). PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE MANAGER IN THE CULTURAL FIELD. *JOURNAL OF ECONOMY, TOURISM AND SERVICE*, 2, 19-23.

13. Nazarbai, K. A. (2023). NEW VOICE IN UZBEK DIRECTION. *Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Art*, 2, 65-70.

14. QOLQANATOV, A. (2024). MA'DANIYAT VAZIRLIGI VA MADANIYAT MARKAZLARI: TARIXIY TARAQQIYOT JARAYONLARIDAN. *News of UzMU journal*, 1(1), 1.

15. Yusupaliyeva, D. Q. (2024). NOMODDIY MADANIY MEROSNI MUHOFAZA QILISH, ASRASH VA TARG'IB ETISH MASALALARI. *Inter education & global study*, (4 (1)), 334-342.

16. Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2015). Некоторые страницы деятельности региональных телевещательных компаний в Узбекистане. *Культура. Духовность. Общество*, (17), 34-38.

17. Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2017). Телевидение Узбекистана как источник духовно-нравственного обновления общества. *Апробация*, (1), 100-102.

18. Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2017). Некоторые аспекты становления и развития телевидения Узбекистана. *Апробация*, (1), 103-106.

19. Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2020). Национальный вопрос и телевидение Узбекистана в условиях кризиса тоталитарной системы. *Актуальные научные исследования в современном мире*, (5-11), 155-159.

20. Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2020). Основные особенности политической системы общества. *Молодой ученый*, (46), 520-522.

21. Rustamov, V., & Umarov, X. (2023). Ma'naviy-ma'rifiy ishlarni tashkil etish va unda insonni qadrlash masalalari. *Oriental Art and Culture*, 4(1), 496-502.

22. Alfiya, Q. (2023). Milliy Musiqa San'ati Va Yoshlar Tarbiyasi. *Journal of Creativity in Art and Design*, 1, 16-20.

23. Nazarbaevna, Q. A., & Serjanovich, K. S. (2024). The Importance of Scenario in Cultural Events. *EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATION IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION*, 4, 259-262.

24. Ganieva, E. R. (2022). Genesis and Evolution: From Multi-Part TV Film to TV Series. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 5(4), 286-290.

25. Ганиева, Э. Р. (2017). Новые страницы истории телевидения Узбекистана. *Молодой ученый*, (21), 57-59.

26. Ganieva, E. R. (2015). Prospects of development and modernization of cinema reproduction channels in Uzbekistan. in the world of science and art: questions of Philology, art criticism and cultural studies. no. 43.

27. Samiyev, Baxtiyor. "INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE AND ART." *Multidisciplinary Journal of Science and Technology* 4.5 (2024): 522-525.

28. Kholmuminov, M., & Qolqanatov, A. (2021). The Formation of the First Libraries in Uzbekistan and the Role of Increasing the Cultural and Educational Awareness of the Population. *image*, *4*(12), 146-151.

29. Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2015). Телевидение Узбекистана в годы независимости. *Культура. Духовность. Общество*, (17), 38-42.

30. Юсупалиева, Д. К. (2019). Деятельность частных телеканалов в Узбекистане. In *Инновационные научные исследования: теория, методология, практика* (pp. 286-288).