

AZERBAIJANI MUGHAM IN THE PUSHKIN HOUSE

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Abstract

Often, what you are looking for turns out to be in seemingly the most unexpected places. For example, we found sound recordings of Azerbaijani musical folklore at the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Moreover, while the Russian Academy of Sciences itself is located in Moscow, the Institute, known as ‘Pushkinsky Dom’ (The Pushkin House), is in St. Petersburg. However, knowing the prehistory, it becomes clear how and why the sound recordings of Azerbaijani traditional music ended up there.

As a result of the work carried out at the Pushkin House, we could establish that these materials were collected by folklore expeditions in the third decade of the 20th century in Transcaucasia. Sound recordings of musical folklore were made by Khristofor Kushnarev (leader), Evgeny Hippus, and Zinaida Evald in 1927–1929. Although the destination of their expeditions was identified as the Armenian and Georgian Republics, the recordings include numerous samples of Azerbaijani musical folklore. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan acquired the copies of these recordings, which are now stored in the State Museum of Musical Culture of Azerbaijan.

Keywords

Mugham, Azerbaijani musical folklore, Sound recordings, Pushkinsky Dom, Toponym

INTRODUCTION

The Azerbaijani mugham is a traditional musical form, a pearl of Azerbaijani culture, proclaimed by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity in 2003 and inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008.

For the Museum of Musical Culture of Azerbaijan, I represent that everything related to mugham (its music and sound recordings, musical instruments, testimonies of mugham performers, studies of mugham, etc.) is of great interest. Of the more than 60,000 items in the museum's collection, the phono archive comprises approximately 3,000 items, of which the earliest audio recordings of mugham from the first decades of the 20th century are an important part. All the witnesses of the mugham's history are valuable to the public.

The first recordings of mugham date back to the first years of the last century, when various companies such as Pathé Records, Sportrecord, Extraphone, and Gramophone recorded Azerbaijani mugham musicians. To be recorded, they travelled to Warsaw or were recorded in their fatherland. Prentice (2000) wrote in his article about the Gramophone Company's work in the East, about recordings done and released “prior to the First World War, some in the Caucasus and some in Russian Turkestan (now known as Central Asia), by the Gramophone Company's regional office in Tiflis (now Tbilisi). The company began operations there in 1901, continuing until the war forced their departure in May 1918”.

In the Museum of Musical Culture, there are single-sided gramophone discs played from centre to edge, and there are also double-sided discs where each side has only one song or one section of mugham on it. Early mugham recordings have been digitised in a joint project with Musiqi Dünyası (Music World). Each original disc has been recorded on a separate CD with a total of 180 CDs.

The museum is looking for and collecting materials on Azerbaijani music history, both musical folklore and professional composers' music. Often, what you are looking for turns out to be in

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seemingly the most unexpected places. For example, we found sound recordings of Azerbaijani musical folklore, including mugham, at the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The institute, known as ‘Pushkinsky Dom’ (Russian, The Pushkin House), is in St. Peterburg.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

How and why did audio recordings of Azerbaijani traditional music end up in the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences, also known as the Pushkin House? To answer this question, an explanation must be given for an institution such as the Pushkin House.

In 1905, a commission met to approve the regulation of the Pushkin House, a special literary pantheon where relics of 19th-century Russian writers would be collected and preserved. In 1907, Nicholas II approved the ‘Statute’ of the new academic institution. Its main paragraphs stipulated the following: “The Pushkin House is established in reverent memory of the great Russian poet Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin for the collection of everything that concerns Pushkin as a writer and a man... The Pushkin House constitutes state property and is administered by the Imperial Academy of Sciences” (Krasnoborod’ko, n.d.). Since 1930, Pushkin House became the Academic Institute of Russian Literature. In 1931, the Folklore Section was created as part of the Institute for the Study of Peoples of the USSR under the Academy of Sciences and was then reorganised into the Department of Folklore of the Peoples of the USSR. This was followed by the transfer of the newly formed department to the Institute of Literature, Pushkin House (Gorelov, 2013:7). The Institute received folklore materials and phonographic records of the expeditions organised by the Leningrad State Conservatory, in particular those from the 1920s in Transcaucasia, namely in the then-acting Transcaucasian SSR. Wax cylinders with audio recordings have since been kept in the Phonogram Archive of the Pushkin House, 4 Makarov Embankment Street, St. Peterburg.

The Transcaucasian expedition was undertaken by the Ethnographic Study, created in 1927 with the support of Russian composer Boris Asafiev. The document cited by Red’kova states: "The Leningrad of the Leningrad Conservatoire State Conservatoire ... sends a music research expedition to the Transcaucasian SSR to study the peasant song and music in the autonomous Armenian and Georgian republics" (Red’kova, 2019:46). Each wax cylinder was given a registration number, and each number had a duration of approximately 4–6 minutes and could consist of one musical unit (song, dance, or mugham section) to three. There are cases where the mugham begins on one cylinder and continues on another. In this case, a recording lasts up to 11–12 minutes. It is clear that these nuances can be explained by the technical limitations of time. The expedition team included Evgeniy Gippius (1903–1985) and his wife Zinaida Ewald (1894–1942), led by Khristofor Stepanovich Kushnarev (1890–1960). Kushnaryov (Kushnaryan) worked from 1925 at the Leningrad Conservatory, an ethnic Armenian whose knowledge of the Armenian language could not have been more useful to the Armenian expedition and guaranteed the accuracy of the verbal attribution of local place names and titles of folklore samples.

WORD AS A MEANS OF IDENTIFYING THE ORIGIN OF MUSIC

Names and titles can be important, in particular, in such an issue as the identification of the national origin of musical folklore. British researcher Will Prentice wrote that Armenian and Georgian musicians were willing and able to play Armenian, Georgian, or Azeri music. Azeri musicians, on the other hand, such as the incredible singer Jabbar Kariagdiev, apparently concentrated on Azeri music (Prentice, 2000). Attempts to pass off original Azerbaijani folk songs and dance melodies as Armenian have been known, for example, the very popular song *Sari gyalin* (*Sarı gəlin*, Azerb.). However, the fact of the existence of this folklore sample under this Azerbaijani title is incontestable proof of the Azerbaijani origin of the song.

As a result of the work conducted at Pushkin House, the following was ascertained. Sound recordings of the expeditions were made from 1927 to 1929. In 1927, apart from Kushnarev, expedition members were Gippius and Ewald, who did not participate in his expeditions of later years. The geography of their expeditions is as follows (here are the names of towns and villages as they appear in the field notes of the expedition):

- Irevan.
- Nor Bayazit district: villages of Zulagach, Gozeldare, Ashagi Arjaman, Elenovka.
- Zangezur district: the villages of Gorusu, Garahunj, Garakil, Bazarchay, Gushbelek, Gerger, Malishki, Karashen and Keshishkend.
- Leninakan district: The villages of Molla Musa and Alla-Lir.
- Shirak district: the villages of Orom, Meinsukh, Molla Goycha, Shulaveren, Arhveli, Gihdeirman, Karavansara.
- Tiflis.

Working in these towns and villages, folklorists have also recorded performers brought from neighbouring settlements such as Shikhlar, Gulakhlar, Mikand villages, and others.

Although, with the exception of Tiflis, the territory covered by the expedition is designated as Armenia, the undoubtedly Azerbaijani toponymy of most of the names of the settlements indicates their Azerbaijani origin. Gozeldere means beautiful gorge, Ashagi Arjaman is Lower Arjaman, Garakilse means 'black church', Bazarchay 'bazaar river', Gushbelek 'bird's nest', Gihdeirman 'forty mills', Gulakhlar 'ears', Molla Mussa 'mullah Mussa', Karavansara 'caravanserai', and Shikhlar 'sheikhs'. The undoubtedly Azerbaijani origin of these toponyms can be explained by the fact that historically, these lands were probably originally Azerbaijani, or places of joint residence of Azerbaijanis and Armenians, but were ceded to Armenia due to the known policies of the imperial Russian and Soviet authorities.

Since most of the toponyms that existed in the 1920s, as indicated by Kushnarev and the members of his expedition, were subsequently replaced by Armenian ones, let us explain some of them according to the interactive map "Azerbaijani toponyms in Armenia" (RealMap. n.d.).

Garakilse (Garakilsa, Garakilis), 5 km from Leninakan, from 1935 is the Armenian toponym Akhurik.

Gozeldere has two villages of the same name, one of which has received the Armenian toponym Gehnadzor since 1946, and the other was renamed Geghadir in the same year. Both villages are in the area of Mount Arakats, whose Azeri name was Alagoz. Not surprisingly, several of the numbers recorded by Kushnarev, performed by Armenians, are titled Alagoz (alagöz, Azerb – light-eyed).

Karavansara, Karavansaray has several villages with this name, one with the Armenian toponym Ijevan and the other located on the southern slope of Mount Alagoz (Armenian toponym Arakats). There were also two villages with the same name, both inhabited by Kurds.

Molla Musa is an Azerbaijani village in the rural community Garakilse of Kars Province, known since 1935 under the Armenian toponym Musakan and since 1946 under the Armenian toponym Vashkehask.

Shikhlar (Şixlər, sheikhs), one of the villages with the same name, was located on the left bank of the Araks River and received the Armenian toponym in 1968. The other was in the Sisian region and, since 1946, still bore another Azerbaijani name, Gizil Shafag (qızıl şafaq, Azerb. – golden dawn).

THE PERFORMERS

Armenian folklore was a priority in the work of the expedition, although along with this, the expedition also recorded representatives of other people, such as Georgians, Kurds, Russians (Old Believers), and Persians. The words ‘Azerbaijani’ and ‘Azerbaijani’ as attributes of music do not appear in the expedition inventory. It is known that the ethnonym "Azerbaijanis" was fixed in the languages later. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in the Russian and European languages, Azerbaijanis were called differently: Tatars, Persians, and Turks. Therefore, some songs are registered in the expedition documentation as ‘local tatar song’. Though in the accompanying written materials neither the noun nor the adjective ‘Azerbaijani’ appear nowhere, many songs sung by Armenians are in ‘Tatar’, as the Azerbaijani were then known, as indicated in the documents. Many songs are labelled as ‘local Tatar’ in the registers. In a piece #1427 performed by Armenians, it can also be clearly heard praising the singer in Azerbaijani: ‘*Sağ ol, (...)! Sağ ol!*’ (Azerbaijani, ‘Thank you! Be well!’), in another piece, #1518, also performed by Armenians, clearly heard the repeated “*Qurban olum!*” (Azerbaijani, words expressing the speaker's willingness to sacrifice himself for the person to whom he says it, literally ‘will be your sacrifice’).

Among the registered titles, there are many samples of Azerbaijani mughams (Rast, Chargah, Hijaz, Mahur, Shur, Bayati Shiraz, and Mirza Hussein Seygah), songs, and dances. Many of the mughams, songs, and dances, mostly performed by ethnic Armenians, had titles in Azerbaijani language: Sari Gyalin (lit., fair-haired young married woman), Koroglu (lit., son of a blind man), Khalabaji (lit., aunt-sister – a collective definition of female relatives), Otuzbir (lit., thirty-one), Choban Bayati (lit., shepherd bayati) and others.

Shamilli notes in her works (2018; 2020) the supra-confessional and supranational character of mugham or maqam(at) art in terms of practice. Armenians living near the Azerbaijani territories and people also performed mugham, but usually they did not sing it but took “*part in instrumental music-making*” (Shamili, 2018: 148) only. Shamilli refers to Firidun Shushinski (1985) and Aliverdibeyov (2001), who wrote about Armenian instrumental performers of mugham.

Armenian instrumentalists performing mugham were clearly aware of its non-Armenian origin. This is also confirmed by the notes in the expedition documents, as there are described the phrases ‘fine, but not suitable’ [прекрасная, но не подходящая] or ‘excellent, but not suitable for a collection’ [отличная, но не подходит для сборника].

The performers with Azerbaijani names in the expedition inventories are less than ten. Following are their names and the names of the mughams and songs they performed as recorded in the expedition database:

- №1579 и №1580. "Rast from Arak". Sings "Zargyar [zargər, azerbaijan, – jeweller] Mahmud Abdul Alizadeh Yakubov (Nuhanski [i.e., from Nukha, present Sheki cuty]). Tiflis.
- №1533. "Orovel" and Choban Bayati. Sung by Hasan Huseynov, aged 35, from the village of Shikhlar (renamed Lusrat).
- №№1540-1546, 1549-1551, 1553 и 1554. Maur, Segah, Shur, Shuba Amamsi, Kesh ogli, Kyaram, Rast, Shikyasta, Haytarma, Bayati shiraz, Taslim, Choban bayati, Shikeste fars, tesnif, Bayati kurd. Sings Aghakhanoglu Abdulazim, 50 years old from the village of Gulahlar.
- №1547. Shur, Gezallama. Gulmamedov Ahmed, 25, from the village of Gerger (according to the Interactive Map, the name of the village is preserved).
- №1548. Shur. Ismayilov Huseyn, aged 30, from the village of Gerger.
- №1548. Shah Ismail Abbasov Rustam, aged 16, from the village of Gerger.

THE STATE MUSEUM OF MUSICAL CULTURE OF AZERBAIJAN IN COLLECTING, PRESERVING, AND STUDYING RECORDINGS OF AZERBAIJANI MUGHAM

In passing, it should be noted that a detailed report on the work carried out at the Pushkin House was submitted in due course to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It also contained a proposal and justified the request to purchase copies of all recordings made by Kushnaryov-Gippius-Evald, despite the fact that the sound quality of many items was so poor that sometimes one could not even make out the language being sung over the wheezing. This is understandable, as the wax-rollers deteriorated from listening to them; the more often they were listened to, the more damage was done to them. Also, the cylinders were harmed during the siege of Leningrad, a prolonged military blockade undertaken by the Nazis against the city of Leningrad (present-day Saint Petersburg), when they were stored in the cellars in inappropriate conditions. However, it is hoped that advances in technology may make it possible to clean and restore the recordings in the future. It was also suggested that the records should be purchased without regard to who was recorded on them, as this would have complicated the procedure, taken a long time, and could have left out those numbers that are of current interest to science. The result was that Ministry officials were sent to St. Petersburg to solve the payment issues, delivered copies of the sound recordings of Kushnarev's expeditions and related documentation to Azerbaijan, and handed them over to the Music Museum. A number of recordings are missing from the copies received. Obviously, those that had deteriorated irretrievably were not copied, and there was nothing to copy. We note the assistance of Yury Ivanovich Marchenko, who was then the head of the laboratory of the phonographic archive.

Information on the discovery in the Pushkin House was published in the journal *Musiqi Dunyasi* (Bayramova, 2010), as were articles about other discoveries of music recordings of mughams and folk songs, written as a result of researching rich museum collections (Bayramova, 2009a, 2009b, 2004). In particular, samples of Azerbaijani folklore were found in the sheet music published at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries in St. Petersburg and Moscow. These were, for example, the *Восточный альбом* [Oriental Album], published by Y.G. Zimmerman's publishing house. And many others.

One of the projects on mugham was a joint undertaking with *Musiqi Dünyası* regarding the digitalization of the discs of the beginning of the 20th century.

Doubtless, all the abovementioned early examples of music and audio recordings of mugham and other samples of Azerbaijani folklore music should be further investigated by ethnomusicologists and folklorists.

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REMARKS

All publishing houses are left in their original language for better tracing. Some publishing places have, therefore, different ways of writing. In case of doubt, please consult your search engines.