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Brigitta Davidjants

ARMENIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: FROM DIASPORA TO MUSIC

EESTI
MUUSIKA- JA TEATRIAKADEEMIA

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Armeenia rahvusliku identiteedi konstrueerimine: diasporaast muusikani

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I Davidjants, Brigitta 2016. Identity Construction in Narratives: Activists of the Armenian Diaspora in Estonia. – Konrad Siekierski & Stefan Troebst (Eds), *Armenians in Post-Socialist Europe*. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, pp. 129–142.

II Davidjants, Brigitta; Ross, Jaan 2016. Conflicts in Music in South Caucasus: The Case of Armenians and Azerbaijanis. – *Musicae Scientiae.* Accepted for publication, available on the journal website http://msx.sagepub.com/content/early/recent. doi:10.1177/1029864916662904.

III Davidjants, Brigitta 2015. The Construction of National Identity in Music by the Way of the Reception of Komitas as an Example. – Ruta Stanevičiūtė & Rima Povilionienė (Eds), *Sociocultural Crossings and Borders: Musical Microhistories*. Vilnius: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, International Musicological Society, pp. 341–366.

IV Davidjants, Brigitta 2015. Identity Construction in Armenian Music on the Example of Early Folklore Movement. – *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*. Vol. 63, pp. 175–200.

Abstract

This doctoral thesis consists of four articles that describe the construction of Armenian national identity from two perspectives. The thesis shows how collective memory presents itself in the historiography of music and also in personal narratives. The case studies of the thesis permit to reach an affirmative conclusion concerning the central hypothesis of the thesis – that one of the most important components of mainstream Armenian national identity is the idea of belonging culturally to the West. This is mostly due to Armenia's adherence to Christianity, which is in contrast to the country's Near Eastern and Caucasian neighbours that mostly follow Islam. Paradoxically, these are also the neighbours with whom Armenians share many similarities in their mindset, living habits, culture, traditions, etc. The research framework of the thesis is supported by theoretical perspectives from the field of post-colonial studies. The articles that make up the thesis do not focus only on processes in the current Republic of Armenia but also on those in the Armenian diaspora.

As an illustration of such identity construction, the thesis presents four case studies. The first case describes identity construction among the older generation of Armenian activists in the Estonian capital, Tallinn. The second case examines the nationalist rhetoric used by Armenians and Azeris in social media discussions about music. The third article examines the musicological reception of the Armenian composer, musicologist and folklorist Komitas who is perceived as one of the most important figures in the process of construction of a Western-oriented Armenian national identity. The fourth article analyses different methodological approaches that Komitas and his contemporary folklorist, Arshak Brutyan, used when transcribing Armenian folk songs.

In interpreting the empirical data, the geopolitical and cultural context that Armenia exists in was taken into account. The first case study shows that the identity aspects that activists related to were the Armenian language, church, and fine arts, whereas the well-known Armenian genocide of 1915 was hardly mentioned at all. This can be explained, on the one hand, by Estonia's peripheral position among the countries hosting Armenian diasporas and, on the other, by the fact that Estonian diaspora does not include large numbers of direct descendants of genocide escapees. The research reported in the second article demonstrates that the representatives of the two nations constructed their arguments differently, yet the claims they made about, and the accusations they levelled at, each other were very similar.

The third article reveals that in the musicological reception of the composer and folklorist Komitas, the singularity and Europeanness of Armenian music are emphasized at the same time, which has resulted in Komitas's music being conceptualised in the Armenian musicological discourse as 'pure' (i.e., avoiding Near Eastern elements). The fourth article argues that, while transcribing folk tunes, Komitas relied more on the Western tradition, while Brutyan tried to find transcription methods that would provide a better fit with Armenian music culture. The outcomes of the third and fourth article reflect the impact of ideology on the academic fields of folklore studies and musicology – disciplines that have often been presented as apolitical.

Foreword

Many people have been of direct and indirect help to writing this thesis. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Jaan Ross who gave me self-confidence for academic research at the time I did not have it, and Prof. Urve Lippus (1950–2015) as well as Dr. Karin Dean under whose supervision I started my doctoral studies at Tallinn University. I would also like to thank all other good colleagues from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre: Prof. Kristel Pappel, Prof. Toomas Siitan, Dr. Anu Kõlar, Prof. Kerri Kotta, Dr. Kaire Maimets-Volt, Anu Veenre, Heidi Heinmaa, Dr. Marju Raju and many others. My special thanks goes to my fellow doctoral student Hannaliisa Uusma, working and writing with whom has been very educational, and Innar Järva.

I would also like to thank my father Artem Davidjants, who is the reason I ever reached that far to start defining the Armenian nationalism, and my mother Inge Davidjants as well as my sister Jaana Davidjants with whom I have spent hours discussing these issues. My special thanks goes to Birgit Pajust who has provided me with invaluable help and supported me in different stages of completing the thesis.

1. Introduction

The aim of the present thesis is to shed light on the various aspects of Armenian national identity with primary focus on Armenian music culture, on Armenian national cultural symbols, on the concept of historical homeland (or country of origin), on the notion of diaspora and on the Armenian genocide.

During the last century, Armenian culture and Armenian music history writing have exhibited national identity constructs and self-representations in which the authors consciously place Armenia in the European cultural space (e.g., cf. Shaverdyan 1955/1989; Geodakyan 1969; Atayan et al 1956, Poladian 1972; Pahlevanyan 2001). In the thesis at hand, I will attempt to sketch an alternative to that approach, to offer an explanation for this widespread identity construct, and to localise Armenian culture rather within a reference frame of Caucasian and Near-Eastern peoples – which includes, for instance, also Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, and others. Armenian culture's contemporary self-placement in Europe appears to me to be primarily an exercise of social construction, which seems to reflect the tidal wave of national consciousness that welled up in the 19th century and has remained high ever since, and that involves relating the concept of the nation back to a distant past, following the line of thinking about culture common at the time to many European nations.

To achieve the aims listed above, I conducted four case studies: three of these focused on identity creation in music culture and one was a broader background study on identity creation by Armenians. I drew on the framework of post-colonial studies for my research, and indirectly also on the concepts of colonisation, self-colonisation, hybrid identities, ambivalency and mimicry (see, for instance, Anderson 2006; Bhabha 1994; Said 2003). These concepts helped me understand and explain the problem field of Armenian cultural and national identity construction as it has evolved over centuries of existence between various empires (Panossian 2002: 126). The thesis shows that Armenians exhibit an ambivalent relationship towards their Russian colonisers. This relationship has led, in the case of Armenians, to cultural self-colonisation in the field of music, primarily through adaptation to Russian culture, and through that, to Western culture. This gave rise to new, hybrid forms of culture which were not exact copies of the Russian music culture but included local variations.

The identity constructs presented in this thesis demonstrate strong links to the collective memory of Armenians. These links are reflected in various layers of creative culture – for instance, in the history of music and in autobiographic writings, two culture creation practices that converge every now and then only to split up again. Music, too, should be regarded as an identity construction tool – after all, as any other art form, it functions as a reflection of the times in which it is created (Laul 1999: 245–246). Sounds become cultural studies texts, i.e., sign systems that, when decoded, reveal a wealth of information. Musicology texts based on music writings, including works of music, are a similar treasure trove. Thus, the core of the thesis revolves around systems of meanings built up around music and their relationship to the construction of national identity.

Such a multi-layer approach to identity construction strategies and patterns, weaving together personal stories and music texts, highlights the diversity of identity creation practices. More specifically, it shows how, on an academic level – in the case at hand, in the history of music and more broadly, in general historiography – certain narratives have been built up around identity policies, narratives that are reflected in important ways in individuals' personal stories and biographies. Often, the narratives in question display certain common denominators – which surfaced every now and then in the case studies – in particular, the attitudes people held towards certain national symbols: the notion of homeland Armenia (the country of origin), Armenian diasporas, the Armenian language, Christianity, the Armenian genocide, Armenian culture, etc. It is through a closer examination of these notions that one is apt to discover that often these relate to a certain concept of Armenians' belonging to the West, i.e. it is these notions that are used to carve out for Armenians an emphatic niche in the West.

Thus, the case studies reported in the framework of this thesis confirm its principal – hypothesis – that the narratives appearing in Armenians' public history writing as well as in personal contexts are often premised on the need to construct imagined borders between Armenians and their presumably hostile neighbours. Such a self-image inevitably results in foregrounding, in the Armenians' collective memory, interpretations of historical events that are based on opposing East and West, Islam and Christianity, in a manner criticised by Edward Said (Panossian 2002: 126; Suny 2001: 88; Said 2003). Oppositions of this type can frequently be encountered in the media as well as in academic discourse[1]. The corresponding manner of conceptualising identity strongly refers to cultural practices rooted in the 19th century (whether they spring from that period or emulate its Romanticist ideas from considerable temporal distance). In constructing such concepts, culture harks back to an old self-definition of Western civilisation which involved a notion

[1] For such approaches see, for example: Abrahamyan 2012.

of culture that was highly Eurocentric and was often used synonymously with Western civilisation (Said 1994: xxi).

Sketching an account of the mainstream Armenian national identity helps to understand Armenians' collective memory. Collective memory is a functional phenomenon – representations of the past allow social groups to define boundaries between communities and permit group members to define their group affiliation as an exclusion of 'the Other' (Neiger, Meyers, Zandberg 2011: 5). Calling into question widespread narratives paves the way to understanding their formulation and allows one to examine them from a critical perspective. The collective memory of Armenians that conceptualizes Armenians as the last European outpost on the border of Asia may be accounted for in geopolitical terms. The fact that Armenia is the world's first Christian nation (starting AD 301) is perceived as the reason Armenians have been subject to persecution by their Muslim neighbours, culminating in the 1915 Armenian genocide by the Ottoman empire (Panossian 2002: 126; Suny 2001: 885).

Yet, this self-image entails a paradox, since it inevitably brings up the question of whether Armenians' pretensions to belonging to the European cultural area are objectively justified. After all, Armenian culture shares many traits with its immediate neighbours who include a number of Muslim nations. This shared Near Eastern heritage is in evidence almost ubiquitously – from lifestyle to folk culture (including practices that even in contemporary Armenia are still very much alive). These similarities are only natural, given that ethnic and religious borders in the Caucasus and the Near East have through centuries been a poor match to the region's political borders, which has resulted in a situation where ethnic groups have for a long time lived in enclaves (Suny 1999/2000: 863–864).

In addition to examining the mainstream constructs of Armenian identity, the thesis at hand also permits to focus, to a certain degree, on the extent to which it is possible to deviate from these. The case studies show that such deviations are possible for various reasons. Hence, the mainstream identity constructs discussed in the thesis cannot of course be attributed to all Armenians across the world – rather, they simply represent a sample of possible constructs. Thus, the case studies demonstrate that identities are constructed, fluid and intersecting (DeFrancisco, Palczewski 2014: 9).

For instance, the comparison of personal and academic identities shows greater variance among the former, which reflects a number of different factors. The article about the Armenians of Tallinn exemplified the impact that the respondents' place of residence (in the historical homeland or abroad – and, in the latter case, the type of diaspora they live in) has on the factors the respondents use to construct their

identity. The second article, which investigates the mutual rhetoric of hostility employed by Armenians and Azeris in social media discussions about music, highlights the fact that although the parties to the discussion used different ways to construct their arguments, the substance of those arguments was very similar on both sides. Although Armenians, unlike Azeris, tend to support their claims by references to historical events and historical sources, in terms of their content the arguments of the parties closely resemble one another, accusing the other people of being thieves, liars, murderers, etc. The third and the fourth article that look at national identity constructs in musicological discourse show that academic fields such as folklore studies and musicology which are often presented as apolitical may actually prove to be ideologically loaded.

In the thesis, I draw considerably on the work of nationalism researchers including those with a global approach (e.g., Safran 1991; Suny 1999/2000, 2001; Smith 2010), as well as those specialising on Armenia and the Armenians (e.g., Tölölyan 2001, 2004, 2005; Panossian 2002; Yazedjian 2004). Amongst others, I also used diaspora research (e.g., Alfonso 2004; Pattie 2005) and Internet studies focussing on the Caucasus (e.g., Pearce 2011, accessed September 16, 2016; Aliyev 2013, accessed September 16th, 2016) to set the context of the thesis. I found support for my thinking in the work of researchers investigating the elements of Armenian national consciousness in Armenian music and musicology (e.g., Nercessian 2000) and, more broadly, in the musicology discourse (e.g., Dahlhaus 1983; Stokes 1994; Frolova-Walker 1998; Bohlman 2001). The work of researchers of Armenian origin proved particularly useful because the authors analysed the establishment of Armenian national discourse in general history as well as in music history and thus examined the construction of the past through the prism of the nation.

2. Analytical overview of the case studies

The section below describes the research questions, methods and main results of the four case studies included in the doctoral thesis.

2.1. Methods

The thesis at hand chiefly employs qualitative methods that permit the researcher, at the same time, to investigate empirical phenomena and to make sense of the context of the case. In all of the articles, the analysis of cultural context holds a prominent place. To obtain relevant information, I have assembled different samples in different articles – always with the aim of being able to reach broader generalisations than would have been possible as a result of an analysis focusing exclusively on the particular case – and to distinguish wider patterns. Thus, in the first article, the material for analysis is made up of responses from semi-structured interviews, in the second by online comments whose authors chose to remain anonymous (as is usual with such commentary), in the third and fourth article by texts from works on music theory and history – specifically, transcriptions of Armenian folk songs. The interviews and comments of respectively the first and the second article have been gathered, coded and interpreted having regard to the principles of thematic analysis (Bowen 2009: 28). Additionally, the third article employs reception analysis and the fourth, comparative analysis of music. It is also important to note my researcher's position in Estonia as a person of partly Armenian descent. Thus, my position is subject to the impact of both my personal background as well as that of extended participatory observations in Armenian communities in both their historical homeland as well as in diaspora, and in Turkey. Such an "at-home ethnography" (Alvesson 2009) has its strengths (good awareness of the socio-cultural context of my fieldwork) as well as weaknesses (a risk of established prejudice and bias) and requires constant self-reflection.

2.2. Overview of the publications: research questions and results

Publication I. In the article *Identity Construction in Narratives: Activists of the Armenian Diaspora in Estonia* I focus on narratives of national identity and on the development of national consciousness in the Armenian minority in Tallinn

starting from the end of the 1980s, the time of the (re)awakening of Estonians' national consciousness. Although the first wave of Armenians arrived in Estonia already at the end of the 19th century, most of the arrivals left the country during the first decades of the 20th, and there were almost no Armenians in Estonia after World War II. Afterwards, in the 1960s and the 1970s, Armenians started gradually arriving in Estonia as part of the internal migration of the Soviet period – some were posted here to work (a widespread phenomenon at the time), some came to study or married local Estonian or Russian residents. At the end of the 1980s, *perestroika* made it possible for people to form associations based on their ethnicity, which led to the formation of Armenian societies in two largest cities of Estonia, Tallinn and Tartu. According to data from the 2011 census, there are 1428 Armenians in Estonia, of whom 847 reside in Tallinn (RL0429 2011, accessed August 4, 2014). Yet, these figures should be treated with caution, since apparently not all Estonian Armenians recorded 'Armenian' as their ethnicity in the census, which of course does not preclude those that did not from being active members of the Armenian community.

The chief theoretical point of departure for this article regards Armenians as a typical diaspora community that has retained a collective memory of their place of origin and that continues to relate to that place (Huntington 2004: 257, 275; Safran 1991: 83–84; Smith 2010: 4). The usual typology of diasporas distinguishes between victim diasporas, labour diasporas and colonial diasporas, of which the victim diaspora is regarded as the prototypical one (Kokot, Tölölyan, Alfonso 2004: 3). Armenians, too, are usually classified as a victim diaspora, since the major part of their modern diasporas was formed as a result of the Armenian genocide. Even for those communities – as that of the Estonian Armenians' – that were not formed by genocide escapees, the genocide remains an important unifying factor in the community. In addition to the genocide, there are other identity factors as well that Estonian Armenians (as Armenian diasporas elsewhere, too) relate to: shared myths, memories, Armenian symbols and traditions, interpretations of what it means to be Armenian, positioning themselves between the historical homeland and the land of residence, etc.

To gather information on the topic of the article, semi-structured interviews were made with 8 Armenians (6 males and 2 females aged 55–75) who at the end of the 1980s formed the first Tallinn group of Armenian activists and who continue to hold an important position in the *Eesti Armeenia Rahvusühing* [Estonian Armenian National Society]. The interviews were conducted face to face separately with each respondent and their duration varied from 0.5 to 2 hours. The interviews were transcribed. Most of the respondents consented to their interviews being recorded. The information was then organised into categories corresponding to the central questions of my research: How did Armenians in Tallinn start their society in 1987?

To what extent are the interviewees satisfied with the Armenian community and its work? How do they feel about being Armenian and what are their feelings concerning their country of residence and their homeland? After this I proceeded to identify the dominant themes and patterns, which permitted me to establish the narratives that recurred in the material. Since I am a native member of the Armenian community of Estonia, this was not unlike engaging in 'at-home ethnography', since, to a greater or lesser extent, I knew all of my respondents.

Four respondents called Armenia their homeland regardless of what country they came from; at the same time one of the respondents stated her home to be the city of Baku in Azerbaijan where she was born. Compared to males, the females appeared to have a stronger emotional connection to their birthplace (or to be less inhibited about expressing this connection) and stated repeatedly that they yearned to live respectively in Yerevan or Baku. All respondents also expressed loyalty to Estonia, which they also referred to as their home. Based on the interviews, this reference may be considered to reflect economic stability that characterises contemporary Estonia. It may also relate to the fact that the Estonian society of ethnic Armenians possesses good, government-guaranteed opportunities to preserve Armenian culture and community. Of the constituent elements of their Armenian identity, most of the Armenians of Tallinn mentioned their native language, but also the Apostolic Church of Armenia. It was surprising that practically no references were made to the Armenian genocide, although the problems that Armenians have with their Muslim neighbours were raised more than once.

The interviews provided a diverse picture of the activists, one that was strongly related to the collective memory of Armenians. There were differences and similarities according to the generation that the activist belonged to, as well as according to their place of origin, gender, education and specialisation. Overall, the Armenian activists of Tallinn represent the elite of their diaspora – more than 20 years after starting the Armenian society, their dedication to 'being Armenian' remains unwavering, even if the interpretation of this relatively obscure notion varies from respondent to respondent. The most important result of the research consists in the difference of the identity constructs encountered among the Tallinn Armenian diaspora from the mainstream constructs of Armenian diaspora, which is explained by the geographically peripheral position of the Tallinn diaspora. The difference consisted in the shift of the central identity axis from the Armenian genocide (Pattie 1999: 13) to the Armenian language and the Armenian church.

Publication II. In the article *Conflicts in Music in South Caucasus: The Case of Armenians and Azerbaijanis* I report a small-scale case study on how folk music can be employed to serve nationalist ideas in social media. The article focuses on the example of Armenians and Azeris. These are peoples whose countries were

recently at war with one another and who have sought to maintain a brittle truce starting 1994. During the ensuing period, the conflict between these nations has shifted into the sphere of culture. This means that professional as well as amateur culture lovers spend considerable amounts of time on arguments – conducted predominantly in an aggressive tone – concerning various aspects of the relevant cultures such as the appurtenance to one or the other culture of certain regional dishes, traditional patterns or folk melodies.

In the article at hand I focus on a traditional melody that is widely known among Armenians as well as Azeris – *Sari Gelin* / *Sari Aghjik*. This is a melody that enjoys immense popularity across the Caucasus and the Near East, and that is performed with different lyrics across the entire region. This popularity has resulted in heated thematic discussions – on an academic level and in the social media – between representatives of different ethnic groups (Gratien 2013, accessed September 26, 2016; Agasieva 2010; Bates 2011). In addition, there are hosts of websites dedicated to discussions concerning the origin of the song[2]. Thus, an indirect objective of the article is to demonstrate the strength and persistence of doctrinal national myths in a practical, everyday context and to show how similar these myths are in the case of the two ethnic groups in question.

The melody in question is by no means unique as an example of hotly contested musical material – it is simply perhaps the most widely known. The spread of a melody across a wide area appears to reflect rather a normal course of events. The neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan have to date co-existed side by side for centuries, and South Caucasus has never been characterised by closely matching cultural and ethnic borders. This is the reason why the ethnic groups in question display similarities as well as differences. Generally, the peoples that populated the territories that are now Armenia and Azerbaijan during the first centuries of the Christian era were subject to considerable Persian influence. The Azeris only adopted Islam when the Saphavid interpretation of that religion was imposed in the region and the inhabitants started to be converted to the Shia branch of the faith (Moreno 2005: 2, accessed January 25, 2016). Unlike their Muslim neighbour, the Armenians are a Christian nation – and the first in the world at that. Currently, Armenia and Azerbaijan experience similar social processes, and both have a long colonial history: both were ruled by the Ottoman empire starting from the 15–16th century, by the Russian empire starting from the 19th century and by the Soviet Union starting from the 1920s.

[2] For example, in social media, there are two pages. One is called 'Sari Gelin – The National Song of Azerbaijan' (www.facebook.com/Sari.Gelin.Song/timeline, accessed January 16, 2016). Another page is called 'Sari Aghjik is an Armenian Folk Song' (http://sari-aghjik.com/welcome-to-our-website.html, accessed January 26, 2016).

The social media was selected as the source of the data for analysis for several reasons. Importantly, social networking appears to be globally the most popular online activity among adults and 91% of the adults who use the Internet regularly use social media. YouTube was singled out because it is the most popular music website in the Internet and has a very large user base – it is the third most visited site in the Internet. (Fan 2014: 3) Social networks also enjoy high popularity among Armenians and Azeris (Aliyev 2013, accessed September 16th, 2016). Both countries are ruled by semi-totalitarian regimes in which state-sponsored media is controlled by the government and the local oligarchy. This means that the social media are among the few fora that permit a relatively unrestrained discussion. Yet, as has been pointed out, social media also reflect an equal measure of national myths that characterise both peoples.

Secondly, social media have an important influence on the transmission of memory. Nowadays it is difficult to examine personal, generational and public memory without admitting the enormous impact that new media as a memory preservation channel exerts on all forms of memory. The digital media have become an inseparable part of what and in what form people remember and how they are likely to treat it subsequently (Huyssen 2003, cited in Kidd 2009: 167). The results of the article at hand suggest that the Internet may also be having an impact on how people remember the song *Sari Gelin* / *Sari Aghjik*, how they speak about it and how they hone their arguments.

The material of analysis was investigated using the methodology of document analysis which contains elements of thematic analysis (Bowen 2009: 28). The material was made up of comments posted by YouTube users on the page of the song *Sari Galin* [the title of that particular version] starting from 28 September 2008 through 15 July 2015. The 348 comments offered coherent material with an easily identifiable history of the discussion. 227 anonymous commentators participated in the discussion. The figures represent approximations because the comments page continued to evolve already during the analysis stage – some comments were deleted by their posters, some were reposted, and the aliases also made it difficult at times to determine the gender of the commentator. In the initial stage, I divided the comments into sub-groups according to the ethnic background of the poster (Armenian, Azeri, Iranian, Turkish and other). I then proceeded to decode the recurrent motifs of the commentary and then divided the comments by content into two categories – comments that were positive to neutral and comments that were negative. I also attempted to link the narratives appearing in the comments to widespread national narratives of both nations.

The results of the analysis show that although Armenians and Azeris use different arguments, the narratives that they employ are remarkably similar both in respect of

attitudes that are positive and those that are negative. Compared to Azeris, the arguments used by the Armenians involve an interesting dimension – Armenians sought to support their claims with historical references, while Azeris preferred direct statements without detailed explanations. Whereas the number of positive and negative commentators among the Armenians was more or less even, among the Azeris the number of negative commentators exceeded that of the positive ones fivefold. The general tendency in the discussion was to accuse the other party of being the enemy, yet there were also participants that made appeals to reconciliation.

Publication III. In the article *The Construction of National Identity in Music by the Way of the Reception of Komitas as an Example* I focus on national identity constructs on an academic level, more specifically, in Armenian music history writings. I analysed the musicological reception of the work of the composer Komitas (Soghomon Soghomonyan, 1869–1935) starting from the first half of 20th century to the beginning of 2000s, with a predominant focus on the Soviet period. Indirectly, the question that interested me in connection with this is – what options does music offer for organising memory and how can they be used to trace borders between your own people and those hostile to it?

The central point of departure of the study is that Armenia, as a small Christian nation in South Caucasus, sees itself straddling the border between different historical empires, several of which are Islamic. Because of this difference of religion, Armenia has, to a large extent, built its identity on excluding any common ground with its neighbours. Distancing itself from the East, Armenia, in its culture, continues to look for proof of belonging to the West. Identity creation trends of this type are especially common in the academic milieu (Panossian 2002: 126; Suny 2001: 88).

I selected Komitas for my analysis because of his importance in Armenian cultural history. Together with the composers Alexander Spendiarov and Aram Khachaturian he is regarded as being among the greatest figures of Armenian music. There are several reasons why Komitas has attained this status. First, he was the founder of a new school of Armenian music in the 19th century, when Western Romanticist thinking spread through the Russian and the Ottoman empire. The work of the composers of the period was characterised by a new, Romanticist approach to folk music. This included adopting an external observer's perspective to the traditional music found in one's culture, as well as collecting folk melodies and using them in Western-style musical works – often with romanticised, exotic plots (Geodakyan 1969: 18; Pahlevanyan 2005: 21). Komitas was not merely a composer – he is considered the first Armenian folklore scholar who conducted in-depth research into the particular characteristics of Armenian music and presented his findings in the West (Geodakyan 1969: 48; Sarkisyan 2001).

Together with that of Spendiarov and Khachaturian, the work of Komitas is often used to argue Armenia's cultural affinity with the West (while at the same time retaining its Armenian flavour). This is then employed to construct an image of European Armenians who are cosmopolitan but bear a unique heritage. As has been referred above, the reason for such practices comes in part from being located in a partly Muslim area – yet, it may as well derive from the cultural policies of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. It should be added that Armenians have historically regarded Russia as a Christian and Western ally that provides the country with a window to Europe[3] (Suny 1999/2000: 885). Komitas's work is, as a rule, approached along the lines of this narrative that formed at the turn of the 19th century and continued during the Soviet period. The national culture policy of the time needed Romanticist composers like Komitas, because they fit the notion of a culture that is "national in form, socialist in content" (Frolova-Walker 1998: 331–336).

The method employed in performing this case study is analysis of music reception; this allows to shed light on implicit ideologies that shape historiography. Different strategies of inclusion and exclusion (Wodak 1999: 8) appear clearly also in the formulations encountered in receptions of Komitas. I related my analysis to the cultural context, i.e. I took into account the historical processes that have had an impact on the creation of a specifically Armenian school of music and the formation of its symbols.

For my analysis, I selected 6 texts from the period 1955–2001, which form a canonical discourse on Komitas. Four of the texts are also part of the Soviet discourse on musicology and are written in Russian, one has been written in 1972 in English by an author of West-Armenian descent, and the last is a 2001 chapter on Komitas from the encyclopedia *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. As a whole, such a sample of texts offers coherent material for analysis. The material shows that approaches to Komitas have not changed much through different political periods.

In this case, the analysis of the cultural context and of reception showed how certain political processes have affected academic milieus that are often mistakenly portrayed as unbiased, non-political – i.e., how music history construction follows the prevalent national narrative. The most notable result of the analysis concerns the idea of ethnic-based cultural purity in Armenian music and musicology discourse, which are assumed to be represented by Komitas and which are linked to the concept of 'purity'. According to the relevant authors, Komitas 'removed' from Armenian music all elements belonging to the country's Muslim neighbours,

[3] In the recent years, Armenians are increasingly voicing their objection to the continued presence of Russia in Armenia. For instance, during the mass anti-government protests in the summer of 2016 one of the demands of the protesters was to decrease Russia's influence and political manipulations in Armenia. See, for example, Atanesian 2016.

leaving only 'pure', 'authentic' Armenian music – as if it were possible to screen out borrowed elements from a culture. This approach appears to require a certain degree of revision, considering the polyethnic nature of the South Caucasus area and its poor match of state and ethnic boundaries.

Publication IV. The article *Identity Construction in Armenian Music on the Example of Early Folklore Movement* examines identity constructs in early Armenian folklore research.

This case study consists in a comparative analysis of the transcriptions of certain Armenian folk songs made on the one hand by the composer and folklore scholar Komitas (see above), and on the other, the folklore researcher Arshak Brutyan (1864–1936). The purpose of the analysis was to map the differences in the objectives pursued by the scholars in their work, in their cultural background, outlook, etc. These methodological differences are not reflected only in the limited analytic material of the articles but can be perceived generally in the variance between the transcriptions of folk melodies made respectively by Komitas and Brutyan. The transcriptions in question reflect a clear difference of musical thinking in terms of aspects that the composers have chosen to stress, placing into the Western framework musical material that does not fit with Western tonal music.

According to the central hypothesis of the article, in his transcriptions of folk melodies, Komitas has predominantly based himself on ideas revolving around Western music, adapting the melodies to suit these. On the other hand, Brutyan appears to be looking for transcription methods that would be consonant with the nature of Armenian music culture. Such a difference may be explained by impressions drawn from a comparison of folk melodies and of the biographies of the folklore scholars, which show Brutyan (possibly unintentionally) rejecting European-type identity constructs – a stark contrast with the ideologically weighted choices made by Komitas.

This hypothesis is related to the thesis that the reception of the work of Komitas and Brutyan by Armenian music scholars contains a national ideology that positions the Armenian culture in the European cultural area. Such an identity construct is based on a variety of factors, for instance the fact that Armenia, as has been pointed out, is the first country in the world to officially have adopted Christianity, or the fact that Armenians exhibit large generally speaking well-integrated diasporas in the West, etc. These identity constructs also accommodate culture, in this particular case manifested by 19th-century Western composers who during that period started working in the paradigm of national awakening. This was a period during which the idea of a nation spread rapidly in East and North Europe and national styles started to be linked to ethnic backgrounds (Dahlhaus 1983: 90).

As the first step of my analysis, I studied Komitas's and Brutyan's collections of folk music with a view to ascertaining recurrent tendencies in their respective transcriptions. This involved analysing the transcriptions of more than 100 songs from both composers. I did this against the background of other collections of Armenian folk melodies, as well as the recorded and in situ performances of those melodies[4,5,6]. A search for material transcribed by both folklore scholars revealed a few dozen overlapping melody sequences and four songs that manifested a nearly full overlap. As the next step, I investigated the tonal and rhythmic structure and form of the songs transcribed by both composers. In the article, I present the comparative analysis of two songs: *Chem chem* and *Le le yaman*. Both had one version by Komitas and 2 by Brutyan – altogether, 6 transcriptions. The material for analysis came from the Charents Museum of Literature and Art which holds the works of Komitas (collections 302, 303 and 304) as well as those of Brutyan (collections 3, 4 and 5).

The results of the analysis showed that the structure of these transcriptions is largely similar in terms of the forms and tones employed and gives the impression that the authors of the transcriptions were working in the same theoretical framework. At the same time, the transcriptions exhibit considerable systematic differences in the rhythmic figures of the melodies and in the manner in which they have been noted using metric structure. Unlike those of Brutyan, the rhythmic patterns of Komitas's transcriptions are relatively simple, schematic. To a certain extent, one also sees the difference in the melodic thinking of Brutyan and Komitas. At times it appears that Komitas has harmonised the modes, masking, for instance, augmented seconds, simplifying melodic embellishments, etc. All in all, when comparing the transcriptions analysed here with the so-called living music tradition, Brutyan's transcriptions appear to do more justice to the material. One is left with the impression that the differences between the transcriptions do not so much stem from the fact that the songs may be assumed to have been transcribed at different times and different locations but rather reflect the fact that the composers had different priorities to govern the choices they made when they wrote down the melodies.

4 Muradyan 2000.
5 Live performance by Margarit Voskanyan, four sessions on 12–14 January 2013.
6 Gevonyan 1978, Muradyan 1980, Toumajian 1983, 1986, 2005.

3. Discussion and conclusion

The first case study of this thesis established certain factors of identity that the Armenian activists of Tallinn considered more important (language, church, culture) or less important (Armenian genocide). The second case study that compared the hostile rhetoric employed in the Internet by Armenians and Azeris showed that although the adverse parties use different arguments to justify the accusations they level at each other, the accusations themselves are quite alike. In the third case study I researched the work of the composer and ethnologist Komitas for recurrent motifs, in particular for those linking Armenianness to the notion of 'purity'. The results of the fourth case study suggest that when making his transcriptions of folk melodies, Komitas used Western thinking as his point of departure, while his contemporary ethnologist Arshak Brutyan attempted to find ways to write down folk melodies in a manner consonant with Armenian music culture.

The results of my research for this thesis suggest the following conclusions. Armenians have several dominant identity constructs which have arisen as a result of prolonged existence at the border between various empires. These constructs relate to Armenia's position on the East-West axis of empires, an axis on which the Armenians as a Christian nation see themselves on the Western side. Such identity constructs are predominant on a formal level – in historiography, public opinion, etc. On a practical, layman's level, however, it is possible for individuals to skirt these constructs, depending on whether they find themselves at the notional centre or on the periphery of their diaspora. This indicates that Armenians' identities are much more fluid than suggested by the identity policies quasi-officially promoted by the Armenian government.

During the last 15 years, new trends have arisen in the identity construction processes taking place in Armenian communities. In part, they are reflected in the second case study of this thesis. The roots of these trends include, for instance, globalisation, the spread of information (largely due to the Internet) and, probably, also a relatively young republic's search for its own identity in a region rife with conflicts. It is the last of these that has made Armenians disappointed with the West – already in earlier periods, Western political machinations have been referred to as the cause of the genocide, and Armenian mainstream media still frequently publish pieces blaming Western customs for the degradation of Armenians (Shirinian 2015: 5, accessed September 16, 2016). This, however, does not signify that Armenians see themselves as belonging to the Near East – rather, this reflects

contemporary national consciousness building processes that relate to key identity factors such as the Armenian church, the Armenian language and others, while regarding Armenia as a country unique in its region.

The results of the thesis at hand are embedded in the context described above, one that is currently dismantling the ideologies that prevailed in the last century and bringing forth new ones. In the framework of contemporary Armenian studies, this reflects an approach that is a relatively recent addition in Armenian humanities but is being adopted more and more widely. It is interesting to note that this approach is more popular among researchers who themselves live in diaspora communities (be they native diasporians or emigrees from homeland Armenia). Overall, a certain ideological divide appears to separate the Armenian studies scholars living in homeland Armenia from those living in diasporas – which is something I experienced first-hand during the entire course of my research. Thus, in the writing of this thesis, an important role was played by my personal background and my personal connections to its theme, including extended periods of fieldwork in Armenia, Turkey and in the Armenian communities of various countries. When I started working with my material more than ten years ago, it was very complicated to find fellow researchers who would be working along similar lines, i.e. with investigations of the manifestations of national consciousness in outwardly neutral fields such as academic research. It was difficult to speak about these topics in Armenian research circles and it was not unfrequent that, having explained what I was interested in, I suddenly ran into difficulties getting my permissions for working in the archives.

Today, however, nationalism studies have all but made it into the mainstream of Armenian studies. As has already been mentioned, it is mostly Armenian researchers with diaspora roots that are working with these topics (cf. Tölölyan 2004, 2005; Panossian 2002; Suny 1999/2000, 2001), providing academic-perspective descriptions of problems similar to those that they have encountered when studying Armenian national consciousness. Moreover, these years have witnessed the appearance of a series of new-generation Armenian researchers who are starting to field similar questions in their work. They are challenging Armenian nationalism both in its academic forms as well as in practical everyday manifestations, and have started to write the 'unwritten' history. Thus, they have, in the Armenian academic milieu, started to focus on marginalised discourses such as gender studies, LGBT studies and nationalism studies (cf. Avagyan 2012; Shirinian 2015, accessed September 16, 2016; Sahakyan 2015). To a certain extent, themes related to music, too, have, during the last decade, been picked up by nationalism researchers, and vice versa – music researchers have started to take an interest in national consciousness building (cf. Nercessian 2000; Alajaji 2009), as well as in the role of the Internet in national consciousness production (cf. Pearce 2011, accessed September

16, 2016). The number of Armenian/Turkish and also Armenian/Azeri academic projects looking into possibilities of reconciling the two nations' interpretations of history and more broadly, the opportunities for peace between the relevant nations (cf. Gamaghelyan, Rumyansev & Sayan 2015, accessed September 17, 2016; Suny, Göcek, Naimark 2011) is on the rise.

The case studies that make up this thesis make an important contribution to contemporary Armenian studies. Some deal with topics that have already been researched, some investigate themes that have drawn relatively little academic attention. For instance, Armenian diaspora studies are a relatively new field because for a long time, Armenian studies focused exclusively on fields such as history, literature and the Armenian language. Armenian diaspora studies is a research field that is only beginning to institutionalise – which means it is opening up to the general academic community, no longer the privileged turf of a few authors. (Hofmann 2003, accessed September 19, 2016)

The thesis also contributes to investigating the relationship of periphery and the centre from a contemporary perspective, since the case studies seem to indicate that deviations from mainstream identity constructs tend to be linked to the peripheral positions of deviating groups. The aspect of periphery-centre relations in the research theme is expressed in different ways in the case studies. For instance, looking at the Tallinn diaspora case, the respondents' position at the periphery of Armenian diasporas is expressed in a series of different aspects, primarily in the respondents' relationship to the generally recognised component factors of Armenian identity. Thus, it was remarkable that the informants scarcely mentioned the Armenian genocide at all, although according to widespread assumptions it is the 1915 genocide that is expected to be the axis that unites Armenians across the world. The Tallinn case study, however, showed a much stronger focus on the Armenian language and the Armenian Church – albeit several respondents stressed that they are not religious.

There are various explanations that may be proposed for such a relationship to identity factors. First of all, the reason might be that, when the activists in question started their community work, they placed a strong focus during the first decade on two aspects – setting up a Sunday school, which turned out to prioritise the Armenian language, and on establishing a local congregation. In other words, these are projects that the activists built up themselves, whilst the genocide – although it remains important as witnessed by the annual commemoration events – remains considerably more distant. Also, limited reference to the genocide may be explained by the fact that the diaspora in question was not started by direct descendants of genocide escapees, although the parents of several informants had that status. This makes for a slightly different memory of the genocide, one that is

more distanced than that reflected by refugees from Western Armenian territories. This is where an interesting difference was observed compared to the younger generation of Estonian Armenians. Based on longitudinal participant observation it appears that, for the younger generation of Estonian Armenians, the Armenian genocide has become one of the central aspects of identity construction. The reasons for this could lie in the younger generation looking for its own axis of national identity construction. The Sunday school and the Armenian Church for them are something that they take for granted, something that they do not have to fight for – unlike the official recognition of Armenian genocide by the Estonian state.

The marginal character – but also the original contribution of my research – is reflected in the thesis from a number of different perspectives. Thus, the investigation of the Armenian diaspora of Tallinn focuses, from the point of view of Armenian studies and of broader diaspora studies, on a very narrow problem field. In the context of the research on various diasporas in Estonia, researchers working in the framework of minority studies have tended to focus on the larger local diasporas (such as the Russians and the Ukrainians)[7]. In the context of Armenian studies, the study of Armenian diasporas is gathering momentum – more and more conferences are organised around this theme and there is an increasing number of books published on the topic. Yet, most researchers focus on diasporas made up of Armenians forced to leave Western Armenian territories. This, in turn, means that the main stress in the research falls on descendants of genocide escapees. Considerably less academic attention has been paid to more recent emigrees, those that left during the Soviet period and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and also those that emigrated from imperial Russia. The latter in particular have been the subject for a few researchers only. It is only relatively recently that comprehensive treatments of Armenians in Eastern Europe have appeared[8]. This broadly reflects the location of Armenian studies – the major Armenian studies centres are situated where Armenian communities were established in the period following the genocide, primarily in the U.S.A, but also in France, Lebanon and Jerusalem[9].

From the point of view of mainstream Armenian studies, the article on social media too represents a marginal approach in that it compares the rhetoric employed by Armenians and Azeris as the adverse parties of a dispute, considering

[7] See, for instance, https://www.tlu.ee/et/Humanitaarteaduste-instituut/Instituut/Akadeemilised-suunad/Vene-ja-Ida-Euroopa-uuringute-akadeemiline-suund.

[8] See, for instance, Siekierski, Troebst 2016.

[9] For example, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, at the University of Paris, at the University of Michigan.

the perspectives of both. As has already been said, both peoples are currently involved in massive history-writing projects to legitimate their prevailing government-sponsored ideology (During, accessed on January 16, 2016). Conducting research along these lines in the homeland is highly difficult on both sides because it would run counter to mainstream research themes and as such call into question the legitimacy of the dominant national narratives. Yet approaches giving equal consideration to the perspectives of both parties certainly offer a fresh look on the ethnic group based hatred dynamic that characterises the relationship between the two nations.

A certain contrast to the above-mentioned articles is provided by those examining the work of the folklorist and composer Komitas. They involve a change of perspective from the personal and informal to the academic and formal and primarily focus on how 'Armenianness' is constructed in Armenian music. These texts exhibit a marked difference from the other two articles in that, while the first two seek to explicate marginal identities by taking a personal approach, the texts on Komitas reflect the dominant government-sponsored identity of Armenians. As the research reported in the articles shows, 'Armenianness' in the work of Komitas is linked to the concept of 'purity', at the same time suggesting that Armenians should be viewed as a group whose culture puts them in firmly the West.

The articles investigating the work of Komitas even today still represent a relatively fresh approach, although it is becoming increasingly popular among Armenian music researchers with a diaspora background. This approach involves problematizing the construction of national consciousness in music and looks at the mechanisms that are used to attribute to a neutral work of music a meaning that is external to music and propagates a certain national identity. Thus, the articles explicitly reflect on the Armenians' cultural self-attribution to the West. They also exemplify three dominant ideas of Soviet-period Armenian musicology which are still very much alive. According to the first, Armenian music is ancient, especially in the context of the Soviet Union, and this makes it unique. The second group of ideas that had universal currency at the turn of the 19th century holds Armenian music to have a particular, national character. A part of this narrative of 'national' music is that any approaches to artistic music must relate that music to traditional music – because, as proponents of the approach claim – it is precisely the links to traditional music that lend a peculiarly national character to Armenian music, one that sets it apart from the ordinary classical music of Europe (cf. Atayan 1956: 4). The third group of ideas has Armenian music belonging to the high culture of Europe. These ideas in conjunction form the point of departure for the claim that Armenian culture has a special value because it brings together elements from Western and Eastern traditions. In music, this is expressed in the practice of using Western classical music forms but filling these with local musical material, with

the songs of the ancestors, resulting in a synthesis of local music and Western classical genres that produces the novel and special Armenian music.

Owing to the marginal status of their themes, all articles of the thesis made an original contribution to Armenian studies. For example, the article on disputes in the social media is a truly interdisciplinary one in that it beings together perspectives from nationalism studies, musicology and Internet studies, resulting in a combination that, in the particular geopolitical context, was original indeed. The other important aspect that this article pointed out was the enormous opportunities that the Internet holds in the contemporary world, including in the Caucasus. The wildfire spread of the Internet during the last decade has considerably defused the general dynamic of hostility between Armenians and Turks, but also between Armenians and Azeris. The Internet has become a platform that allows hostile nations to meet and to enter into a dialogue. The level on which the impact of the Internet is the most felt is that of grassroots movements and peace initiatives (for instance, in 2012 a taxi project was run inYerevan and Baku which involved the taxi driver playing, respectively, an Armenian/Azeri-language tape in the car and filming the passengers' reactions[10]). These initiatives are clearly compensating for the shortcomings of the state-sponsored media of both nations which to date air little but the official positions of the politicians. In addition, the Internet provides a voice to marginalised groups in South Caucasus, such as the LGBT community[11] and to women[12], who are both subject to considerable discrimination in everyday life. For instance, there was a project that involved Armenian and Azeri women sharing war stories, because the official war narratives give very little voice to women. The civil society and the opposition are making maximum use of the Internet, which has resulted in many *online*-activists being arrested (Aliyev 2013, accessed September 16th, 2016).

During my research I got the impression that Armenian studies need to be linked to a broad spectrum of contemporary discourses and discussions that currently animate the humanities and social sciences. Logically, this is the next stage that we are headed for, because the major centres for Armenian studies are located in Europe, which means they are closer to influential academic hubs. All of the issues that the articles of the thesis focus on also point up new research aspects and thus indicate prospective directions to work in. Approaching each article separately, the question that has been raised recently is how to expand the base for Armenian diaspora

[10] Passenger [official website of the movie] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-ecdfVRZL8, accessed June 17, 2016.

[11] Armenia [official website of ILGA Europe], http://ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/2016/armenia.pdf, accessed June 17, 2016.

[12] Domestic violence survey in the Republic of Armenia 2011. – *Police-Public partnership*. http://www.osce.org/yerevan/88229?download=true, accessed August 31, 2016.

studies[13]. One of the options that I would propose in this respect is to drop the widely used comparative reference to Jewish people and the Holocaust and to focus on comparing the Armenians to ethnic groups with whom the Armenian diaspora has more in common in geopolitical terms, and who, too, have been overshadowed by the so-called big history, such as the Georgians, Azeris, Kurds and others.

Based on the results of the article on social media, it would be interesting to research the extent to which the attitudes of diaspora communities of ethnic groups with homelands in the Caucasus differ from those of the groups' members who live in the historical homeland. It may be conjectured on the basis of my research for the article that the difference is extensive. It is hard to escape the impression that government-sponsored brainwashing campaigns have left an enormous mark on people's minds – a theme that deserves specific observation and analysis. The difference emerges clearly in the research for the social media article in which it stands out that many of the commentators standing for peace between the groups represented in the discussions are of Iranian origin. In addition to the extent to which homeland and diaspora attitudes differ, further research might also target the differences between the diasporas themselves – for instance, those of Estonia and France.

The articles focussing on the historiography of music repeatedly highlighted a phenomenon that may point to an interesting avenue for research in this field. The corresponding approaches to music (such as that of Shaverdyan from 1959) regard Armenian culture as situated at the periphery of the spheres of interest of big empires and in a certain sense, resemble contemporary post-colonial studies. The rise of such approaches was certainly helped along by Soviet cultural policy, but also the fact that only a brief period had elapsed since the Armenian genocide – which affected the minds of Armenian cultural figures during the period when all talk of the genocide was taboo. Publicly mentioning the genocide was out of the question even in the 1950s and the first major thematic protest only took place in Yerevan in 1965, when 50 years had elapsed after the genocide (Whitehorn 2015: 140). Still, people found ways of weaving implicit references to the genocide into their writing[14]. Hence, it would make sense to continue investigating the position of Armenian culture in a post-colonial perspective at the border of various empires.

[13] For instance, the 9–10 May 2016 conference in Leipzig, Germany organised by the University of Leipzig and the University of Michigan on Armenian diasporas, in which one of the themes for discussion was precisely how to expand the focus of diaspora research by including in it, in addition to Western Armenian diasporas, also those in Eastern Europe and those that are more recent.

[14] For example, praise to the folklorist Akop Arutyunyan for publishing the collection *Manjak* containing 200 folk songs written down among the Armenians living in Turkish territories, which is thought to have saved a significant amount of traditional material from disappearance (Shaverdyan 1955/1989: 68).

The topic of these articles – the construction of national consciousness in Armenian music and musicology – deserves to be examined further. For instance, future research could focus on the national consciousness constructs that appear in the work of other Armenian composers, and investigating the use of ethnicity in the production of power relationships between various groups, primarily between the centre and periphery, with particular attention to Armenia's geopolitical and cultural placement.

Summary in Estonian / Töö lühikokkuvõte

Käesoleva doktorikraadi kaitsmiseks esitatud väitekirja „Armenian national identity construction: from diaspora to music“ („Armeenia rahvusliku identiteedi konstrueerimine: diasporaast muusikani“) eesmärk on seletada armeenlaste rahvusliku identiteedi eri aspekte, esmajoones läbi rahvuslike kultuurisümbolite tõlgendamise. Väitekiri koosneb neljast eelretsenseeritud artiklist, juhtumiuuringust, millest kolm keskenduvad kitsamalt identiteediloomele muusikas ning üks vaatleb armeenlaste identiteediloomet laiemalt. Artiklite loetelu leiab väitekirja algusest ning väitekirjale on lisatud ka kõigi artiklite täistekstid.

Sissejuhatavas peatükis tutvustan Armeenia kultuuris ja muusikalookirjutuses levinud rahvusliku identiteedi konstruktsioone ja eneserepresentatsioone, milles ajalookirjutajad paigutavad Armeenia ja selle kultuuri teadlikult Euroopa kultuuriruumi. Pakun sellele lähenemisele alternatiivi, selgitatades seda levinud identiteedikonstruktsiooni ning lokaliseerides armeenia kultuuri pigem Kaukaasia ja Lähis-Ida rahvaste kontekstis. Kaasaegset enesepaigutust Euroopasse näen sotsiaalse konstruktsioonina, mis peegeldab 19. sajandil tekkinud ja püsima jäänud rahvusteadvuse tõusu. Seejärel tutvustan artiklite põhilisi uurimismeetodeid, teoreetilisi lähtepunkte ja uurimistulemusi. Artiklites tuginen kvalitatiivsetele uurimismeetoditele, mis võimaldavad uurida ühtaegu nii empiiriat kui ka mõtestada juhtumite konteksti. Seega on kõigis artiklites olulisel kohal kultuurilise konteksti analüüs. Artiklites kasutan eri laadi valimeid, mis võimaldaksid teha laiemaid üldistusi kui pelgalt ühe juhtumi põhise analüüsi korral ning tuvastada üldisemaid mustreid.

Töö lõpuosas, mis hõlmab diskussiooni ja kokkuvõtet, paigutan juhtumiuuringute tulemused laiemasse Armeenia uuringute konteksti. Juhtumiuuringute põhjal tehtud järelduste kohaselt eksisteerib armeenlastel mitu valitsevat identiteedikonstruktsiooni, mis on kujunenud eri impeeriumide piirimail viibimisest. Need on seotud positsiooniga Ida–Lääne impeeriumide teljel, kusjuures kõige enam kasutavad armeenlased enda Läände paigutamiseks pikka ajalugu kristlastena. Sellised identiteedikonstruktsioonid valitsevad enam formaalsel tasandil: ajalookirjutuses, avalikus arvamuses jm. Praktikas, n-ö tavainimeste tasandil, on võimalik neist kõrvale kalduda, sõltuvalt konkreetsete indiviidide viibimisest kas Armeenia diasporaa tsentris või perifeerias. Võib järeldada, et identiteedid on märksa voolavamad, kui seda laseks arvata n-ö riiklikult sanktsioneeritud identiteedipoliitika.

Järgnevalt esitan artiklite lühikirjelduse. Esimeses artiklis **„Identity Construction in Narratives: Activists of the Armenian Diaspora in Estonia“** („Identiteedikonstruktsioonid narratiivides: Eesti armeenia diasporaa aktivistid“) keskendun armeenia rahvusvähemuse rahvusliku eneseteadvuse kujunemisele ja rahvusliku identiteedi narratiividele Tallinnas alates 1980. aastate lõpust. Käesoleva artikli peamise teoreetilise lähtepunkti kohaselt näen armeenlasi diasporaa tüüpmudelina, mis on säilitanud kollektiivse mälestuse päritolukohast (Huntington 2004: 257, 275; Safran 1991: 83–84; Smith 2010: 4) ja identiteedifaktoritest (jagatud müüdid, mälestused, sümbolid ja traditsioonid, armeenlaseks olemise tõlgendused, paiknemine isa- ja elukohamaa vahel jne).

Infokogumiseks viisin 2013. aastal läbi poolstruktureeritud intervjuud kaheksa Eesti armeenlasega, kes 1980. aastate lõpus moodustasid esimese Tallinna armeenia aktivistide grupi. Organiseerisin informatsiooni eri kategooriatesse vastavalt uurimistöö kesksetele küsimustele: kuidas Tallinna armeenlased 1987. aastal organiseerumist alustasid, kuidas on intervjueeritavad hetkel kogukonna ja selle tegevusega rahul, kuidas nad tajuvad armeenlaseks olemist ning millised on nende tunded seoses elukoha- ja isamaaga. Seejärel määratlesin valitsevad teemad ja mustrid, mille abil tuvastasin korduvad narratiivid.

Intervjuude põhjal kujunes aktivistidest mitmekülgne pilt, mis oli tugevalt seotud armeenlaste kollektiivse mäluga. Erinevusi ja sarnasusi võis täheldada vastavalt põlvkondlikule kuuluvusele, päritolukohale, soole, haridusele ja erialale. Suures plaanis oli Tallinna armeenia aktivistide puhul tegemist diasporaaeliidiga – enam kui 20 aastat hiljem on nad jätkuvalt pühendunud „armeenluse“ hoidmisele, isegi kui selle nende eelistatud, kaunikesti häguse mõiste tähendus inimesiti varieerub. Olulisima uurimistulemusena võib välja tuua erinevuse armeenia diasporaa peavoolu identiteedikonstruktsioonidest, mis on seotud Tallinna diasporaa positsiooniga äärealal. Selle kohaselt ei moodustanud informantide identiteedi põhitelge genotsiid (Pattie 1999: 13), vaid hoopis keel ja kirik.

Teises artiklis **„Conflicts in Music in South Caucasus: The Case of Armenians and Azerbaijanis“** („Muusikalised konfliktid Lõuna-Kaukaasias: armeenlaste ja aserbaidžaanlaste juhtum“) olen esitlenud väiksemõõdulist juhtumiuuringut sellest, kuidas saab rakendada rahvamuusikat sotsiaalmeedias rahvuslike ideede teenistusse. Artiklis keskendun kahe hiljuti sõdinud riigi esindajate, armeenlaste ja aserbaidžaanlaste näitele. Tänaseks on riikide vaheline konflikt laienenud ka kultuuri valdkonda – nii professionaalsed kui ka amatööridest kultuurisõbrad kulutavad hulgaliselt aega sellele, et vaielda eri kultuurielementide üle, kummale rahvale need kuuluvad. Käesolevas artiklis illustreerin seda ilmingut mõlema rahva hulgas levinud rahvaviisiga: „Sari Gelin / Sari Aghjik“.

Materjali uurimiseks kasutasin dokumendianalüüsi, mis sisaldab temaatilise analüüsi elemente (Bowen 2009: 28). Analüüsimaterjali moodustasid YouTube'i kasutajate 348 kommentaari, mis olid postitatud laulu *Sari Galin* [antud versiooni pealkiri] alla portaali alates 28. septembrist 2008 kuni 15. juulini 2015. Diskussioonis osales 227 anonüümset kommenteerijat. Esimeses etapis jagasin kommentaarid vastavalt rahvusele alagruppideks (armeenia, aserbaidžaani, iraani, türgi jt rahvuste esindajad). Seejärel dekodeerisin kommentaarides korduvad motiivid, misjärel jagasin kommentaarid sisu järgi kahte kategooriasse – positiivsetest neutraalseteni ning negatiivsed.

Analüüsi tulemusel selgub, et kuigi armeenlased ja aserbaidžaanlased kasutavad vaidlustes erinevaid argumente, on nende narratiivid silmatorkavalt sarnased, ja seda nii positiivsete kui ka negatiivsete hoiakute puhul. Võrreldes aserbaidžaanlastega, püüavad armeenlased toestada oma väiteid ajalooliste viidetega – samas kui aserbaidžaanlased eelistavad otsesõnalisi, laiema selgituseta viiteid. Kui armeenlaste hulgas oli positiivsete ja negatiivsete kommenteerijate hulk tasavägine, siis aserbaidžaanlaste hulgas leidus negatiivseid kommenteerijaid viis korda rohkem kui positiivseid. Üldise tendentsi järgi süüdistavad mõlema rahvuse esindajad üksteist vaenlaseks olemises, ent leidub ka selliseid, kes kutsuvad üles rahule.

Kolmandas artiklis **„The Construction of National Identity in Music by the Way of the Reception of Komitas as an Example"** („Rahvusliku identiteedi konstrueerimisest muusikas Komitasi retseptsiooni näitel") olen keskendunud rahvusliku identiteedi konstruktsioonidele akadeemilisel tasandil, täpsemalt armeenia muusikaloo kirjutuses. Selleks olen analüüsinud helilooja Komitasi (Soghomon Soghomonjan, 1869–1935) muusikateaduslikku retseptsiooni alates 20. sajandi esimesest poolest kuni 2000. aastate alguseni, fookusega valdavalt nõukogude perioodil. Kaudsemalt olen seeläbi otsinud vastust küsimusele, milliseid mälu korraldamise võimalusi pakub muusika ning kuidas saab seda kasutada, et rajada piire enda ja vaenulike rahvaste vahel.

Uurimuse olulisim lähtekoht on see, et Lõuna-Kaukaasias asuva väikese kristliku maana näeb Armeenia end erinevate ajalooliste impeeriumide piirimail, millest mitu on islamiusku. Selle religioosse erinevuse tõttu on Armeenia rajanud oma identiteedi naabritega ühisosa välistamisele. Distantseerudes Idast, otsib Armeenia pidevaid tõestusi, et kuulub kultuuriliselt Läände. Selline identiteediloome valitseb eriti tugevalt akadeemilisel tasandil. (Panossian 2002: 126; Suny 2001: 88) Seda identiteedikonstruktsiooni on mõjutanud ka Vene impeeriumi ja Nõukogude Liidu kultuuripoliitika, kusjuures armeenlased on Venemaas kui kristlikus ja läänelikus liitlases näinud läbi ajaloo akent Euroopasse (Suny 1999/2000: 885).

Käesoleva juhtumiuuringu metodoloogiana kasutasin muusikalise retseptsiooni analüüsi. Analüüsimiseks valisin kuus teksti vahemikust 1955–2001, mis moodustavad Komitasi-teemalise kanoonilise diskursuse. Enamik tekste on ilmunud Nõukogude Liidus, vene keeles, ning kaks eri aegadel Läänes, inglise keeles.

Valisin analüüsimiseks Komitasi, sest ta kuulub armeenia muusika suurimate sümbolite hulka. Ta oli uue armeenia muusika koolkonna rajaja 19. sajandil, mil Lääne rahvusromantilised ideed levisid Vene ja Osmanite impeeriumis (Geodakyan 1969: 18; Pahlevanyan 2005: 21), ning esimesi rahvusvahelise haardega armeenia folkloriste (Geodakyan 1969: 48; Sarkisyan 2001). Antud juhul näitasid kultuurikonteksti ja retseptsioonianalüüs, kuidas on teatud poliitilised protsessid mõjutanud akadeemilisi valdkondi, mida presenteeritakse sageli ekslikult neutraalsetena, mittepoliitilisena, teisisõnu, kuidas muusikaajalugu on konstrueeritud vastavuses valitseva rahvusliku narratiiviga.

Veel tänagi kasutatakse Komitasi – armeenia muusika suurimat sümbolit – selleks, et tõestada Armeenia kultuurilist kuulumist Läände, säilitades samal ajal justkui armeeniapärasuse. Selle tulemusel luuakse kuvandit eurooplaslikest armeenlastest, korraga unikaalsetest ja kosmopoliitsetest. Kõige tähelepanuväärsem tulemus puudutas etnilisest aspektist tuleneva kultuurilise puhtuse ideed armeenia muusikas ja muusikateaduslikus diskursuses, mida Komitas eeldatavalt esindab ning mida seostatakse autentsuse kontseptsiooniga. Vastavalt neile autoritele „puhastas“ Komitas armeenia muusika mosleminaabrite elementidest, nii et vaid „autentne“ armeenia muusika jäi järele, justkui oleks võimalik kultuuri „puhastada“ laenatud elementidest. Võttes aga arvesse Lõuna-Kaukaasia polüetnilisust ning riigi- ja etniliste piiride kattumatust, nõuaks selline käsitlus teatavat revideerimist.

Neljandas artiklis **„Identity Construction in Armenian Music on the Example of Early Folklore Movement“** („Identiteedi konstrueerimisest armeenia muusikas varajase folklooriliikumise näitel“) olen vaadelnud identiteedikonstruktsioone armeenia varajases folklooriliikumises. Juhtumiuuringus analüüsin võrdlevalt samade armeenia rahvaviiside transkriptsioone, mille on teinud helilooja ja folklorist Komitas ning folklorist Aršak Brutjan (1864–1936). Analüüsi eesmärk on kaardistada erinevused folkloristide tööhuvides, kultuurilises taustas jne. Need metodoloogilised erinevused ei paista silma vaid artikli kitsast analüüsimaterjalist, vaid peegelduvad laiemalt Komitasi ja Brutjani rahvaviiside transkriptsioonide erinevustes. Transkriptsioonid kajastavad selgelt erinevat muusikalist mõtlemist: milliseid aspekte on kumbki folklorist rõhutanud, asetades läänelikku raamistikku muusikalist materjali, mis erineb Lääne tonaalsest muusikast.

Vastavalt artikli kesksele hüpoteesile on Komitas tuginenud rahvaviise transkribeerides rohkem Lääne muusika kesksele mõtlemisele, kohandades viise sellele vastavaks, samas kui Brutjani transkriptsioonimeetodid on rohkem kooskõlas armeenia muusikakultuuri olemusega. Seda erinevust võib seletada nii rahvaviiside võrdlusest kui ka folkloristide elulugudest kujunenud muljega, mille kohaselt Brutjan hülgas (võimalik, et ebateadlikult) euroopaliku identiteedikonstruktsiooni, mille taustal tõuseb Komitasi ideoloogiline meelestatus eriti selgelt esile. See hüpotees on suhestatud väitega, et armeenia muusikateadlaste Komitasi- ja Brutjani-teemaline retseptsioon sisaldab rahvuslikku ideoloogiat, mis paigutab armeenlased kultuuriliselt Euroopasse.

Analüüsi esimese sammuna uurisin Komitasi ja Brutjani rahvamuusikakogusid, et tuvastada transkriptsioonide levinumad tendentsid, ning analüüsisin mõlema folkloristi enam kui saja laulu transkriptsioone. Otsides mõlemalt folkloristilt samade laulude transkriptsioone, leidsin mõnikümmend kattuvat viisijuppi ning neli laulu, mis kattusid teineteisega peaaegu täies ulatuses. Artiklis esitasin kahe laulu võrdleva analüüsi: „Tšem tšem“ ja „Le le jaman“. Mõlemast laulust leidus üks Komitasi versioon ning kaks Brutjani versiooni, mis moodustas kokku kuus transkriptsiooni. Analüüsimaterjal on pärit Tšarentsi nimelisest kirjanduse ja kunsti muuseumist, kus asuvad nii Komitasi materjalid (arhiivikogud nr 302, 303 ja 304) kui ka Brutjani omad (arhiivikogud nr 3, 4 ja 5).

Analüüsi tulemustest selgus, et eri transkriptsioonide vormiline ja tonaalne struktuur on sarnane, ning jääb mulje, et folkloristid toetusid samale teoreetilisele raamistikule. See-eest ilmnevad märkimisväärsed süstemaatilised erinevused viiside rütmifiguurides ja meetrilise struktuuri ülesmärkimises – vastukaaluks Brutjanile on Komitasi transkriptsioonide rütmimustrid oluliselt lihtsamad, skemaatilisemad. Teatud määral esineb erinevusi ka Komitasi ja Brutjani meloodilises mõtlemises. Kohati tundub, et Komitas on laade ühtlustanud, maskeerides näiteks suurendatud sekundeid, lihtsustades meloodiakaunistusi jne. Kokkuvõtvalt, kui võrrelda analüüsitud transkriptsioone n-ö elava muusika traditsiooniga, tunduvad Brutjani transkriptsioonid täpsemad. Jääb mulje, et transkriptsioonide vahelised erinevused ei tulene niivõrd sellest, et laulud olid transkribeeritud eeldatavasti eri aegadel ja eri kohtades, vaid et folkloristidel olid erinevad prioriteedid, mille järgi nad viise üles kirjutades oma valikuid on teinud.

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Annex

Publication I
Sample questions for interviews with members of the Armenian community in Tallinn, February 2013

- How did you come to set up the society?
  What made you take that up in the first place?
- How did you learn about potential members of the envisaged society?
- How would you characterise yourselves?
  What was it that brought you together?
- How would you characterise that period? What has changed since then?
  And what was it that motivated you then?
- Did it matter where a particular member came from?
- How did you perceive the tensions at the time,
  concerning the Karabakh region as well as Estonia?
- How did you position yourself at the time the Soviet Union disintegrated?
- Are you satisfied with where you have come since then?
  What has changed compared to that period?
- What do you think of the Armenian community here in Estonia?
  Are members of the community active enough?
  What would you expect from young active Armenians?
- In your opinion, does the issue of roots command sufficient importance
  with young Armenians here?
- When marrying, should young Armenians prefer a spouse who is Armenian?
- What, in your opinion, is the foundation of the Armenian identity?
- What does Armenia mean for you? Do you primarily regard it as your state?
  Or your place of origin?
- What does Estonia mean for you?

I Davidjants, Brigitta 2016

Identity Construction in Narratives: Activists of the Armenian Diaspora in Estonia

Konrad Siekierski & Stefan Troebst (Eds),
Armenians in Post-Socialist Europe.
Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, pp. 129–142

Diaspora Identity

In order to maintain its identity, a diaspora community requires an élite that is committed to maintain, evoke and actualise its distinct culture and ideology (Safran 2004: 18). The people, who are the subject of this chapter, represent such an élite, which in Tallinn, Estonia has remained generally the same as it was at the end of the 1980s, when the Armenian Cultural Society (Armeenia Kultuuriselts) was established. In this chapter I recall, first, a number of personal stories about the formation of the Armenian community in Tallinn. Second, I examine leaders' motives for their engagement in the activities of the Society and their opinions about the current condition of the community. Finally, my research deals with the more intimate issue of the activists' perception of their Armenianness.

A widespread understanding of the word 'diaspora' is that of an ethno-cultural community whose members live outside the territory which is viewed as their homeland, and who retain a collective memory or vision about this distant place of origin, and continue to relate to it in one way or another (Huntington 2004: 257, 275; Safran 1991: 83–84; Smith 2010: 4). Next to Greeks and Jews, Armenians are considered a model case of a diaspora (Smith 2010: 3). The first mass Armenian dispersion took place as early as the 11th century (Tölölyan 2000), and today, there are approximately three million Armenians living in the Republic of Armenia, and 3.5 million living in the diaspora. Members of the Armenian diaspora can be found everywhere around the world, from the Middle East to Australia to America. During the last century, the size, geographical deployment and character of the Armenian diaspora has drastically changed. Robin Cohen posits a typology of victim, trade, labour, and colonial diasporas, with victim diaspora being a prototypical one (Kokot et al. 2004: 3). Armenians can be classified as such a diaspora, since these were the victims of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, who formed the core of the modern Armenian diaspora in many countries. Furthermore, even in these Armenian communities which came into existence without the participation of genocide survivors, as is the case with Armenians in Estonia, the commemoration of this tragedy is one of the most important unifying elements of the community.

According to Anthony Smith, national identity can be seen as a reproduction of the pattern of common heritage of shared myths, memories, symbols, and traditions, and an individual's identification with that heritage (Smith 2010: 4). In this article, the relation of activists to their national identity and their understanding

of the notion of Armenianness is traced: what it means to them, how it is preserved, what is the 'proper' way of being an Armenian, and how the activists position themselves between their fatherland and new homeland. Ani Yazedjian claims that the construction of identity and the resulting practices based on it reflect the cultural nuances of the specific community. She points out that while some commonalities do exist, for example, between the commemorations of the Armenian Genocide in the communities of Chicago and Cairo, there are also certain differences in the representation of Armenian identity depending on the place where such a commemoration is held (Yazedjian 2004: 47). This idea can be applied, in a 'micro-scale', to the variety of individual experiences of my Estonian Armenian interviewees. The differences and similarities between activists can be traced with reference to a number of variables, including generation, place of origin, gender, education and profession.

Research Methodology

In the course of my fieldwork, eight Estonian Armenians were interviewed: six men and two women. Their ages varied from 55 to 75. Half of them – Artem, Garik, Ira, and Aragats – were married to Estonians; the other half – Karen, Rafael, Sofia, and Juri – to Armenians. Artem, Karen, Sofia and Rafael were born in Baku; Garik, Ira, and Aragats in Yerevan; all of them came to Estonia in the 1960–1970s. Juri was born in Estonia. He was the only one to be of mixed – Armenian-Russian – descent. All respondents lived in Tallinn, where the Armenian community is most numerous compared to other Estonian cities. They all had received higher education and at the time of my research worked in the public sector and education, ran their own business (including an art studio and a car service), or were retired. One of them – Garik – used to be an honorary consul of Armenia in Estonia from 1999 until 2004. At the end of the 1980s, all the interviewees formed the group of the first Armenian activists in Tallinn, and today they play leading roles in the Estonian Armenian National Society (Eesti Armeenia Rahvusühing). This organisation, established in 1998, continues the work of the Armenian Cultural Society, which existed formally in 1988–1994, and informally (without juridical status) up until 1997.

All the interviews were conducted in person, in different places (at interviewee's homes, in cafe, in working place, and even in a car), and their length varied from half an hour to two hours. The interviews were semi-structured, and most of my respondents agreed to have our conversation recorded. The first part of each

interview dealt with how Armenians became organised starting in 1987, and the interviewees' current level of contentment with the community affairs. During the second part, personal issues were discussed, such as individual understanding of Armenianness and feelings towards the homeland and host country.

My own position as a researcher should be clarified. During my fieldwork, I tried to be aware about my "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988: 575–599). Being half-Armenian and half-Estonian, I find myself neither torn between these two communities, nor dedicated to only one of them, but rather in balance with both. On the one hand, I am a daughter of the key activist, Artem, and for the last ten years I have been doing voluntary work for the Estonian Armenian National Society. On the other hand, my mother tongue is Estonian and I have been studying and working at Estonian universities, mainly in the field of ethnomusicology. Thus I have approached my informants as a researcher, while at the same time I "flipped the research telescope" (Denskus 2007: 24) by working with people who live in the same place as me and whom I have known since my childhood. Such "at-home ethnography" (Alvesson 2009), with both its advantages (such as a deep knowledge of the socio-cultural context in which my fieldwork was set) and challenges (such as the risk of more pronounced prejudgements and biases) promises an interesting perspective that should add to an academic discussion on diaspora identity construction.

Armenians in Estonia

Armenians first appeared in Estonia in the first half of the 19th century. Their arrival is usually related to the important Armenian writer and public figure Khachatur Abovian who came to study at Tartu (Dorpat) University, one of Europe's leading centres of higher education. Other Armenian students also came to Tartu, mostly from Eastern Armenia, which was a part of the Russian Empire, as was Estonia. The peak period of this educational migration took place in 1848–1858, when Armenian students had an Armenian library and literary circle (Issakov 1977: 123–130). Another significant wave of Armenian students (around 200 in total) came to Tartu at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. They had several student organisations, published their own newspaper and took active part in an emerging modern Armenian political life (Issakov 1977: 123–130). The Russian Revolution of 1917 brought this migration to an end, and there were almost no Armenians in Estonia until after the Second World War (Grigorjan 2000: 12–13).

Estonia was not the first choice for the internal migration of Armenians within the Soviet Union. Nevertheless the number of Armenians in the republic started to grow gradually in the 1960s–1980s. Most of them were assigned by the Soviet labour system to work in various branches of industry; others came to study, or got married to Estonians or local Russians.

During those years, there was no possibility to create an ethnicity-based organisation of migrants, but in the late 1980s – with the national awakening of Estonians – new opportunities arose, also for Armenians. The development into an organised diaspora began both in Tallinn and in Tartu, the biggest urban centres in Estonia. In Tallinn, the first step was taken in 1987 with a newspaper advertisement in *Sovetskaya Estonia* by Artem Davidjants, who was looking for Armenians interested in starting Armenian language courses for children. The first meeting took place in the Old Town Music Hall, as the director of the institution, Kersti Nigesen, supported Davidjants's initiative. At first, few families responded to the advertisement. Later, as the information spread, roughly a hundred people attended the constituent assembly of the Armenian Cultural Society in April 1988. However, the question arose as to how to register such an association despite the lack of a legal basis for it. Eventually, in order to find a way around this problem, the Armenian Cultural Society became a collective member of the Estonian Heritage Society (Eesti Muinsuskaitse Selts).[15] The end of the 1980s was a very active period for the Society, with many concerts and exhibitions given by Armenian artists. From 1988 to 1992, a newspaper *Vahagn* was published. Since 1992, the radio program *Tsitsernak* has been broadcast, lead by Gohar and Juri Vartanjan (Tsitsernak n. d.). From the mid–1990s until the early 2000s, the society became less active, as Estonia entered a period of economic hardship. Furthermore, many Armenians did not know Estonian; instead, they spoke Russian, and they were not well incorporated into Estonian society. After Estonian independence was established in 1991 this became an obstacle because of nation-building processes within the country, which included the marginalisation of Russian culture and language.

At the beginning of the 1990s, not many Armenians emigrated to Estonia; instead some of them left the country, mostly to the United States. After Estonia gained independence, Armenians were differentiated by their new legal status: some of them received Estonian citizenship due to marriage, some because of

[15] The Estonian Heritage Society can be considered one of the first anti-Soviet organisations 'in disguise' in the Republic, as one of its aims was to achieve the independence of the country from the USSR; in public, the aim was preserving Estonian heritage, both material and intellectual (Seltsi n. d.).

supporting the grassroots Estonian Congress at the end of the 1980s, and some Armenians passed the citizenship exam. If in the 1990s there were more non-citizens among Estonian Armenians, by today the situation has changed and many of them have Estonian citizenship.

Two important events in the life of the community which took place in the 1990s should be mentioned here. First, in 1993, by the blessing of Catholicos Vazgen I (the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church), and with the participation of Father Ezras – an Armenian priest who resided in Sankt Petersburg, but was in charge of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Estonia – the St. Gregory Estonian Congregation of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Armeenia Apostliku Kiriku Eesti Püha Gregoriuse Kogudus) was registered. The Estonian Council of Churches provided the community with a rent-free building – the Jaani-Seegi Church – in the centre of Tallinn, which the community uses to this day. From 2002 until 2008, there was an Armenian priest residing in Tallinn, with Estonian territorial jurisdiction. Since 2012, the priest serving all the Baltic States visits from Riga at least twice a month, and in Tallinn, during the holidays, around 200–300 Armenians visit the church. Since 1994, the Armenian Apostolic Church in Estonia has been an active member of the Estonian Council of Churches, which was founded in 1989 (Eesti, n. d.).

Secondly, in 1998, the Estonian Armenian National Society (the successor of the Armenian Cultural Society) was registered as a non-profit organisation. Its statute declares that the main goals of the society are the integration of Armenians into Estonian milieu, the development and promotion of Armenian culture in Estonia, and the promotion of Estonian culture in Armenia. These objectives have mostly been realised through Armenian language courses, as well as various cultural programs, including exhibitions, film screenings and concerts, with both local Armenian musicians as well as artists from Armenia.[16]

In 2013, there were 913,262 Estonians (around 70% of the society), 333,929 Russians, 23,113 Ukrainians, 12,763 Belarusians, 7,838 Finns, and 18,040 people of another or unknown nationality living in Estonia (PO0222 2013). Two years earlier, there were 1,428 Armenians in Estonia, of whom 847 lived in Tallinn (RL0429 2011). Nevertheless, those numbers should be read carefully, as they do

[16] There is a considerable amount of Armenian musicians in Estonia: Andranik Kechek (pianist), Ara Yaralyan (double bass), Levon Jeremjan (violin), Margarit Voskanyan (shvi, sring, pku) the folk ensemble Atlas (led by Brigittta Davidjants), the vocal ensemble Dvin (led by Džanna Šahbazjan), etc.

not necessarily show the people who are ethnically Armenians and might even be active in the community but, for some reason, have chosen not to declare it in the survey.

Safran (2004: 13) distinguishes countries on the basis of their receptivity to immigrants. Following his distinction, Estonia can be classified as a culturally pluralistic country which admits immigrants and encourages them to become members of the political community, while permitting them to retain their cultural particularities. On an institutional level, the Integration and Migration Foundation – Our People (Integratsiooni ja Migratsiooni Sihtasutus Meie Inimesed), funded by state and European Union funds, focuses on integration of immigrants (Integratsiooni, n. d.). Furthermore, many organisations of national minorities receive financial support from the Ministry of Culture (Kultuuriline, n. d.).

Stories of Armenian Activists

Getting Organised

My informants credited their active participation in the creation of the Armenian Cultural Society to their need to contribute to the preservation of the Armenian identity. They all claimed that events in Armenia at the end of the 1980s had not been a leading force, as the community had come together a year before the Karabakh conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis started. At the same time, a solidarity with the host society was felt, as the attempts of Estonians to achieve independence resembled the Armenian experience of foreign domination and a cry for freedom. One informant also tied the initial motivation of four activists with their place of origin, Baku, which was remembered as a place with a flourishing Armenian community.

Most of my informants remembered their first meeting in a similar way: they had read the newspaper advertisement by Artem. As he described it:

> I published an advertisement in *Sovetskaya Estonia*, stating that the Armenian Sunday School was seeking Armenian participants. Some families responded […]. So, we discussed what we could do. They brought their children, who started to learn the language, as well as singing and dancing. This is how the process began.

Sofia, Karen and Rafael shared similar memories. Rafael said: "In 1987, I read from *Vecherniy Tallinn* [sic!] that Armenian and Georgian language courses were about to begin,[17] and children were invited […]. We read it with Karen and Sofia in our kitchen and decided to go to see what it is all about".

Aragats is an exception here, as Artem had personally approached him. His comments suggest that personal sympathy was an important pull factor for him to get involved: "Once he came to my studio […]. He asked for my opinion. In a few minutes, we already liked each other very much. So, after a few days I went to this meeting".

The activists were motivated by their concern regarding the preservation and transmission of Armenian identity in their families. In particular, they concentrated on one issue – the language.[18] As Artem expressed it: "We shared the feeling that we needed to do something in order not to forget our roots. The older generation was already starting to forget the language, and the children didn't know it […]. So, we wanted to preserve it for future generations". Rafael gave a personal, somewhat nostalgic perspective:

> We had small children, and indeed we wanted them to hear the language. So we went there, and this is when I saw Artem for the first time. He greeted us at the door […]. We started to attend those courses, and our children came with us. Officially, we became organised in 1988. Only then there become more than five of us […]. It was an interesting era. We were young and energetic. We had a lot of strength. The kids were small […]. It's hard to say what motivated us. It came from the inside.

Similar tones could be heard in Sofia's words, as she tied having an Armenian community in Estonia with homesickness: "One wants to preserve one's traditions, history, culture. To join people who are one's zemlyaki (fellow countrymen) and have a similar education. A home and community at the same time".

One should not speak about the Armenian diaspora in Soviet Estonia, but rather about the presence of a number of individuals who identified themselves, and

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17 The initial idea was to co-operate with Georgian minority in Estonia and offer courses in both languages. However, this idea was not realised due to a small number of Georgians in Tallinn and, subsequently, lack of interest towards Georgian language course.

18 Religion, which is seen as one of the key factors of Armenian identity, also in contemporary Estonia, came into the focus of activists only in the 1990s, when, after the fall of the USSR, freedom of religious expression was restored.

were identified in their passports as Armenians. However, most of the interviewees reported that even then there was an awareness among them of the centuries-long Armenian diasporic tradition, which, to some extent, became a driving force for organising themselves. As Artem said:

> Every Armenian knows since childhood that there are strong Armenian diaspora centres engaged with culture, to some extent with politics, and with social life […]. Estonians had a limited knowledge about us, and it didn't make our life comfortable. This gave us the idea to create an organisation that would unite us […]. Well, no one knew that the Soviet Union would fall apart. We just lived peacefully. We knew how Armenian societies were living in different countries — they had structures, they helped elders and kids – and we wanted something similar here.

The late 1980s was a time of dynamic and difficult changes for all the nations in the Soviet Union. In Armenia the Karabakh movement started, which resulted in pogroms of Armenians in Azerbaijan, and later turned into a full scale Armenian-Azerbaijani war. Furthermore, a devastating earthquake struck Armenia in 1988. All my informants stated that they had followed carefully what was happening in the homeland, and one of the first initiatives that cemented a newly established community was an organisation of humanitarian aid for the victims of the 1988 earthquake in Armenia. As recalled by Rafael: "The community helped us to share the pain, which in turn brought us closer. We collected money. Even children stood on the streets with boxes".

Nevertheless, it has to be noted that all respondents claimed that the birth of the local community was not tied to the events in Armenia, but rather to the increasing freedom in Estonia during perestroika, and that their motivations were not political. As Karen put it, "It wasn't the politics but culture that was understandable to everybody". In turn, Artem explained the nature of the organisation in the following words:

> Even if talking about politics wasn't forbidden during perestroika, it also wasn't approved. People were still scared of the repressions of the 1950s, so we thought it would be the best to hide behind the culture. We started to get organised a year before the Karabakh movement […]. We were among the first in Estonia who became organised for cultural aims […]. Life in Armenia had a certain impact on us, but it was not the driving force.

A Level of Contentment with the Community

As Susan Pattie demonstrates, it is typical for the people living in a diaspora that each generation's concern is that the next one will not find the right balance between preservation of its identity and accommodation to the host culture, and that the latter will overcome (Pattie 2005: 51–59). Keeping contact both with Armenia and the local community, and preserving Armenianness, regardless of how it is understood, is an important issue in Estonia, too. However, my interviewees did not seem to be preoccupied with a fear of the loss of national identity. There was also a belief that being an Armenian is something 'in the blood' that cannot be forgotten, even if one has married a non-Armenian or is of mixed origin. This last point is well illustrated by the marital choices of a number of interviewees and in their attitude towards this issue.

Artem married an Estonian, and during the interview he stated that the idea that an Armenian should marry another Armenian does not correspond to Armenian traditions. As he said: "Look at Cher, Kardashian and many others. Armenians are open to the world". Ira, also married to an Estonian, admitted that she used to dream about an Armenian spouse, but being well-integrated and keeping her social position was more important than being a blood-bound Armenian. What is more, she did not approve of young people traveling to Armenia and returning with a fiancé or groom: "I see how those Armenians go and bring brides. But where is love…? Maybe our culture of mixed families is already different. But the 'real' Armenians,[19] they bring a spouse however they can, legally or illegally. You know, these are mostly people from the countryside".

Most interviewees evaluated positively the existing relation between integration to the host society and preserving Armenianness among active community members, which is expressed, for example, by Karen: "Seed grows when the land is good. For Armenians, here are wonderful opportunities for working and studying, for creating a family. You can pray to your God and make your own culture".

Although all respondents admitted that in the late 1980s-early 1990s the Armenian Cultural Society was more active, and talked about those days with a certain nostalgia, they also trusted that the young generation will keep the

[19] Ira means Armenians with a more traditional background, and those who settled in Estonia more recently.

community alive. As Artem said: "Considering that there are less than 2.000 of us here, things are going well. Most of the people preserve their Armenian identity. For some it is culture, to others it means Armenian friends". In turn, according to Aragats:

> Back then, we had more issues to discuss. Now it is all more quiet. Me, Artem, Garik, Hakop, we are already old. You are our future […]. Things have to go their natural course […]. 20 years ago there were so many children in our organisation, but many of them have left Estonia. And people had more time. After work, they had nowhere to go. Now they have their own businesses.

Nostalgic feelings can also be traced in Sofia's words: "Back then our activities were more lively […]. Maybe we are just getting older". Still, Sofia expressed content with the current situation, especially in relation to the younger generation:

The upbringing of children is the most important and our children appreciate their cultural and historical values. For example, in 1993 we got the church. It was in horrible condition, but there was no money for renovation. Those teenagers did it all by themselves. They were all dirty and dusty, but they did it to save money. I hope they will not lose their roots.

In turn, as Karen put it:

> There is an active group. The new generation arises. At first with their parents' help. Later the parents can retreat, but the circle will hold. The young people didn't lose their identity. They didn't say that 'I'd better go to Harvard or Ireland'. They have Armenian parties with Armenian jokes and music. Even cakes they prepare look like our flag […]. Our youth lives in Estonia, in a European country, but doesn't forget its roots.

The only critical voice was expressed by Garik, who was discontented regarding the work done by the organisation both in the sphere of internal integration of the community, and of integration to the host society:

> In our statute, it was clearly phrased that we'd work on the integration of the diaspora and on the Estonian language. Actually neither of those worked out. I've never favoured the idea that Armenian parents living here speak Armenian and teach their children Armenian in an Armenian school, instead of teaching them Estonian. Instead, they should all know Estonian and the Estonian law […].

> We are all loyal to this country, but we should show it somehow. In fact, we were among the first minority organisations that started to celebrate Estonian Independence Day. But many Armenians are completely indifferent. They have their group with whom they gather, but they know nothing about Estonia. And if there is an Armenian evening, they go there gladly, they drink and eat, but still only two or three people have to organise and finance it all.

Christianity, Language, and Genocide

Armenians in the homeland and in the diaspora worldwide share a common cultural history, with the help of which they define their identity and communicate with each other. There are certain symbolic events and phenomena which are 'building blocks' of this identity, including: being the first Christian country in the world, possessing a distinctive language and alphabet, sharing the experience of centuries-long dispersion, and remembering the Armenian Genocide (Panossian 2002: 125; Pattie 2005: 54–60; Yazedjian 2004: 43–46). In the following paragraphs I will describe how Armenian activists in Estonia have perceived some of those key symbols.

As in many other Armenian communities, in Estonia, too, the Armenian Christianity is seen today as a key symbol of Armenian culture, and the formation of the church community in Estonia in the first half of the 1990s gave a new impulse for Armenians to keep together. Usually, the church is crowded during major religious feasts, which serve as an important occasion for the community's members to come together. All the interviewees mentioned their attachment to the Armenian Apostolic Church as an important factor in their Armenian identity. On the other hand, many of them emphasised that they were not religious, so the ecclesiastic institution was mostly seen as a key part of Armenian cultural heritage, which, in turn, was important for all the informants. As Garik put it briefly, "An Armenian might be a believer or not, but the Church is important". Karen explained the local outcome of this situation:

> All the time we've had simultaneously these two communities: the Armenian Church, and the Armenian Society. They go along with each other. For Juri, his radio program *Tsitsernak* is certainly more interesting than religious events. Artem is active everywhere […]. But we have the same goals. It's just that one part of our diaspora concentrates more on cultural activities, while another on church life.

Regarding the relation to religion, Armenia's centuries-long struggle against dominant Muslim forces was also mentioned by the interviewees. The widespread opinion in this matter was expressed by Karen in the following words:

> Armenia is surrounded by Muslims. There were always persecutions on religious grounds. Iran and Turkey are aggressive. Let's not even talk about the Arabs and the Tatar-Mongol yoke. Until the latest events [the Armenian Genocide] there was an endless struggle. Here the role of our Church is stronger than for example in Russia. Muslims had already written 200 years ago about Great Turan. Armenia doesn't let them accomplish this idea. Armenia is like a bone in the throat of the Muslim world.

For Armenians in the diaspora, the Armenian language and alphabet are symbols of their distinct and rich culture, even though they may not be fully mastered and used in everyday life (Yazedjian 2004: 45). As previously described, the first impulse for the creation of the Armenian association in Estonia was the need felt by Artem and other activists to organise courses in Armenian. Among my respondents, the importance of knowing the mother tongue and transmitting this knowledge to the next generation of Estonian Armenians was pointed out by Garik, Ira, Sofia, Artem, and Aragats. As the latter said: "I speak Armenian with my daughter. I needed someone next to me who knows Armenian". Ira stated that it was her dream (which came true), that her children would speak the language. Sofia also named language as a primary identity factor; however she seemed to have an almost traumatic relationship with it, since as Bakintsi Hay (an Armenian from Baku) she does not know Armenian well[20]:

There is a proverb that a nation has to know its language. It is our sin that our children don't know it. Ira is the example of how it should be. She has six grandchildren and all of them know Armenian. But she is from Armenia. Since our birth, we have heard only Russian. The children whose parents came from Armenia were lucky because their first language was Armenian; our children started with Russian, and it wasn't good.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 was almost not referred to by my respondents, which was highly surprising, as it is one of the key factors in the construction of identity for Armenians. Because of the genocide, Armenians see themselves as victims of history, which, as Yazedjian claims, is often compensated for by their

[20] Baku was a very international city, thus, the level of Armenian language proficiency was low among Baku Armenians, as most of them used Russian as the language of everyday communication.

striving for education and success in professional life (Yazedjian 2004: 39–43). To some extent, this can be noticed in Estonia, too, and all my informants emphasised that Armenians always survive, no matter if the case is genocide or the post-Soviet hangover. As Artem puts it: "Armenians survived the crisis and did everything to return children to their parents' social status. Now their children belong to the intellectual élite".

However, a certain level of hostility was present while speaking about Armenia's Muslim neighbours, which was the case especially with Karen, Garik, and Juri, but not so much among my female interviewees. For example, Ira did not mention it at all, and, in contrast to Karen, Sofia had no antagonism towards Muslims, as she spoke about the Karabakh war: "We lived together for years. I'm telling you, [different nationality and religion] didn't influence our relations. I think everything was decided somewhere up there".

Yet, the Armenian Genocide is definitely important to Estonian Armenians, as it is commemorated every year on April 24; there is always a well-attended memorial service at the church, and often concerts and screenings also take place.

Defining Homeland

There are three parallel visions of Armenia that dominate in the present-day Armenian diaspora. The first is the post-Soviet Republic of Armenia, where Armenians form 95% of the population, and Armenian culture is absolutely dominant. The second is historical 'greater Armenia' with its splendorous past tracing back to ancient times. The third is the hometown or village of the ancestors, often located in the territory where the Armenian Genocide was committed in the Ottoman Empire (Pattie 2005: 55–56).

Scholars of diaspora studies claim that for dispersed people, the homeland becomes a utopian vision of paradise to long for (Pattie 2005: 57), and the diasporic experience is about not being there (Kokot et al. 2004: 5). However, most of my respondents did not seem to be tightly connected to any of the aforementioned visions of Armenia. Only Ira stated:

> Armenia is my home. I really miss it a lot. My fatherland is there, but my home is here, with my children. I couldn't even think of leaving them, but I'm still very drawn to Armenia. I raised my children as best as I could. I taught them my language and customs, and they love what they learned.

In turn, Sofia expressed a strong longing towards Baku – the place where she was born and raised. As she said:

> There are two definitions of homeland: ethnic and based on birthplace. Though I'm an Armenian and I've lived in Yerevan for seven years, my home is Baku, though my house is not there anymore […]. If you'd ask what I want most, it would be to travel to Baku just for one day, at least to see the sea. I went to Armenia last year after 21 years. Indeed, it is incredibly beautiful. But I didn't find that anything there was important to me.

Most diasporas are characterised not only by their members' longing for their distant homelands but also, simultaneously, by a variously scaled attachment to the place of current settlement (Safran 2004: 23). Thus, diaspora people may belong to more than one collective group; i. e. have a dually rooted identity (Wodak 1999: 16). The persistence or weakening of one or another of these elements partly depends on and reflects the socio-cultural values, institutional structures and political regime in the host country (Safran 2004: 17). Estonia is a democratic country which supports its national minorities, and this positive milieu is appreciated by Armenian activists, who, along with being aware of their national cultural heritage, are also loyal and grateful to the country of their settlement. My informants expressed their close attachment to Estonia, and even called it their 'homeland'. As Karen said: "I came here when I was 20. When we sit around the table, I say the first toast to Estonians […]. How many of our kids have graduated cum laude from the University of Tartu, though they've come from a Russian language environment!" In Garik's words: "I feel that we owe a debt to Estonians. I remember the Spitak earthquake. I'll never forget how people came with piles of money. They didn't want any check or anything. Just take and do what's necessary. Creating our organisation was our way of thanking the Estonians". Taking the most extreme position among my respondents, Aragats expressed his attachment to Estonia solely. He described Estonia as a wonderful place to live and claimed that most of his friends were Estonians. In contrast, he expressed his discontent with modern Armenia: "We used to have a beautiful house there, with grape wines. Those communists demolished it all. Tourists have nowhere to go. Houses are tasteless, and children have nowhere to play…"

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the identity construction among the leading activists of the Armenian community in Tallinn, Estonia. To that end, I analysed their stories about the formation and functioning of the Armenian diaspora since the late 1980s. The Armenian activists in Tallinn correspond largely to the picture of the élites of diasporic Armenians: as twenty-somethings years ago, up to today they are still committed to maintaining their culture and Armenianness, even if the meaning of Armenianness varies from person to person.

Four interviewees named Armenia as their homeland, no matter where they were from, while one informant considered her birthplace, Baku, to be her home. In general, when compared to men, women seemed to be more attached – or in a more personal way – to their birthplace. Regarding their lives in Estonia, one idea prevailed among my interviewees – it is good to be an Armenian here. This general contentment seemed to stem both from their financial stabilisation and a satisfaction they enjoyed due to their engagement in the life of the community. All the interviewees mentioned language as one of the most important pillars of Armenianness. Seven activists saw the Armenian Apostolic Church's heritage as another crucial element of Armenian culture. Surprisingly, however, the Armenian Genocide was barely mentioned, although difficult historical relations with Armenia's Muslims rulers and neighbours were raised.

Finally, I should add that for myself it was very rewarding, both as a researcher and a person actively involved in the life of the Armenian community in Tallinn, to bring into the research level the phenomena I have observed over last 25 years, regarding how Armenians in Estonia became organised, how they set their goals as an Armenian diaspora in Estonian society, and how their leaders fought and made peace with each other, and still remained active in the local Armenian community.

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Conflicts in Music in South Caucasus: The Case of Armenians and Azerbaijanis

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Conflicts in music in the South Caucasus: The case of Armenians and Azerbaijanis

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Abstract

This article explores how music is employed in the service of nationalist ideas by two Caucasian peoples: the Azeris and the Armenians. The small-scale case study reported here focuses on a folk song that is popular in both nations (known respectively as *Sari Gelin*/*Sari Aghjik*) and on its reception in social media. The paper shows that doctrinal, national myths cultivated in Armenia and Azerbaijan are remarkably similar and have a stronghold in the mindset of the respective nations on an everyday level. Individuals from both nations may include certain desired elements in their respective cultures or exclude certain unwanted elements that reveal the similarities between the two. Both countries are characterised by semi-totalitarian regimes in which a state-financed official media is under the control of an oligarchy or the government. As this makes social media one of the very few places for free discourse, elements of peace-building between countries can also be found. Yet even here, on a micro level, social media reflects national myths that are common to these two nations.

Keywords

collective memory, folk song, music and conflict, nationalist identity construction, social media

This article presents a small-scale case study concerning a conflict in music between Armenia and Azerbaijan, two neighbouring nations in the South Caucasus area that are at war (but have declared a ceasefire that has been in place since 1994).[1] The conflict's most active phase was the period 1988–1994. The current political situation has pushed war into the field of culture. Among the South Caucasian nations, in addition to geography, disputed division lines also run across cultural phenomena such as architecture, design patterns on traditional clothing, and many others. Even national dishes such as the *dolma* and *pahlava* can become the

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subject of an endless fight. Music – which represents an important tool for constructing ethnicity, identities, and ideologies (Stokes, 1994, p. 5) – is a prominent area for cultural dispute.

The analysis below will concentrate on a folk song[2] that is shared by both nations – *Sari Gelin* (*Bride in Yellow*) in Azeri, or *Sari Aghjik* (*Girl from the Mountains*) in Armenian – and the rhetoric that people are using in social media discussions to "prove" that the song belongs to their nation. Although it serves as a national identity marker primarily to Armenians and Azeris, in fact *Sari Gelin* is widely known all over the South Caucasus, and many of the region's nations are keen to claim it. The song has given rise to endless fights concerning its origin, amongst musicologists as well as lay music lovers.

Regardless of their many confrontations, Armenians and Azeris share many similarities – including when it comes to their music culture (as is only to be expected given the fact that we are dealing with neighbours). Yet both nations tend to deny mutual musical influence, neglecting the common ground between them. As a result, the process of identity construction in both Armenian and Azeri music culture has resulted in a web of inclusions of desired, and exclusions of unwanted, musical elements and facts concerning reception of the relevant musical material.

For the background of the analysis presented below, the identity constructions of Armenians and Azeris will be briefly sketched. After that, a short background to the song will be provided. This will be followed by a description of the methodology used and by the analysis of the song's reception in social media. The analysis is based on the version performed by Djivan Gasparyan, an Armenian player of duduk, the folk instrument, and the contemporary Iranian composer Hossein Alizâdeh whose roots are partly Azeri. Some notice will also be paid to Iranian commentators, as their country shares a prominent position in the geopolitics and culture of the Middle East and, in a more general way, also the Caucasus.

Historical background

Armenian and Azerbaijani national identity constructions

Identity construction relies on properties that are shared by all members of the social unit. These include, amongst others, symbols, myths, language, religion, ethnicity, common history, values and traditions (Smith, 1991, p. 28). Because of their history of conflict, Armenians and Azeris have made the exclusion of any common ground with the other party a central tenet of their respective identities. Understandably, there are major differences between Armenians and Azeris. While the ethnic origin of Armenians is quite obscure, Azeris are considered to be descendants of Caucasian Albanians and Turkic people. The Armenian language belongs to the Indo-European language group whilst the Azeri language belongs to the Turkic group. While Armenians are predominantly Christians, Azeris follow the Shiite interpretation of Islam.

Armenia sees itself as the eastern outpost of Christianity. In national identity construction, this is reflected in the country being conceptualised as part of Europe (see Figure 1). An important Western element of Armenian identity is connected with the Armenian diaspora that started with the survivors of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire in 1915 (Panossian, 2002, p. 136). That, together with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, has defined the confrontation between Armenia and its neighbouring states, which Armenians perceive as being part of an "aggressive" Orient. At the same time, the idea of "Europeanness" is an important aspect of the Azeri identity as well – one that refers to the influence of Pan-Turkism, the movement that emerged in the 1880s among Turkic intellectuals and whose aim was the cultural and political unification of all Turkic peoples.

The construction of any identity is a process of inclusion in that it internalises certain common values as identifiers, yet it is also a process of exclusion in that it eliminates certain

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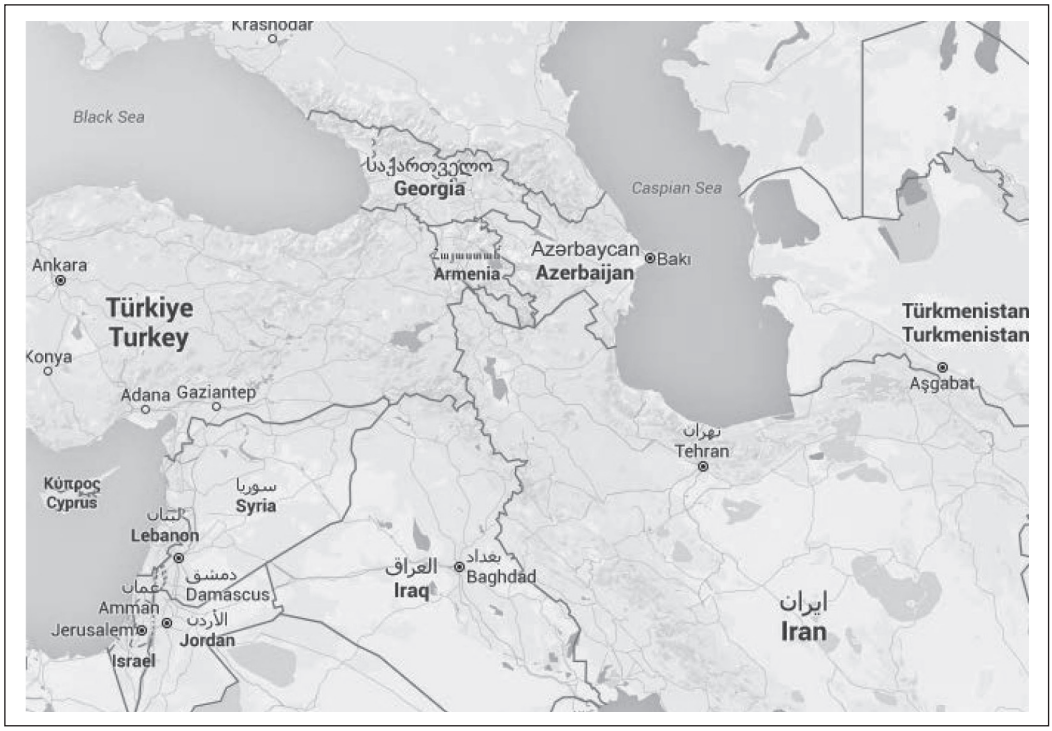

Figure 1. Map (Copyright: Google Maps).

identities as possible holders of identifier status (İnaç & Ünal, 2013, pp. 223–224). One of the main elements in the rise of the Azeri identity was the conflict with Armenia for the control of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. After several years of fighting, this conflict became the main source of unity for Azeris.

Yet there are many common elements in Armenian and Azeri culture – both peoples lived side by side in different empires, and both show strong Ottoman, Persian, and Russian influences. The influence of the Russian Empire continued under the Soviet Union, adding up to more than 100 years of Russian-style education and cultural policies (Frolova-Walker, 1998, pp. 331–336).

Social media as a platform for identity construction and preservation

Anderson (2006, p. 6) sees nations as "imagined communities": "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members … yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". The creation of such imagined communities became possible when the printing industry switched to the vernacular language, and through this switch a common understanding was reached (Anderson, 2006, p. 44). With new media streams such as blogospheres and social media, new methods of forming imagined communities have evolved. For those who perceive themselves as part of a group, the internet offers a space to preserve their identity. The internet has also begun to play a greater role in memory transmission, and it is now possible for strangers of shared ethnicity to find common ground using this medium.

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For countries such as Armenia and Azerbaijan, the internet also provides a certain sense of freedom by creating a space for discussions that otherwise could not be held. Both countries are ruled by semi-totalitarian regimes in which the official media is under the control of the oligarchy and the government, and is not particularly trusted (Pearce, 2011, p. 5). This makes social media the place for the free expression of opinions, and for socio-political activism (Aliyev, 2013). However, at the micro level social media also reflect myths that are common among both nations.

With regard to the number of Armenian and Azeri users of the internet, a certain controversy can be observed in the statistics. According to data collected by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Azerbaijan has around 50% of its population using the internet, while the corresponding figure for Armenia is around 40% (Aliyev, 2013). However, the data from the 2016 Caucasus Barometer by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) provide a picture that shows 53% of the population using the internet in Armenia and only 26% in Azerbaijan. Be that as it may, both in Armenia and Azerbaijan internet use has been growing steadily (Aliyev, 2013). The primary activity of internet users is social interaction, and 60% of Armenian internet users have a social network profile, which most visit at least on a daily basis (Pearce, 2011, p. 5).

In addition to Armenians residing in their homeland, there are also many large Armenian diaspora communities (a total of 7 million people). There appears to be no research as to their internet use, yet many are located in the USA, France, Russia, Canada, and other Western countries that offer very good access to the internet. The Armenian diaspora is also characterised by a strong historical memory. The internet is certainly being used to organise Armenian communities around the world, and there are many examples to show this.[3]

Methodology

For this article, an analysis was carried out concerning the reception of the song *Sari Galin* (*Sari Gelin*/*Sari Aghjik*) on the YouTube website, principally by looking at comments posted by users on the song page.[4] The decision to use social network posts as data for this research is based on the fact that 91% of online adults use social media regularly (Fan & Gordon, 2014, p. 3). YouTube was chosen in preference to other web services because of its large user base – it has the third highest traffic figures on the internet (Fan & Gordon, 2014, p. 3). In addition, the comments that were posted offered coherent material for analysis, and that clearly reflected the history of the discussion.

In order to be able to examine the data, a document analysis method was used which included elements from content analysis and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). The data included comments about the song that had been posted by YouTube users in the first seven years since the song had been placed online – on 28 September 2008 – with 15 July 2015 used as the cut-off date. The information was initially organised into categories that were related to the central questions of the research project, i.e., comments were divided into subgroups according to ethnicity – Armenian, Azeri, Iranian, Turkish – while postings by representatives of other ethnic groups only received a cursory examination and postings that did not pertain to the song were screened out. As the next step, patterns and emerging themes within the data were mapped – i.e., the most common narratives that could be discerned in the comments were catalogued, and coding was added in order to highlight themes that were pertinent to the discussion (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). Comments were divided by content into two categories – the first included comments whose tenor was positive or neutral and the second those that were entirely negative. As the next step, a count was carried out of how many comments were entered by Armenian and Azeri users in each category, which was followed by mapping the main positive and negative

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narratives. Finally, a brief description was compiled of the core attitudes of users of Iranian, Turkish and other ethnic backgrounds. The document analysis was combined with research on cultural and social context and with personal experience accumulated in the course of field work spanning more than 15 years in Armenia as well as in Armenian and Azeri communities elsewhere.

The figures should be regarded as including a certain margin of approximation, because commentators do not always explicitly state their nationality and certain postings which have more than one instance of appearance in the data may have been counted several times. Additionally, seven years after the song was first posted on YouTube, it started drawing a constant flow of new postings. This means that the results of the analysis could very well be different now that an entire stream of new data has come in (and still continues to come in).

The analysed upload of the song was not the only version of *Sari Gelin/Sari Aghjik* on YouTube. There were many other versions on the internet, both by Azeri and Armenian performers. When the keyword *Sari Gelin* was used, YouTube provided a total of 107,000 hits. In addition to this, 3,810 hits were produced using *Sari Gyalin* as the keyword, and another 1,610 were for *Sari Aghjik*, both of these using the Latin alphabet. A further 2,990 hits came up for *Sari Aghjik* in Armenian letters.[5] This amounts to a total of 115,410 clips. Of course, not all of these represent different versions of the song – rather, the numbers show the relevancy of the topic to the two nations concerned.

Analysis: Conflicts in music using the example of *Sari Gelin/Sari Aghjik*

The song's background

This section focuses on conflicts in music in social media by using the folk song *Sari Gelin/Sari Aghjik* as an example. Both versions of the song are sung to the same melody but have different lyrics across the South Caucasus and Anatolia.

Sarı in Azeri means "yellow", i.e., blond, while in Armenian the same word means "mountain". This sets the stage for the song's narrative – in Armenian, the story is about a girl from the mountains; and in Azeri, about a bride in yellow or a blonde-haired bride. The song tells of a tragic love story between a Muslim boy and a Christian girl, who are either kept apart by their families or by the girl having chosen someone else.

The performers of the version analysed for this article – Djivan Gasparyan and Hossein Alizâdeh – are renowned musicians in their native countries as well as worldwide. Their work reflects their respective national music traditions in that they use the corresponding folk instruments and modes in their compositions, yet also offers a novel approach to the material performed.

The version of the song under scrutiny was the most intriguing because of its international nature. It was sung jointly by Armenian and Iranian-Azeri performers and the arrangement introduced Persian, Armenian, and Azeri languages and musical elements. Thus, it emphasised shared elements in the cultures of the Middle East and the Caucasus.

The ensemble of musicians included, from the Iranian side, the Hamavayan Ensemble, widely known for its innovative interpretations of classical Persian music, and the Armenian duduk players, Vazgen Markaryan and Armen Ghazaryan, all playing traditional instruments. The song *Sari Galin* [sic] was released in 2005 on the album *Endless Vision* by Alizâdeh and Gasparyan. The album was nominated for a Grammy Award in the category of "Best Traditional World Music Album" at the 49th Grammy Awards.[6]

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Table 1. Outcomes of the analysis.

	Armenians	Azeris
Number of comments	104 comments by 29 users	57 comments by 29 users
Positive comments	29 comments (28%) from 16 users (55%)	24 comments (42%) from 4 users (13%), incl. 20 comments from 1 user
Negative comments	75 comments (72%) from 17 users (59%)	16 comments (28%) from 14 users (48%)
Positive narratives	– Music and a common musical tradition as a unifying element stronger than wars. Conflicts are instigated by politicians (15 comments from 7 users) – Iranians, Azeris and Armenians as friends, brothers (7 comments from 5 users) – Compliments on the beautiful song and its performance (10 comments from 7 users)	– The song shows the closeness of Iranians, Armenians and Azeris (9 comments from 3 users; 6 comments from 1 user) – Shameful politicians have sown hatred between them, and common ground should be sought (2 comments from 2 users)
Negative narratives	– Historical references about Azeris not having proper history, being an invented nation, often in contrast to Armenians as a nation with long history (23 comments from 7 users) – Azeris as enemies: barbaric people, liars, murderers, thieves of lands and cultures (23 comments from 6 users)	– Armenians as enemies: murderers, thieves and traitors (7 comments from 5 users) – Iranians are blamed for friendship with Armenians instead of their Muslim brothers, the Azeris (2 comments from 3 users); being an enemy is passed on by blood (3 comments from 3 users) – Aggressive claims to *Sari Gelin* being an Azeri song, mixed with insults (11 comments from 9 users)

An analysis of comments on the song Sari Galin (Sari Gelin/Sari Aghjik)[7]

The song was uploaded to the YouTube site on 23 September 2008.[8] Up to July 2015 it had accumulated a total of 341 comments and sub-comments, with a constant flow of fresh comments and 282,029 views. Assumptions concerning the ethnic background of the commentators were made by analysing the contents of their comments and their usernames (see Table 1 for outcomes of the analysis). Based on the assumptions, there were 104 comments by 29 Armenian users, 57 comments by 29 Azeri users, 122 comments by 54 Iranian users, 17 by Turkish users, and 41 that did not explicitly reflect a particular ethnicity. The commentary was a true smorgasbord of cultures in which people often switched from one language to another and then to yet another. This (and the relevant usernames) indicates that many comments were probably posted by people from ethnically mixed backgrounds, whose proportion in the region is significant. For example, one could see usernames in which the syllables *armen* and *az* appeared together, referring respectively to the Armenian and Azeri languages.

There was also a tendency for individual commentators to leave multiple postings, which means that the number of people who participated in a particular thread of discussion was lower than the number of postings in the discussion. Multiple posting was very common among

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Armenians, with more than 2 comments being posted by eight users (covering, respectively, 38, 12, 10, 6, 7, 5, 4 and 3 comments). Among Azeris, there were far fewer multiple posts. More than 2 comments were posted by only one user (a total of 20 comments).

The first category of comments (positive and neutral) tended to appeal to the shared elements of Armenian and Azeri cultures and to peace-building. The second category contained negative comments that expressed opposition to the "other" nation and even included hate speech.

The more aggressive commentators often had usernames with national subtexts, such as CilicianElite (38 comments), Armenia Urartu (4) and HaydukOfKilikia (5), which all refer to ancient Armenian kingdoms. They had also chosen profile pictures with nationalist symbols that were often mixed with military ones, such as a flag and a gun. It was common tendency, especially among Armenians, to choose usernames with an historical subtext. Azeri usernames also inclined towards national bias but were less concerned with historical references, preferring instead to add nation-related words to usernames, such as Azeri, Baku, Azerbaycan and others.

Armenians were inclined to be longer in their posts, relying more on historical references. They spent quite a bit of time going far beyond the music to explain exactly how Azeris stole their culture. Azeris tended, as a rule, to content themselves with tersely stating that the song is Azeri (18 comments). Although references to history were sometimes present in their postings, they were much less common than with Armenians. In some cases, Azeris also saw the ability to perform the song "correctly" as something that was inherently connected to Azeri ethnicity. For example:

> I understand that it's hard for you to understand but the main performer here is Azeri. This is why he is so good at singing it. In spite of the fact that your celebrated Dzhigan Ghasparyan kept messing it up, the result is still not bad. Because it's his folk song, it's in his soul and blood. But your performer – Dzhigan or Tsigan,[9] – it's all useless. Ask this Dzhigan what duduk means, the only thing he will say is that it is ancient Armenian instrument. (Translated from Russian by BD)[10]

Such differences in rhetoric were also present when commentators were verbally abusing each other. Whereas Armenians loved making references to Armenian historical sources, Azeris simply stated that Armenians were murderers, thieves, etc.

From the Armenian commentators there were 29 comments from 16 people that were positive, and 75 negative comments from 17 people (one commentator made both positive and negative comments). Some of those comments were not explicitly negative, but rather sought to make a particular point (e.g., Armenia being an old nation compared to certain others). Yet despite this they were still part of an aggressively-toned conversation.

The most common positive narrative amongst Armenians was about common musical traditions as a unifying element that trumps war. Conflicts are apparently only instigated by politicians (a view reflected in 15 comments by seven commentators). Another positive narrative was that Iranians, Azeris and Armenians are friends, even brothers (7 comments by five commentators). Unfortunately, in some cases the praise of Iranian–Armenian friendship was immediately followed by an expression of hatred of the Turks and accusations at Azeris for betraying their Caucasian brothers. There were also a large number of compliments about the beautiful song and its performance (10 comments by seven commentators).

The majority of negative narratives from Armenians concerned historical references to Azeris as a people without their own history, an invented nation, often in contrast to Armenians as a nation with a long history (23 comments by seven commentators). For example:

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> Azeris were called Caucasian Tatars until 1918. You can't find any document dated before this with the Azeri name as a nation. A biography of Azero-Turk tribes' foundation begins in the Caucasus only in the late 12th century. The so-called Azeri culture is a mix stolen from the Iranian–Armenian Tat Talish cultural heritage.[11, 12]

Another common narrative cast Azeris as the enemy of all enemies: a barbaric people, liars, murderers, thieves of lands and cultures (23 comments by six commentators). These two negative narratives appeared together a total of 7 times. The authors of these comments used both "Azeri" and "Turk" as a reference to the other side of the discussion. Also, at least one-third of such comments claimed that Turks are Islamised Armenians, which is a very common motive encountered in writings on Armenian history. According to this theme, many thousands of Armenian children were assimilated into Turkish society (see, e.g., Melkonyan, 2008).

On the Azeri side of the argument there was a total of 24 comments from four commentators who showed a positive bias (with the majority – 20 – coming from a single commentator), and 16 negative comments from 14 users. The main positive narrative from Azeris had the song demonstrating the closeness of the three ethnic groups – Iranian, Armenian and Azeri. "Shameful" politicians were blamed for being the cause of hatred generated between these groups, and common ground was called for. For example:

> Shame on those who turned us from brothers into enemies over the centuries. Yes, we are basically brothers, Azeris and Armenians, but there is just too much blood between us. It's a vicious circle, just like this sad love story, *Sari Gelin*.

An interesting aspect was that of the four positive commentators, at least two were Iranian Azeris. The patriotism in respect of Iran was clearly present, and sometimes very visibly expressed, with such claims as "Long live Iran and all of its ethnic groups".

There were two main types of antagonist narratives being generated by Azeris. The first one portrayed Armenians as the enemy: murderers, thieves and traitors (7 comments by five commentators). This narrative sometimes appeared together with a tendency to blame Iranians for maintaining their friendship with Armenians instead of their Muslim brothers, the Azeris (two commentators and 3 comments), whereas being an enemy was seen as something that was inherited in the blood (three commentators and 3 comments). For example:

> Shame on such Persians like you! You disgrace the name of the whole nation by cooperating with Armenians – blood enemies of your Muslim-Shia brothers.

Another negative narrative consisted of aggressive attempts at convincing others that *Sari Gelin*/*Sari Aghjik* is an Azeri song, with such attempts being mixed with insults (11 comments by nine commentators).

Another common narrative resorted to by all three nations – Armenians, Azeris and Turks – considered the myth of Armenians and Turkic people all being blond; this claim was made by three commentators at least. The reason for such a turn in the conversations was that *sarı* means blond in Azeri, so one of the arguments about the song not being Azeri was because, according to Armenians, Azeris cannot be blond.

An interesting point was also the misogyny and homophobia shown in these comments – the antagonists were referred to as "gays", "bitches", "pussies", "motherfuckers", "*baby*"[13] (by Armenians and Muslims alike). However, Azeris never used the reference to Christianity as an insult, which suggests that religion as an identity factor is much more important to Armenians

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than it is to Azeris. Armenians are very proud to be the first Christians of the world and to highlight this fact to distance themselves from their Muslim neighbours (Panossian, 2002, p. 136). For Azeris, on the other hand, the most important religion-related aspect in the make-up of their identity is a liberal interpretation of Islam (Moreno, 2005, p. 9).

Another interesting group of people was formed of Azeris, Armenians, Kurds and also Georgians, all with Iranian roots (they either openly stated this in their postings, or represented it in their usernames, or switched from one language to another). These people shared a strong Iranian identity which made them different from their kin in their ethnic groups of origin. The impression their postings gave was that people from Iran are very loyal to their country, no matter their ethnic origin. Moreover, some of the most passionate peace builders appeared to be Azeris or Armenians from Iran (the song page had comments from three such commentators, respectively posting 20, 1 and 6 comments). For example:

> Very beautiful song! As an Iranian Azeri, I think it shows the brotherhood of the three ethnic groups in Iran, and I think this kind of music can remember the peace and brotherhood with the two countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Long live Iran and all of its ethnic groups.

Iranians were also very active in the commentary, and provided over 100 postings from around 50 commentators. They also formed a kind of a peace-building community, similarly to Armenians and Azeris from Iran. Altogether, one could find 16 comments that referred more or less implicitly to the multicultural nature of the region. These comments often discussed the origin of the people and the need to come together in peace and solidarity (40 comments by 17 commentators). Iranians also implied that the Azeris of Iran are closer to being Persians, while the Azeris in their homeland were closer to being Turks. It is also interesting to note that the majority of comments written in Farsi were about the music and performance and, overall, Iranians were more likely than anyone else to discuss the song itself and the performance (46 comments by 33 commentators).

Occasionally, anti-Semitism and anti-American sentiments were expressed (in a discussion by three users), reflecting ingrained stereotypes concerning Israelis. These comments were often met with stiff opposition by other Iranians. Additionally, there was also a discussion on whether Iran should be called "Persia".

Turks were mostly positive in their comments, just like Iranians, and there were 9 comments that were mostly thankful for the song, generally praising it. There were other comments that mentioned friendship and common ground between the peoples concerned.

In addition, there were a number of posters (35) who did not explicitly refer to their roots, and had chosen usernames that did not include a reference to ethnic origin or nationality. In many cases, while reading the comments, one could sense that the people who made them had a Caucasus or Middle East background. These comments were highly knowledgeable, often including peaceful praise of the song's beauty, but also calling for peace in the region.

Discussion

The research project reported in this article is not entirely original since similar processes have been noted in many places all over the world, and the topic of music and conflict has been widely researched (e.g., O'Connell and Castello-Branco, 2010). Good examples can be found in case studies on the Balkan states (e.g., Baker, 2010; Balandina, 2010; Sugarman, 2010) but also in those on the Middle East, especially on Palestinians and Israelis (e.g., Al-Taee 2002).

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In the framework of Armenian studies, the interdisciplinary approach of the current case study offers a new view of the subject matter researched by bringing together nationalism studies, music studies and internet studies. As far as is known to the authors, this represents a unique combination of perspectives – no similarly broad research appears to have been reported in Armenian studies to date. Yet, nationalism studies are today clearly present in the Armenian humanities (e.g., Kokot, Tölölyan, & Alfonso, 2004; Panossian, 2002; Suny, 1999–2000), even though the deconstruction of nationalism – instead of constructing it – is quite a new approach and tends to be espoused primarily by researchers with diaspora background. During the last decade, music has been extensively investigated by nationalism researchers and vice versa (e.g., Nercessian, 2000), and the relationship of the internet to nationalism has been examined by various scholars (e.g., Pearce, 2011).[14]

In the framework of Caucasus studies, an important aspect of this article is that it offers an impartial analysis of the matter by presenting the views of both sides, i.e., of the so-called enemies. This approach also shows how similar ethnicity-based hatred is on both sides of the conflict.

In the context of Armenian studies, the research reported here also raises many questions that are worth investigating further. Thus, an interesting aspect of the data was that the discussion included people both from the historical homeland and the diaspora, and suggested a distinct difference of attitudes between diasporic Caucasians (from different countries) and those living in their historical homeland. The data also suggest that the impact of "national" brainwashing in semi-totalitarian states is considerable.

In relation to the performance of music, cooperative arrangements by representatives of different nationalities are often used to promote peace, for example in the Israeli–Palestinian case (Al-Taee, 2002, p. 52), and many musicians across the world are doing work that politicians have neglected or failed to do. Still, although the opportunities for peace-building through discussions on music exist, they should not be overestimated. Thus, the research offers insight about how music can be used as a weapon in nation-based conflicts, and how discussions about music can both escalate and promote discussions about peace.

An important aspect of the article relates to the opportunity to engage in online discussions of certain topics that are difficult to discuss offline. Here, future research should focus on opportunities that the internet presents for Caucasians, and on the way that technological development has changed the opportunities for exercising the freedom of speech in semi-totalitarian regimes. The century-long hatred between Armenians and Turkish people is a case in point. At the beginning of the 2000s, it seemed highly probable that a similar entrenchment of attitudes would happen between Armenians and Azeris and that the latter, similarly to Turks, would become a mythical enemy. Today, one can see that although strong negative feelings exist between the two sides, the internet has started to dismantle the hate dynamics between the nations. Thus, even if discussions about music on the internet do not appear to be a big opportunity for building peace, the existence of what might be presumed a safe space for discussion in the semi-totalitarian regimes that run both countries is of considerable value in itself.

Conclusions

The most interesting discovery was that although the arguments used by Azeris and Armenians were constructed differently, the narratives (both positive and negative) that these relied on appear strikingly similar. The proportion of those who provided positive and those who provided negative comments was the same in the case of Armenians. Among the Azeris, there were almost four times more negative postings than positive ones. In general, Armenians and Azeris

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blamed each other for being an enemy, yet there were also a large number of comments that called for people to build peace. Compared to those of the Azeris, the arguments used by Armenian posters had an additional dimension – one of historical references. The position of Iranians in the discussion was interesting too – they often acted as peace-builders between conflicting commentators, a tendency that also characterised Armenians/Azeris with Iranian roots.

Traditional music does not have an author – it is an oral culture. It is more than natural, especially in the multicultural Caucasus where different ethnic groups have been living side by side for centuries, that a song should spread – with small modifications – over a large area and even carry the same name across different national borders, as is the case with *Sari Gelin/Sari Aghjik*.

Over the centuries, ancient Armenia and the countries of Asia Minor developed a common cultural platform that is reflected in the similarity of compositional and stylistic elements (Kushnaryov 1958, p. 24). It seems that the fact of the existence of such common elements is resented by representatives of nations that are at war.

In the current case, the comments reflected how strong a hold the ethnic stereotypes propagated by the respective official policies of the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments have on people's minds. Still, any opportunity to talk with the so-called enemy also allows for the opportunity, one day, of a real dialogue. This too was reflected in the positive narratives generated by the comments for *Sari Gelin/Sari Aghjik.*

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Notes

1. The cause of the conflict is the area of Nagorno-Karabakh. Following the collapse of the Russian Empire and the creation of the Soviet Union, in 1921 the area (whose majority population is ethnic Armenian) was allocated to Azerbaijan by Stalin. In 1987, ethnic Armenians in the area began demanding the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. This was opposed by the Azeris and the ensuing conflict erupted into full-scale war after the collapse of the Soviet Union.
2. See "Sari Gelin": http://caucasophilia.blogspot.com/2012/08/sari-gelin.html
3. For example, on Facebook one can find hundreds of pages and communities that are devoted to various Armenian organisations: https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=armenian%20society&init=mag_glass&tas=0.408996163867414&search_first_focus=1453728894608
4. Sari Galin: Hossein Alizadeh & Jivan Gasparyan (Endless Vision album): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHtuaIN2EhE
5. Last accessed on 15 July 2015.
6. Jivan Gasparyan. Official website: http://www.jivanduduk.com; see also http://www.hosseinalizadeh.net
7. The comments appearing in this article have been edited.
8. Posted by Kaveh Ahangar Irani: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHtuaIN2EhE (last accessed on 25 July 2016).
9. Reference to Roma background.
10. "Я понимаю, что тебе трудно этого понять, но тут главный исполнитель по национальности азербайджанец. Потому и у него очень хорошо получается её петь. Даже несмотря на то, что её постоянно портил ваш хваленный джиган каспарян, все равно вышло неплохо. Потому что это его народа песня, это в его душе в его крови. А ваш исполнитель хоть будет джиган, хоть будет цыган, без толку . Этого джигана спроси, что означает дудук, кроме того что это дрэвнэ аррмянский инструмент он ничего не скажет."

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11. The last four names were originally shown in capital letters.
12. The Talish people are an ethnic group that lives in certain parts of Azerbaijan and Iran.
13. "Old woman" in Russian.
14. Katy Pearce. Official website: http://www.katypearce.net/research-2/

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The Construction of National Identity in Music by the Way of the Reception of Komitas as an Example

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The Construction of National Identity in Music by the Way of the Reception of Komitas as an Example

ABSTRACT. In my paper, I examine the construction of the Armenian national identity through their writings of history and music and analyse the historical processes that have influenced this. A description of how music offers an opportunity to organize memory is presented, and how it can be used to create cultural borders between nations. Like many other countries these days, Armenia is considered to lie on the borderlands of several historical empires, and is characterized by the fact that it tries to prove its belonging to the West and distances itself from the East. I use the example presented in the reception of the composer, Komitas (Soghomon Soghomonyan, 1869–1935), to describe these processes. He is one of the biggest Armenian national symbols, someone who is generally used to 'prove' that Armenians belong culturally to the West, but also to preserve Armenianness. This may be considered as providing antagonism towards the country's Muslim neighbours, as well as being an outcome of the cultural politics of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. Armenians have always viewed Russia as a window onto Europe. However, Armenianness is an important aspect, too. Therefore Armenians tend to emphasize both their singularity and Europeanness at the same time, which concludes in the concept of the purity of Komitas' music in the Armenian musicological discourse. Music is an element of such self-representation, and Komitas' reception can be used for the benefit of certain official ideologies.

KEYWORDS: musical nationalism, national identity, music history writing, Komitas.

Introduction

In my paper, I will analyse how national identity has been created in the writing of Armenian music history during the last hundred years, mostly in the Soviet days but also today. In national culture, identities are constructed by producing meanings about 'the nation'

with which people can identify. These meanings are contained in stories being told about the nation, and in memories which connect the nation's present with its past (Hall, 1996, p. 613). These stories can also be told in the writing of music history, which offers a good opportunity for organizing memory.

National identity constructions can be investigated in terms of the constant construction of boundaries, which are re-invented and shifted according to the requirements of the situation (Kokot et al, 2004, p. 4). Armenian national identity consists of a self-image which places its people on the border between East and West, and of being 'an enclave' of Europe in the East. I will present this by means of music, mostly in light of the reception for Komitas, one of the symbols of the Armenian music school in the nineteenth century. Komitas acts as a summary of the identity construction of Armenian music. He is used to promote the ideology of Europeanness in Armenian musicology, and in drawing cultural borders between Armenia and its neighbouring Muslim countries.

Komitas also distributed national ideas, and, in addition to his work as a composer and ethnologist, he expansively researched the peculiarities of Armenian music. The narrative, including Komitas as the most important Armenian composer, was taken over at the turn of the century. During the Soviet years, the cultivation of Komitas' ideas continued, in spite of the fact that he did not live in the Soviet Union and that his activity was more tied to Western Armenia – which was part of the Ottoman empire – and not so much to Eastern Armenia within the Russian empire which later became part of the Soviet Union (Шавердян, 1989, p. 66–88). Yet borders can be seen as cultural constructions and not only geographical markers, and Komitas was – directly or indirectly – a teacher for many subsequent generations of Armenian ethnologists and composers, someone who continued his school and kept his memory alive in Soviet Armenia. In any case, the narrative about Komitas as a national composer was taken over and enforced in the Soviet Union's discourse of the writing of music history. In the Soviet Union's official cultural policy, every nation needed its great figures, and Komitas became one for Soviet Armenia, someone upon whom Armenian history based its national myths.

My aim is to deconstruct the national narrative about Armenian music and Komitas, and his role in it, which is still viable. I am interested in what Armenianness and purity mean in Armenian musicological discourse – more precisely, in Komitas' music – and what is Komitas' role in the constructions of Armenianness in music? While searching for the answers to these questions, I will also present a description of how certain political processes have influenced the academic fields that are considered non-political.

According to my knowledge, there is almost no research by Armenian musicologists on deconstructing the construction of an Armenian national identity in Armenian music or, if this has only taken place within the diaspora such as, for example, that by Andy Nercessian who has written about the ideological dimension of musical expression and its connections with the nationalist movement (Nercessian, 2000: 80). However, there is a growing volume of critical research about Armenian nationalism (Razmik Panossian, Khachig Tölölyan, Ronald Grigor Suny, etc).

Methods and Sources

In the current paper, discourse analysis will be employed for discovering hidden ideologies, as well as any kind of inclusion and exclusion strategies (Wodak, 1999, p. 8). Those strategies reveal themselves in language used in the Komitas' reception and make us address questions of value and canon (Everist 1999: 378). I will analyse various texts about Komitas that form a certain canonic discourse and produce knowledge about him, in order to present national narratives which create a connection between stories, along with historical events, national symbols representing shared experiences and concerns, triumphs and defeats, and 'national destiny' in general (Hall, 1996, p. 613–615). This approach will be combined with research of the cultural context, as the main interest here is the relation of the text, i.e. discourse, with the cultural context that forms the background to the texts written about Komitas.

1. The first and most important text is a monograph about Komitas by Aleksandr Shaverdian. It was originally written in 1955 but was published in Russian for a wider circle in 1988. In

the preface, the editors emphasize that the monograph has not lost its relevancy. In 1989, it was still one of the most important areas of research on Komitas, and this is why it was translated into Russian more than thirty years later (Шавердян, 1989, pp. 8–18). Even today, it is one of the most comprehensive works on Komitas.

2. The second text was written by Georgi Geodakian in 1969 for Komitas' centenary, and was published in Russian. This pocket-sized book is still often used in Armenian music education.
3. The third source is a book about Armenian composers by Robert Atayan, Matevos Muradyan, and Aleksandr Tatevosyan from 1956.
4. The fourth source is Matevos Muradyan's book on Armenian musicology from 1960 (Мурадян, 1960).
5. The fifth source, *Komitas Vardapet and his contribution to ethnomusicology*, was written by the Western-based Armenian author, Sirvart Poladian, in 1972. It is a good example of the similarity of Komitas' discourses on different political systems.[1]
6. The sixth source is also in English and originates from the paragraphs on Armenian music and Komitas in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* from 2001. These texts have been selected for several reasons, mostly because they are considered to be primary sources for a Western audience – the English-speaking audience gets its main areas of information about Armenian music from these sources. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that although these texts come from different eras and discourses, the authors belong to the same Soviet school. The paragraph on Komitas was compiled by Aram Kerovpyan, based on Robert Atayan's materials. The paragraph on Armenian music was written by Alina Pahlevanian, Aram Kerovpyan and Svetlana Sarkisyan.

[1] The text was published in the West during the Soviet era, and is still often noted in Armenian music bibliographies such as, for example, in the bibliography of the paragraph on Komitas in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Komitas.am, etc.

For my analysis, I chose texts from different periods and political regimes, which give a more general overview of Komitas and less in the way of narrow, specific topics, such as music analysis. For the most part, I concentrated on the texts in Russian, as my aim was to observe how Armenianness in music was presented in texts to 'outsiders', i.e. non-Armenian readers. Also, those books were often translated from Armenian into Russian. In addition, most of the texts are in Russian due to the fact that during the Soviet era this was the language of international communication in the Soviet Union, and dissertations were mostly in Russian.

Armenian Identity on the Border Between East and West

The issue behind the current article can be explained in terms of the cultural and historical factors that have influenced the construction of the Armenian national identity, and the Armenian geopolitical context offers an explanation in terms of aspiring to belong to the West. Identities are formed within broad discourses and are related to the historic positioning of the subjects involved (Suny, 1999/2000, pp. 866–868). In the process of constructing a national identity, certain groups of factors can be noticed. The first one consists of the myths and symbols of the nation, including invented traditions around which the nation forms its collective identity. The second group of factors covers the nation's view about itself as the whole of the national community (Panossian, 2002, pp. 123–124). At the same time, people almost always consider their present identity as fixed, internally harmonious, distinct from others around their boundaries, and even rooted in nature (Suny, 1999/2000, pp. 866–868). Central to identity formation is narrative. It reflects historical memory; it is a prerequisite for national identity, even if it does not correspond to reality (Wodak, 1999, p. 25). Narration helps to bring conflicting elements to a point of constancy, and into harmony with each other (Wodak, 1999, pp. 14–15).

Both groups of factors are also present in the identity construction process in terms of Armenian history writing. Armenian researchers have named the elements of Armenian identity, such as a common history, one that has been dominated by the struggle with their

Turkish masters, a shared language and literary tradition, a sense of place, of lands which were historically populated by Armenians, and a common religion, along with the Armenian Apostolic Church (Rutland, 1994, p. 840). Suny has commented that, as 'people with a long written tradition (dating from the fifth century AD), with a past that includes numerous polities, dynasties, and continuous institutions (such as the national church), Armenians enjoy a rich repertoire of symbols, legends, and historical accounts with which to construct a modern national consciousness' (Suny, 1999/2000, p. 884). Razmik Panossian, too, has emphasized similar dimensions in the identity construction of Armenians; primary among these being Christianity and the Genocide in 1915 (Panossian, 2002, p. 126). Christianity especially corresponds to certain visions about being Armenian and about Armenia itself because according to one, Armenia does not have to mean the modern republic of Armenia rather than an ancestral town or village that is not usually located in the modern Armenian Republic (Pattie, 2005, pp. 55–56). Due to this, for centuries the Armenian community was tied more to its national church and local community and less to its language.

Special notice has to be paid to the adoption of Christianity in AD 301, which allowed Armenia to position itself on the borderlands – geographically in the East but culturally in the West – therefore allowing it to see itself as the eastern border of Christianity. Around Christianity and its holy texts and legends is tied an important dimension of the Armenian identity and this is often the starting point for the history of Armenians – though pagan Armenia also existed – as well as the narratives of Europeanness. Armenians believe that they will never fit into their region, which consists mostly of Muslims (Panossian, 2002, p. 126): since the 7th century, there have been invasions both by Arab and Kurdish tribes, with these gradually being replaced by Turkish tribes from the 12th century. In the 15th century, Armenia became part of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore the identity of Armenians is closely linked to antagonism towards the pre-Russian colonisers before the 19th century who were predominantly Muslims. This antagonism is reflected in Armenian historical writing, which is told in the form of an epic, complete with heroes and

martyrs, sacrifices, enemies and unfaithful friends. According to this narrative, Armenians have been repeatedly betrayed, abandoned by great European powers, and invaded by non-Christian barbarians, but have nonetheless survived. Even in diaspora and without a state, Armenians have staunchly retained their faith and their ways of life (Suny, 1999/2000, p. 885).

In the 19th century, Eastern Armenia, which used to be part of the Persian Empire, became part of the Russian empire. Almost for a hundred years – between 1828 and 1917 – modern Eastern Armenia was part of the Russian empire, and Russia served as an opportunity for distancing Armenians in general from the Muslim world. As the Russians were also Christians, the religious factor is often emphasized; allegedly, in the Russian empire, Armenians had much more religious freedom than in the Muslim empires. In general, Russia was seen as a window to the West. Through the Russian empire, Armenian music was introduced into Western institutions in areas such as Western music education, art and music forms, etc. Paradoxically, for Europe, a large part of Russia was geographically considered to be more Eastern than Western. The rise of the national movement can also be seen as part of the larger movement in the whole of Europe. In France, national and secular ideas were introduced after the French revolution, from where they probably did indeed spread into Turkish intellectual circles, which also included Armenians, as the Ottoman Empire had many ties with France (Sarkisyan, 2001).

In 1920, after a short-lived period of the 'Democratic Republic of Armenia', Eastern Armenia became part of the Soviet Union until its fall in 1991. In the Soviet Union, Armenian culture did not have to adapt to unified cultural politics, unlike Central Asia, for example (Frolova-Walker, 1998, pp. 331–336); essentially, Armenians did not have to create their cultural programme from the very beginning; rather they relied on the traditions that were already rooted in the nineteenth century (Davidjants, 2007, p. 17). Later, since the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia has been integrating itself into European political institutions, and this identity politics is reflected on many other levels, including everyday media, but also in humanities and in

writing about history writing.[2] Today, Russia has remained important and, during the post-Soviet era, Russia has been the most significant political ally of Armenia.

Another important dimension of Armenian identity is connected to the modern Armenian diaspora which originated from the survivors of the Armenian Genocide which took place within the Ottoman Empire in 1915 (Panossian, 2002, p. 136). Religion is tied to the victim mentality, according to which Muslims, especially Turks, are seen as the aggressive Orient, while the Christian West is an enlightened civilisation to which one can aspire to belong. Historical approaches that are based on the antagonism between East and West, or on positioning itself on the border between Europe and Asia, are still very common in Armenian writings, from everyday media to humanities. The fact that the Genocide was carried out by Muslims is emphasized on every level. Whenever there is a conflict concerning the relations between Armenians and Turks, the Armenian public finds a way to tie it into the Genocide.[3] Also, the greatest spokespersons against the Genocide are diasporic Armenians, and there is a great deal of literature and art that has been created on this topic.[4]

The aspect of religion and the Genocide has also influenced the image of Komitas, as he was a Genocide survivor and an important churchman at the same time. Nevertheless, the experience was so traumatising that he lost his mind and spent the rest of his life in France in a nursing home (Poladian, 1972, p. 83). Naturally, this tragedy contributed to the discourse about him, which can be illustrated in the words used by various musicologists. For example, Aleksandr Shaverdian has put it this way:

2 For such approaches, see, for example: Abrahamyan, Levon. *Armenia and Armenians between East and West*. www.noravank.am/upload/pdf/260_en www.noravank.am/upload/pdf/260_en.pdf (2012 09 28).

3 See, for example: Adalian, Rouben. "The Armenian Genocide: Context and Legacy". In: *Social Education: The Official Journal of the National Council for the Social Studies*, 1991. Also, see the reflections on the murder of Hrant Dink: Balakian, Peter. *Hrant Dink's assassination and Genocide's legacy*. 29th January 2007, www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-turkey/dink_assassination_ 4291.jsp (2012 09 28).

4 See, for example, *Ararat* by Atom Egoyan, *Mayrig* by Henry Verneuille, read, for example, *Gendarme* by Mark Mustian, etc.

> Komitas' path does not reflect so much, or solely, his personal destiny, rather than [that of] the nation's. (Шавердян, 1989, p. 20)

Also, the musicologist Geodakian, who sees Komitas in line with the creator of the Armenian alphabet, Mashtots, asks why Komitas became such a symbol despite the other great artists who have existed throughout the centuries, and answers:

> In the destiny of Komitas, on his thorny and tragic path, the whole historical epoch of the Armenian nation is reflected: the rise of national consciousness, struggles, emerging hopes, and the era that concluded in the terrible tragedy of 1915, which shadowed the most horrible pages in the history of much-affected Armenia. Komitas drank to the bottom the bitter cup of suffering that was devolved to his nation.[5] (Геодакян, 1969, p. 7)

Nowadays, just as the aspect of the Genocide is still an area of authority for Armenians so is the church. Nevertheless, the secularization that took place in the Soviet years had its consequences. Due to this, many other elements have arisen which have been used by Armenians in proving their Europeanness (Panossian, 2002, p. 130), both in terms of high art (music, art, literature, etc) and mass culture, from journalism to music videos. At the same time, such a self-image includes a range of paradoxes because, when taking a closer look, it seems that Armenians have taken over only the external attributes, the obvious Europeanness, while preserving strong mental Middle Eastern elements which characterize many layers of society in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and other surrounding countries. In everyday practices and traditions, even today, Armenians have much in common with the Middle East, under the strong influence of which Armenia has developed.

[5] *В самой судьбе Комитаса, его жизненном пути, тернистом и трагическом, отразилась целая эпоха истории армянского народа. Время подъема национального самосознания, борьбы, рождавшихся надежд и время свершения ужасной трагедии 1915 года, затмившей самые страшные страницы многострадальной армянской истории. Комитас до конца испил горькую чашу страданий, выпавших на долю его народа.*

Armenian Music Between East and West

Armenian writing of music history is linked to the national discourse in general, which is especially true in post-Soviet/post-war Armenia.[6] For more than a century, stable and unchangeable narratives have been created in Armenian musicology, and these narratives distinguish Armenian music from the music of neighbouring countries and instead locate it within the European sphere of culture. Nevertheless, traditional Armenian music has developed in the Middle Eastern sphere of culture. It is monodic, which is typical of the Middle East, and there are strong connections between a Middle Eastern musical tradition called mugham and Armenian traditional music.[7]

For centuries, Armenian music lacked the concept of art music in the Western sense. Nevertheless, folk music and scholastic culture have to be distinguished. The fifth century saw the rise of the art of the *gusan*s which referred to tellers of tales, singers, instrumentalists, dancers, comedians and tragic actors. Later, the art of the *gusan*s was replaced by that of the *ashugh*s, which for the most part spread across Armenia during the 17th and 18th centuries. *Ashugh*s were also considered professionals, and there was a variety of schools of *ashugh*s in the areas of present Armenia, Turkey and Georgia, as well as in other locations, with different dialects and manners of expression, but nevertheless they all corresponded to a certain performing tradition that was common to the Middle East; there were certain rules for improvising, poetry was more important than music, the *ashugh*'s pseudonym was always mentioned in the last couplet of the song, etc (Pahlevanian, 2001).

Sacred music holds the same importance as folk and professional folk music. At the beginning of the fifth century, St. Mesrop Mashtots devised the Armenian alphabet. The translation of the Bible into Armenian, which followed soon after, became the starting point for the development of the tradition of local liturgical music. During the

6 The Nagorno-Karabakh War took place between Armenians and Azerbaijanis from 1988 to 1994.

7 Yernyakian, Lilith; Pikichian, Hripsime. *Sahari in Armenian music. Hymn to the Sun*. 1998; Kushnarev, Khristofor. *Theory and History of Armenian Music*. 1958.

first centuries of Christianity, the greater part of the liturgy consisted of psalms and canticles whose chants were probably adapted from local melodies. As the liturgy evolved, the number of chants increased and new forms appeared. By the fifteenth century, a complete repertoire of texts was established, and many new chants continued to appear until the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, equal temperament was introduced. Polyphonic settings and organ in the Divine Liturgy were introduced by Makar Ekmalian (1856–1905), Levon Chilingirian (1862–1932), Komitas, etc. (Kerovpyan, 2001).

In 1829, after 400 years in the Persian Empire, East Armenia became part of Czarist Russia. Due to emigration and the dispersal of Armenians in Europe and around the East, various Armenian societies, cultural and educational centres, and publishing houses sprang up in the areas of the modern Armenian Republic, as well as in the areas of modern Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, France, Italy, and Austria. Of those locations, Constantinople and Tbilisi became the biggest centres of musical culture for Western and Eastern Armenia; there were links with Western traditions in Constantinople and with Russia in Tbilisi. Russia itself became a 'window' onto Europe and thereby to Western national ideas (Sarkisyan, 2001; Геодакян, 1969, p. 11).

Due to these processes, the second half of the nineteenth century saw the growth of music that was influenced by European art forms. The time in which Komitas lived and worked was a new era for Armenian musicians. After centuries of monodic music, Western classical music spread amongst Armenian musicians, and Western-type Armenian musicians emerged, musicians who started to value their traditional culture, observe it from the 'outside', and teach it to subsequent generations. Komitas himself had many pupils. He formed Armenian choirs in Constantinople, Izmir, Alexandria and Cairo, and he also gave concerts and lectures about Armenian music both in the Middle East and Europe (Kerovpyan, 2001). Arrangements of traditional songs were composed from the mid-19th century. Solo and choral performances became frequent, and the first symphony orchestras were formed. Various European genres, such as opera, chamber music and romance, were adopted. In 1868, Tigran

Chukhajian composed the first Armenian opera, *Arshak Erkrord*. Khristofor Kara-Murza, Makar Yekmalian, Nikoghayos Tigranian and Komitas initiated the first Western-type Armenian composers' school and composed polyphonic and homophonic music, used European genres, Western notation, etc (Sarkisyan, 2001). Those oeuvres were typical of the nineteenth century; their national romantic plots seek inspiration from the glorious past. Musically, to portray the East, composers took over the compositional techniques of Western art music; they imitated traditional melodies, used tonal harmony for harmonising folk tunes in a completely different tonal system, and so on.

Komitas – the Image of Pure Armenian Music

Traditions in Armenian historiography are also reflected in Armenian writing of music history. This illustrates the gap between the yearning of Armenians for Europe and their partly Middle Eastern, partly post-Soviet reality. Music organizes collective memory and divides space (Stokes, 1994, p. 35), and Armenians use local academic writing of music history for creating and proving their national identity. This means creating narratives that strengthen certain aspects and deny others, which construct the past and in which unwanted elements and narratives are excluded (Said, 1994, p. 16). In the case of identity creation in Armenian music, this meant cleaning out Armenian music of the influences of Eastern music. On the one hand, those narratives can be seen in Komitas' own activity, in his writings and musical work. On the other hand, as the music depends on the social context, the same narratives can be found in Komitas' reception, which reflects the self-image of Armenians.

1. The Constructions of Armenianness in Komitas' Activity

Komitas was a churchman, folklorist, composer, musicologist, and music teacher of the 19th century, and he is considered to be the greatest figure in Armenian music and musicology, one of the creators of the national school of composers (Геодакян, 1969, pp. 42–48; Шавердян, 1989, p. 47; Brutian, 1985, pp. 15–16).

As a composer, Komitas wrote both vocal and instrumental music. His vocal works can be divided into two groups: those that are based on folk or sacred melodies, and those that are freely composed. Compared to the folk-based pieces, the latter form a much smaller group and are considered to be not quite so characteristic of Komitas. Folk-based songs with piano include love and dance songs, lullabies and peasants' songs, monologues by expatriates, ballads and folk parables. His choral pieces share similar subjects; these cover work songs, scenes of religious rites, a lament, epic-heroic pieces, landscape pictures, dance suites, comic numbers and love songs. Komitas also arranged sacred pieces and composed arrangements of *sharakan*, *meghedi* and *tagh* songs (various chants from Armenian liturgy). Other works include arrangements of urban songs, often about national liberation, and popular dance tunes for piano (Kerovpyan, Atayan, 2001).

The works by Komitas should be viewed in the framework of the national movement in Europe in the nineteenth century, as in that era a great many composers turned to their folk heritage for inspiration. Until the nineteenth century, a typical national music style did not consist of much of an ethnic character, which is something that a composer inherited at birth. It was more of a convention of writing from which he could select and exchange for another at will (Dahlhaus, 2006, p. 90). According to Anderson, the concept of 'nation' was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm (Anderson, 2006, p. 7), and the idea arose that one should be loyal to one's nation instead of one's monarch or local ruler.

Armenian musicians were no exception to this national awakening movement that influenced so many nations in the nineteenth century. The emergence of Western-type Armenian composers also took place in this period, after national ideas spread out to the Eastern European nations. As Benedict Anderson has noted, the intelligentsias were central to the rise of nationalism in many territories. Also, in Armenia, those 'new' cultural producers played a crucial role in the rise of national culture and sentiments, as those new, Western-type musicians started to seek out their national roots and look for new styles and ideas, original national musical language on a national

basis. In other words, those musicians were linked to the spread of choral singing, orchestras, public concerts (Геодакян, 1969, pp. 42–48; Шавердян, 1989, pp. 40–47; Brutian, 1985, pp. 15–16), and, for example, as is typical of the era, Komitas wanted to create a national opera (Шавердян, 1989, pp. 71–72).

Along with the spread of these new ideas, the folklore movement also developed, and the belief that nationality, the collective spirit of a people, was the most profound motivator in history (Dahlhaus, 2006, p. 81). Therefore, an important part of this movement was collecting folklore, and also folk tunes. In the nineteenth century, many classical composers throughout all of Europe, such as Grieg in Norway, Bartók in Hungary, Ralph Vaughan Williams in Britain, and so on, shared a profound interest in traditional music and culture. Some of them collected folk tunes, while others used those tunes in their compositions. Komitas also had close relations with Western musicians; he travelled a good deal to Europe, and from 1896 to 1899 he was in Berlin, where he was enrolled in the Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm University and where he studied music at the private conservatory under Professor Richard Schmidt (Kerovpyan, Atayan, 2001).

In the 1880s, the systematic collection of folk songs and dances also began amongst Armenian musicians, such as Khristofor Kara-Murza, Makar Yekmalian, Nikoghayos Tigranian and Komitas (Pahlevanian, 2001). Considering the period, Komitas was an excellent ethnologist who carried out a major piece of work by collecting about 3,000 Armenian folk tunes (Пахлеванян, 2005, p. 8). Today, if we observe the transcriptions of Armenian folk tunes that were made by Komitas, we see that these are typical nineteenth century transcriptions that were adapted to the expectations of a Western audience. For example, the rhythmic picture of his transcriptions is 'softened' and is rather homogenous, and he recorded almost no melismatics (Davidjants, 2007, p. 55).

At the same time, Komitas believed that Armenians had a specific traditional musical culture, and he also expressed that idea in his writings about Armenian music. He often used a certain lexicon, with words such as 'specificness', 'vitality', 'corkiness', 'full of philosophy', etc (Шавердян, 1989, p. 305–306). Komitas also wrote – in the Herderian

sense – that the spirit of the nation is included in Armenian music; the music functions as the mirror of the nation (Шавердян, 1989, pp. 305–306).

Specificness, in general, is the main theme of Komitas' most famous article about Armenian music, 'Armenians have specific music', which, according to Shaverdian, was inspired by the absence of a paragraph of Armenian music in the Musical Encyclopaedia in Paris and, according to Shaverdian, Komitas also blamed European musicologists for ignoring Armenian music (Шавердян, 1989, pp. 89–90).

These points of view are reflected in an interview in 1914 which was given to the Constantinople-based Armenian newspaper, Azatamart,[8] which was published after Komitas' return from the congress of the International Music Society in 1914. There, he claims that his speech about specific Armenian religious and folk music was something new to the participants, among whom there were some great musicologists, who were very impressed and even called this music divine. According to the interview, specificness and the high artistic value of Armenian music was largely acknowledged after the lectures, and it left the audience with the impression that it had remained more untouched when compared to the music of some other nations (Шавердян, 1989, pp. 305–307).

2. Armenianness and Komitas' Reception

In Soviet musicology, the national category was very important. According to this, music – and culture overall – had to be socialist in form and national in content. This meant copying Western cultural achievements: creating operas, ballets, symphonies, etc, such as Western musical institutions, but integrating Eastern plots and oriental melodies. This was problematic for some republics of the Soviet Union, mainly in Central Asia, who had to create their Western musical programmes from the very beginning, as their own culture relied on a completely different tradition (Frolova-Walker, 1998, pp. 331–336). Armenians did not have to start from scratch, so in the Soviet years the promotion of Komitas became widespread.

[8] Azatamart – in Armenian this means 'free person'.

Throughout the twentieth century, it was common for writings about Armenian music always to start with the 'obligatory' reference to Komitas, emphasizing his role in the development of Armenian music. This corresponds to the explanation by Atayan and Kerovpyan:

> One of the first Armenians to have a classical Western musical education, as well as instruction in the music of his own people, he laid the foundations for a specific national style in his many songs and choruses, all of which are deeply influenced by the folk and church traditions of Armenia. (Kerovpyan, Atayan, 2001)

This and further quotations in Grove, along with the dictionary's chapters as a whole, almost precisely correspond to the first chapters, Introduction and "Komitas" in the book *Armenian Composers* by Robert Atayan, Matevos Muradyan, and Aleksandr Tatevosyan from 1956, and this reflects how the discourse had not changed in half a century (Атаян et al., 1956, pp. 9–33).

The quotation also clearly demonstrates why Komitas is considered to be such an important figure in Armenian musicology. According to the main narrative, as a composer Komitas combined Western culture with that of Armenia – he was the founder of the national style because he developed Armenian traditional music in his scores. To put it simply, Armenianness in his music meant that he used Armenian intonations in Western genres: in his choral works, he brought polyphonic development to monodic music, and often imitated speech intonations directly. In polyphony, Komitas used Armenian intonations in melodically-independent voices and, harmonically, he preferred chords in fourths and fifths (Kerovpyan, Atayan, 2001).

One of the interesting issues that are associated with Komitas concern subsequent responses to his work as an ethnologist. As mentioned before, Komitas' transcriptions were typical of the nineteenth century traditions, i.e. they were centred around Western music (Davidjants, 2007, p. 55). In modern Armenian musicology, Komitas' ideas are still very prominent and are used in ethnomusicology. For example, if we take a look at the Grove dictionary, which is the most widely used source of Armenian music for an English-speaking audience, Komitas' classification of folk

tunes is used to describe Armenian folk music,[9] and most of the examples showing different types of Armenian folk tunes originate from Komitas' folk tune collections (Kerovpyan, Atayan, 2001).

In other words, Komitas' transcriptions are still considered to be very important sources of Armenian folk tunes in general and, throughout Armenian music history, we can find statements about Komitas' transcriptions representing 'pure' Armenian music;[10] the result is that purity and Armenianness are related to each other. At the same time, the fictitious idea of 'pure, original people' or 'folk' is employed to support national identity (Wodak, 1999, p. 24); one is intrinsically part of the other. Such standpoints can be found in the literature of different eras, starting with the Soviet period and reaching up to the present day. For example, in 1960, musicologist Matevos Muradyan writes in his overview about Armenian musicology:

> Komitas set himself the goal of finding the authentic Armenian song and 'cleaning' it of borrowed elements that are generally foreign to the [Armenian – *B.D.*] soul.[11] (Мурадян, 1960, p. 338)

Musicologist Nikoghayos Taghmisyan expresses similar thoughts almost thirty years later in his preface to the monograph by Shaverdian:

> Komitas' life mission during his era was to reach to the core of the popular national melos, to find its golden vein, after which it was not difficult to specify the contour of this national and original

[9] It is also emphasized that the work on classification of folk tunes continues Komitas' work. First of all, Komitas divided Armenian peasant songs geographically into songs from the mountains and songs from the plains, considering stylistic features. Then, he divided them according to larger regions of origin, that is, according to dialect, for example, songs from Shirak, Aparan, Alashkert, Van, Mokk, Mush, Akn, and Kharberd (places in historical Armenia). Next, he divided them according to the most important centres of song creation within these regions.

[10] See, for example, Шавердян, 1989, pp. 24, 106–107; Poladian, 1972, p. 88.

[11] *Он задался целью найти подлинно армянскую песню, «очистить» ее от наносных, чуждых ее духу элементов, чтобы на этой основе создавать национальную профессиональную музыку.*

phenomenon as a whole, determine its peripheries, and abandon its clearly stranger, borrowed elements.[12] (Шавердян, 1989, p. 24)

Consequently, Shaverdian more precisely demonstrates the antagonism towards the neighbouring Muslim countries, with this antagonism being related to *ashugh*s, Middle Eastern minstrels, which represent the intersection of the Armenian and Muslim cultures. According to Shaverdian, Komitas called *ashugh*s "the carriers of foreign, mostly Islamic influences" (Шавердян, 1989, pp. 106–107), though later he softened his words (Шавердян, 1989, p. 276).

The examples above leave the impression that, according to the authors, Komitas supposedly 'cleansed' Armenian music of the elements that had been added due to those Muslim neighbours who lived side-by-side with the Armenians, so that only 'pure' Armenian music was left. Such an idea correlates with the attitude that there is an authentic culture somewhere that does not borrow anything from other cultures, and that culture can presumably be 'cleansed' of borrowed elements. Such a distinction is quite questionable, as in South Caucasia before the fall of the Russian empire in 1917 identity was shared with coreligionists, fellow speakers of one's language and people with a common culture, rather than with a fixed homeland (Suny, 1999/2000, p. 873).

At the same time, in Armenian musicology, the clear distinction is made between Armenian music and the music of neighbouring countries, and, although Armenians tend to diminish their neighbours' influence upon their music, they emphasize their own contribution to the music of their neighbours. This attitude corresponds to their history writing in a larger sense, and for a long time "the story of the republic of Armenia was told as a story of ethnic Armenians, with the Azerbaijanis and Kurds largely left out, just as the histories of neighbouring republics were reproduced as narratives of the titular nationalities" (Suny, 1999 / 2000, p. 887). A similar approach can

[12] *Самым решительным велением времени при жизни Комитаса было пробиться до самой сердцевины народно-национального мелоса, найти его золотую жилу, после чего нетрудно было бы уточнить контуры национально-самобытного явления в целом, определить его периферии, отвергнуть явно чуждые, наносные элементы и т. д.*

be noticed in Komitas' case, as he is seen as an important figure in the culture of those neighbours, as he collected Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian and Arab folk tunes, and wrote about them based on his research (Геодакян, 1969, p. 48), which makes him an important ethnologist at an international level. These statements also leave us with the impression that one may be able to influence but remain 'pure' oneself. Examples of such an attitude can be found in the very same Grove dictionary:

> Until recent times Armenian instrumentalists were among the best performers of the Persian-Azerbaijani branch of maqāmāt, naturally leaving an impression on certain levels of urban music. In some Persian-Azerbaijani maqāmāt, however, especially in instrumental sections with a dance character, the influence of Armenian urban songs and dances can still be detected. The Armenian [...] assimilated certain features relating to Middle Eastern *ashugh* poetics during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In spite of these common cultural characteristics and mutual influences, Armenians have retained a specific national culture. (Kerovpyan, Atayan, 2001)

Quite naturally we must consider the fact that, although the text comes from the Grove dictionary, it is based on texts by Atayan from the Soviet period, i.e. on the Soviet Armenian musicological discourse from between the 1950s and 1980s. Nevertheless, this opposition to an Eastern nation can be seen in other sources during the Soviet period by Western authors and, for example, Poladian's writings cannot be explained in terms of the Soviet musicological discourse; more likely it reflects the romantic values of the nineteenth century in which peasants – unlike urban residents – remained pure and free of foreign influences:

> Komitas discovered that the Armenian peasant carried the historic traditional idioms of Armenian music. Previously, this musical style had been practically unknown to urban Armenians, particularly to those in Turkey. Over the course of several centuries of subjugation to Islamic culture, a thorough impregnation with foreign influences had been carried out, not only in terms of folk songs and the popular music of urban Armenians, but also in the music of the church itself, the

> influences consisting of Turkish, Arabic and Persian musical styles. The native, traditional musical style all but disappeared. Komitas' discovery of this native traditional music in remote areas of Eastern Armenia, a style that was more diatonic, less ornate, and altogether unlike the Turkish-Arabic idioms came as a revelation to Armenians everywhere. Komitas lectured, and published analytical articles defining this style.[13] (Poladian, 1972, p. 88)

Armenian musicologists also emphasize the fact that there is something specifically Armenian in their music, which differentiates it not only from Middle Eastern music but also from European music, and it is something that is wholly original. For example, if we take a look at the descriptions of the spread of polyphony into Armenian music, we will see that this is related to the national movement of the nineteenth century, as well as with the music's development in previous centuries, and authors make connections between Armenian and European music from the tenth to the eighteenth centuries. For example, while describing polyphony in Armenian music Geodakian quotes the following:

> Music's development in different phases remarkably outdistances the development of European culture and holds an essential addition to the picture of monody, in terms of the forms and the phenomena.[14] (Геодакян, 1969, p. 13)

He adds that this era was followed by a period of apparent decline, due to political and economic reasons, and the 'wondrous development of polyphony' which characterized European music did not reach Armenians until the nineteenth century (Геодакян, 1969, p. 13; Шавердян, 1989, p. 41). So, according to him, after the fifteenth century Armenian music was 'artificially isolated' until the middle

[13] The idea of purity among Armenian musicians is wittily analysed by musicologist Andy Nercessian, who gives an example from folk music orchestras throughout the 20th century (Nercessian, 2000, p. 87).

[14] *… ее развитие на отдельных этапах, очевидно, значительно опережает развитие европейских культур и вносит нужное дополнение в общую картину жанров, типов и явлений монодической* (одноголосной – Г.Г.) *музыки.*

of the 1880s and the discovery of polyphony, which offered new opportunities when it came to developing music art (Шавердян, 1969, pp. 13–14). Such an interpretation leaves us with the impression that, until the fifteenth century, Armenian music was conceptually tied to European music but then, apparently due to the Muslim invasions, it was isolated until the nineteenth century at which time it was able to take the opportunity to reacquaint itself with its roots.

The previous examples leave the impression that Armenian writing of music history (written by Armenian authors) is imbued with national ideology. Similar notions are put forward by other Western-based authors. For example, the French musicologist Jean During, who has written about Azeri music, says:

> Their [Azeri] mugam music also formed part of the Armenian repertoire for a long time. However, there has been a tendency amongst Armenians for some decades now to reject this music because of the growth in nationalism on both sides which resulted from the geopolitical division of Transcaucasia in 1917. (During, 2001)

Similar notions are made by the musicologist Andy Nercessian in his criticism towards the reception of Komitas in the review about the book on Komitas written by Robert Atayan:

> Transcriptions and arrangements by the author [Robert Atayan] are included throughout the book. All kinds of songs that are meant to demonstrate the supposed 'uniqueness' of the Armenian national style are present. These construct an image both of the nature of the music and the ideological attitude of the ethnomusicologist who finds a balance between 'retaining the original' and 'harmonising to enrich the sounds and spirit' of what he might call 'his people'. Ideology can at times become obtrusive in cases such as, for instance, when the author claims that 'the folk songs of a given nation are so characteristic that it is not possible to confuse them with those of foreign or related nations', and then goes on to demonstrate how a collection of songs 'correspond in structure and harmony with the spirit and style of Armenian folk songs'. Such attempts are not always convincing, and although well written, they demand of the reader a certain (if only minimal) acquaintance with Armenian music. (Nercessian, 2000, p. 144)

At the same, this attitude – the joint claim for originality and Europeanness both at once – seems to be specific to Caucasian and several Middle Eastern nations in general. Analogously, a national, romantic self-image that is related to musical nationalism also characterizes the musicological discourse of so-called enemies, such as the Azeris and Turks. For example, in the book about Azeri music the authors Ismailov and Karagicheva, after describing Azeri modes, claim that although Azeri music was monodic, harmonic moments were embedded in the modes and melodies of Azeri folk music that paved the way for professional composers in the Western style (Исмаилов, Карагичева, 1961, p. 19), as if Azeri music was different from others due to their mugham modes, but still it also contains something European 'by nature' which makes it easy to arrange harmonically, a rhetoric that sounds very similar to the Soviet Armenian musicological discourse.

Conclusion

In my examples, I have illustrated how Komitas' representations were in the past, and are even today, based on a dichotomy between the East and the West; his discourse reflects the self-representation of Armenians, meaning an antagonism towards Muslim colonisers and the self-adaptation to the Western world. Komitas became a symbol of Armenianness during the Soviet era, but also in the post-Soviet era, and the national category in the phenomenon of Komitas is still very important. To some extent, Armenians have even adopted a self-colonising look towards themselves and, as they want to present themselves as being a European country, they keep using the West as an opportunity to confront the East. There are many historical narratives that support the European self-image (Komitas is just an example) while controversially, for the West, throughout the centuries, Armenia itself represented the Orient.

As a result, on an institutionalized level, Armenians create borders between themselves and their Muslim neighbours. They use culture to distinguish themselves from their neighbours and position themselves to the West. For this purpose, Armenians create historical narratives that support the European self-image, and they try to demonstrate that perhaps, somewhere, there may be authentic music which, after

being cleansed of borrowed elements, could shine like a jewel in its purity. In the current case, Komitas represents 'our, Armenian music'. 'Our music' is a mighty weapon, much mightier than, for example, 'my music', because it is shared, not owned. 'Our music' exists only in a group, and for the group members it is a means of communication (Bohlman, 2001, p. 20–21).

The approaches described above are questionable because cultures do not develop in isolation, and we have to consider the common shares of cultures (Bhabha, 1994, p. 113). Over the centuries, the borders of Armenia have changed significantly, and Armenians have been living side-by-side with Muslims since Islam started to spread across the Middle East. A political scientist by the name of Ronald Suny has criticised such approaches to Armenian history as being ethnocentric, that denying the similarities of Armenian culture and those of its neighbours and its neighboring cultures:

> ... the history of the region emphasized the long constitution of a shared Caucasian culture; a polyglot, migrating population; cities inhabited by diverse peoples; and soft, blurred, shifting boundaries between ethnic and religious groups. (Suny, 1999 / 2000, pp. 863–864)

He shows examples from Baku and Tbilisi as models of interethnic cohabitation:

> Tbilisi at one time had an Armenian majority, and Yerevan was primarily a Muslim town at several points in its long history. (ibid.)

As the Armenian musicologist Khristofor Kushnarev has written, a common cultural platform has developed between ancient Armenia and Middle Eastern countries. He has emphasized that we are speaking not only about common compositional and stylistic elements, but also about important, ideological moments (Кушнарев, 1958, p. 24). Thanks to this, we cannot assume that ethnic groups are identical with cultural groups (Eriksen, 1993, p. 36; Jenkins, 1994, p. 208), and in such conditions, the cultures of neighbouring countries tend to blend together.

Suny, attacked because of his following words as a betrayer of the Armenian nation, has said the following:

> It is important to remember that nations are congealed histories. They are made up of stories that people tell about their past and thereby determine who they are. Histories in turn are based on memories that are organized into narratives. Whatever actually happened is far less important than how it is remembered. What is remembered, what has been forgotten or repressed, provides the template through which the world is understood. Nationalist violence or inter-ethnic cooperation and tolerance depend on what narrative, what tales of injustice, oppression, or betrayal are told. Tellers of tales have enormous [...] power to reshape, edit, share their stories, and therefore to promote a future of either violence or cooperation. (Suny, 1999/2000, p. 864)

For that reason, it is important to examine critically the construction of national identity in Armenian music history writing as this offers the opportunity to see how artificial can be the borders that are built between neighbouring cultures.

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IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN ARMENIAN MUSIC ON THE EXAMPLE OF EARLY FOLKLORE MOVEMENT

Brigitta Davidjants

Abstract: The aim of the article is to present various identity constructions in the early Armenian folklore movement. Armenian identity construction has been affected by various factors, including Armenia being the first country to adopt Christianity, and also the fact that it has a well-integrated diaspora in the West, both of which are used to present the 'Europeanness' of Armenians. Yet Armenia is surrounded by Muslim countries with which it shares many cultural similarities. Armenia has also been involved in various conflicts with its neighbours, starting with the Romans in the first century BC and ending with the Nagorno-Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia between 1988 and 1994. Due to these processes, the country is trying to distance itself from the East and, instead, belong to the West, and music can be used for the benefit of such identity construction. As an example, the article introduces various approaches to transcriptions of Armenian folk tunes that were made by composer and folklorist Komitas (Soghomon Soghomonian, 1869–1935), and folklorist Arshak Brutyan (1864–1936). Komitas is regarded as the most important figure in Armenian music. While transcribing folk tunes, he relied more on the Western way of thinking by standardising tunes according to the Western music system while Brutyan, on the other hand, tried to find transcription methods that would fit more with Armenian musical culture. Nowadays, unlike Brutyan, Komitas's ideas are still strongly advocated in Armenian academic circles, and he is respected for unifying Armenian music with Western European musical culture.

Keywords: cultural boundaries, early folklore movement, folk tune transcriptions, national identity construction

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will concentrate on national identity construction in the Armenian ethnomusicological discourse in light of the work of the composer and folklorist Komitas (Soghomon Soghomonian, 1869–1935), one of the founders of the discourse, and his contemporary, folklorist Arshak Brutyan (1864–1936). I will show how folk music transcriptions reflect different aesthetic preferences and methodological starting points, and how they can be related to national identity

construction in general, as folk tunes formed in the past as well as today – an important part of creating a homogenous national identity. In describing those processes, I will analyse the same folk tune transcriptions that were carried out both by Komitas and Brutyan. According to my hypothesis, the former adopted his transcriptions according to the expectations of the Western audience, by simplifying the melodic, rhythmic, and metric elements of folk tunes, whilst the latter sought out methods from inside the culture he was researching by trying to mark down every single melodic and rhythmic characteristic in the tunes. The subsequent reception of Komitas and Brutyan by Armenian musicologists over the last hundred years contains a national identity construction that culturally positions Armenians within Europe. Partly due to that, unlike Brutyan, Komitas still maintains an important position in modern Armenian musicology.

Most of the Eastern European nations have created their own schools of national music in the Western tradition and Armenians are no exception. Armenian writing of national history through music writing emerged in the Russian area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and continued to develop in Soviet Armenia (Pahlevanyan & Kerovpyan & Sarkisyan 2001). In the Armenian national discourse, Komitas is considered to be the founder of Armenian national music. He was a composer, folklorist, musicologist, and music teacher at the time of the national awakening at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. His musical activities brought Armenia closer to Europe: as a folklorist he worked towards the research and preservation of Armenian traditional music, while he also used this music according to the conventions of western national-romantic music. The story of Armenian music has presented Komitas almost as a mythical national hero.[1] Even today he is the symbol of Armenian European cultural identity, although such a self-perception conflicts with regional realities. Armenia is historically divided into eastern and western Armenia. Since the nineteenth century, eastern Armenia was lodged within the Russian empire and now forms the modern Armenian Republic. The western part belonged to the Ottoman Empire and has been absorbed into eastern Turkey. In Armenian culture two branches can be distinguished, eastern and western, and both have their own dialects, culture, etc. (Samuelian et al. 2003: 26). Komitas lived mainly in today's Turkey, and his identity can be tied more to western Armenian traditions.

Brutyan was Komitas's contemporary and, at first sight, certain similarities can be traced between them. They both originated in the western Armenian region (modern north-eastern Turkey), but studied and graduated from the Gevorkian Theological Seminary in Vagharshapat in the east (today's Etchmiadzin), Brutyan in 1882 and Komitas in 1893. As was typical of the era, they

were engaged in a large number of activities: they were music theorists, folklorists, and teachers, they developed choral singing, etc. For example, Komitas wrote multiple comparative research papers on traditional music, in which he generalised the traditional music of various nations (Geodakyan 1969: 48), while Brutyan compared Western and Armenian notations (Brutyan 1985: 15). Allegedly, Komitas and Brutyan also met at least once – according to Margarit Brutyan, the grand old lady of Armenian musicology and granddaughter of Arshak Brutyan – when Komitas and another composer, Kara-Mourza, arrived in Alexandropol (today's Gyumri) to give concerts. Brutyan worked there as a music teacher and he introduced them to his choirs for four voices (Brutyan 1985: 15–18).

Brutyan offers interesting material for comparison with Komitas. His position in Armenian musical life and in the history of Armenian music is different. Considering Komitas's role in Armenian musical life also as a composer, Brutyan's scope of activities was narrower, which did not bring him such a prominent position. Though highly appreciated by folk musicians and folklorists (Brutyan 1985: 8; Kushnaryov 1958: 5), he did not gain such public attention as Komitas. He has not been that well recognised by later musicologists, and he also did not form a separate school of folklore in Armenia. The reason might also be that he was more local in his activities and stayed mainly in Alexandropol where he is highly appreciated also today, and where a music school has been named after him. The difference between Komitas's and Brutyan's positions in Armenian ethnomusicology was reinforced and confirmed by later Armenian national music history writing, which evaluated Western concert and choral music more highly than folk music in itself, but perhaps also because Brutyan's transcriptions did not correspond to the ruling ideology of Europeanness.

This all makes it harder to explain Brutyan's position in Armenian folklore discourse, which is not ideologically so loaded as Komitas's, yet also carries a certain meaning. Today, his transcriptions are still used for practical purposes: through history, they have been taken as good examples of Armenian folk music and art of *ashugh*[2] (Kushnaryov 1958); folk music students use them in their performances (according to my fieldwork at the Yerevan State Conservatory named after Komitas from 2002 to 2011), etc., yet there is no such discourse around him as around Komitas.

Brutyan was slightly older than Komitas and worked simultaneously with him, and yet they represented different musical worlds. When comparing Komitas's and Brutyan's folk tune transcriptions, one can notice a big methodological difference between approaches towards transcriptions. Their transcriptions reflect their different ways of musical thinking: which aspects either of the folklorists have emphasised, or on what they have concentrated while placing

the musical material into the framework that originated in a culture different to that of Western tonal music. The analysis shows a difference in their cultural background according to which they observed and valued the collected material. This difference can be partially explained by Brutyan's probably unconscious denial of the ruling European identity construction in his folkloristic work. In his contrast, Komitas's ideological nature becomes particularly evident. This is something that has never been called in question in Armenian musicological discourse.

Yet in Armenian ethnomusicology new trends have also emerged since those days that include new transcription techniques. Beginning in the 1960s, more precise transcription methods were developed in Armenia, too, according to developments of ethnomusicology. Armenian musicologists started to use recordings for transcriptions, many additional marks came into use for marking down melody, they started to make textual analysis next to musical analysis, songs were transposed only exceptionally, etc. Those methods are still present in modern Armenian ethnomusicology (Pahlevanyan 2005: 25–30).

In the next chapter, a description is given of the methods being used in the current research, while in the following parts Armenian music is positioned on the boundaries between East and West. The theoretical background of this research is based on the discourses of post-colonial theorists (Homi Bhabha 1994; Benedict Anderson 2006; etc.), musicologists (Andy Nercessian 2000; Philip Bohlman 2001 [1999]; Carl Dahlhaus 1983 [1980]; etc.), and political scientists who have concentrated on Armenian topics (Ronald Grigor Suny 2001; Razmik Panossian 2002; etc.). The last chapter presents some comparative analyses of two folk tunes that were transcribed both by Komitas and Brutyan. The transcriptions are in the archives of the Charents Museum of Literature and Art in Yerevan, Armenia.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present analysis is to describe the different ideologies in early Armenian folklore movement that reflect themselves in approaches chosen for transcribing the same folk melodies. Such differences can result from different, perhaps hidden, unconscious ideologies, and reflect the cultural context of the two folklorist. By and large, the sociocultural model for studying music is used, in which both the research of the cultural context and comparative music analysis are applied.

Transcriptions are seen as cultural texts, and by analysing them and their cultural background I will highlight the common codes, ideologies, and

discourses. I try to map what can be said about the individuals featured in the texts, and also how the texts are framed and presented. I am interested in which terms are used and what is their symbolic meaning, and what are the assumptions embedded in the musical texts. I will use the answers to the questions to build arguments about those who construct cultural products and wider social and cultural conditions (Davis 2008: 56).

My first step was to examine Komitas's[3] and Brutyan's[4] folk tune collections to discover general tendencies in their transcriptions, which would support my comparative analysis of folk tunes. More than a hundred songs by Komitas and the same amount by Brutyan were examined for having a representative sample of the texts that would help to make more extensive conclusions about the transcriptions. In general, the songs shared the same tendencies that characterised the songs chosen for comparative analysis. Transcriptions made by Komitas were generally without embellishments, the rhythmic picture was symmetric and the songs were both metrically and modally adjusted to correspond to the European discourse of folklorism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Brutyan's transcriptions, on the other hand, were characterised by a very complicated rhythmic picture, melodies included many embellishments and were not modally so adjusted to European folklorist discourse.

As a background to Komitas's and Arshak Brutyan's folk tune collections, I also analysed other Armenian folk tune collections, to see which parameters other folklorists had concentrated on: metro-rhythmic, tonal, form, etc.[5] Here I noticed a tendency that earlier transcriptions – until the first half of the twentieth century, for example by Spiridon Melikyan and Mihran Toumajian – resembled more, both rhythmically and tonally, Komitas's transcriptions, yet in the second half of the twentieth century – those of Brutyan's. The latter was common, for example, to an important modern source, the prominent folk tune collection *Talin: Zhoghovrdakan yergery*[6], which was published in 1984. Rhythmical similarities became especially clear while comparing transcriptions of the same song, such as *Le le yaman*, by Brutyan and Komitas, and a version of *Dle Yaman* in *Talin*, although the latter was created around half a century later (Pahlevanyan 1984: 143–145).

To better understand Armenian folk tunes, I also transcribed and analysed living and recorded performances of folk tunes, to start with Hayrik Muradyan's recordings from 1958 to 1988,[7] and to end with Margarit Voskanyan's performances in 2013.[8] The analysis was also supported with my own experience of performing Armenian music, and studying, living, and working in Armenia for more than ten years. As experience is central to cultural studies (Pickering 2008: 17), my own practical experience has offered me valuable insight into the performance of Armenian folk music. In other words, my own ethnographic

observation has been useful as it has offered me an opportunity to document the actual processes and people involved in cultural production (Davis 2008: 58).

The majority of work was done in the archives of the Charents Museum of Literature and Art, with Komitas's archived materials (Archive collections Nos. 302, 303, and 304), and also those of Brutyan's (Archive collections Nos. 3, 4, and 5), searching for transcriptions of the same tunes that were made by both of them. I found four songs in which the musical material and lyrics largely overlapped, and compared their tonal, rhythmic, and formal structures, in addition to a few dozen songs that overlapped only to some extent. In the article, I will present the analysis of two of them, *Chem chem* and *Le le yaman*, which are both good examples of different approaches to interpreting folk tunes. For both songs, there is one version by Komitas and two versions by Brutyan, which makes a total of six transcriptions.

There is no information available as to where or when precisely these transcriptions were made. Komitas and Brutyan both lived and worked mainly in western Armenia, i.e. the Ottoman Empire. In general, it is known that all of Komitas's transcriptions were made between 1881 and 1913, mostly in the western Armenian area (Muradyan & Atayan & Tatevosyan 1956: 28–31), and some in eastern Armenia, i.e. in the Russian Empire (Shaverdyan 1989: 58). Brutyan started his work in the eastern Armenian area at approximately the same time (1879) (Brutyan 1985: 16).

Transcriptions of the same songs made by different folklorists in dissimilar places at different times may differ from each other due to regional features, variability, incidental deviations, etc. Even so, by juxtaposing the songs, an interesting picture of the transcribers unfolds, which reveals the interests and preferences of the folklorists, and the similarities and differences in their cultural background, the era's research methods, etc. Therefore, the transcriptions of the two songs illustrate more general tendencies that characterise the transcriptions of Komitas and Brutyan but – with the analysis of cultural context – also show how their meanings were produced later on in the Soviet era.

Names of places and people in Armenian are transliterated according to eastern Armenian pronunciation and orthographic rules, except the names of persons who originated from western Armenia, as there are minor differences between the two dialects.

SOME ASPECTS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN ARMENIAN CULTURE

In Armenian musicological literature, both the reception and transcriptions of Komitas and Brutyan – but also of many other Armenian folklorists – bring us to a larger topic of identity construction for Armenians. Identity is the representation of selected habits that are used for defining one's self to others (Turino 2004: 8), and there is an "atavistic belief that identities can be maintained and secured only by eliminating difference and otherness" (Wodak et al. 1999: 3). In Armenian culture, across the centuries, self-positioning towards the West has been common, which often includes creating boundaries and neglecting common ground with regional neighbours. Boundaries can be defined in several ways: geographically, culturally, politically, religiously, linguistically, etc. Armenians locate themselves geographically on the borderlands of East and West; they position themselves geographically in Asia, but as Christians they see themselves as a part of Europe. An essential element of their identity is antagonism towards pre-Russian colonisers who were mostly Muslims. Also today, Armenia is surrounded on three sides by Muslim countries: Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Iran. The idea of Europeanness is reflected in many fields, such as everyday politics and media, as well as arts and humanities.[9] As one of the reformers of Armenian music according to the Western tradition, Komitas agrees well with the construction of cultural boundaries between Armenia and its Muslim neighbours.

The first important strategy for constructing Europeanness in Armenian identity is related to the adoption of Christianity in the fourth century after Christ (Panossian 2002: 126). Religion is a significant factor in Armenian identity construction. In the South Caucasus, before the Bolshevist Revolution in 1917, identity was shared primarily with co-religionists, rather than with a theoretically bounded territory as a homeland (Suny 2001: 873). In Armenia, Christianity is traced back to the missions of apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus around AD 60. In AD 301, Saint Gregory the Illuminator converted Armenian king Tiridates III to Christianity, which was soon recognised as the state religion (Ter-Sarkisyants 2005: 136–179). According to legend, Christianity was adopted due to the miraculous convalescence of the king from madness. Yet the reason was probably political: Tiridates III had been informed that Roman Emperor Diocletian had negotiated with the Persian powers (the Sassanids) against the Armenians. As Christians had already been exerting a noticeable influence on Armenian society, the king decided to baptise himself, and Christianity became the official state religion (Panossian 2002: 126).

Today, Armenians emphasise that they were the first Christian country in the world. They have an independent church, and they are "the defenders of Christianity at the frontiers of Islam" (Suny 2001: 885). The church has been an essential institution in establishing boundaries between Armenians and the 'others'. Particularly, in the diaspora, the church has organised life for centuries; it has been forming the community and preserving it. The church has helped to preserve rituals, foods, dances, and customs, which are all markers of diasporic identity (Yazedjian 2004: 44). The Armenian diaspora emerged first in Middle Eastern countries: during the existence of the Sassanid and Persian empires (Tololyan 2005: 37). The rise of modern diasporas in Western countries is also based on religion: the Armenian genocide of 1915 within the territory of the Ottoman Empire is interpreted in the light of a deep antagonism between Muslim Turks and Christian Armenians. It has to be mentioned that the refugees of the genocide did not form the first wave of the Armenian diaspora: living in diaspora was not new for the Armenians of the twentieth century. Certain waves of emigration can be distinguished in history and the earliest of them go back to the ancient period and the Middle Ages. However, the largest emigration to affect the modern Armenian self-consciousness took place at the beginning of the twentieth century (Adalian 2010: 271).

In the cultural resources of the classical diaspora, suffering experienced through forced exiles, persecutions, and finally genocide, is explained through religious theodicy (Smith 2010: 8). The figure of Komitas is interpreted as being a great example – he was a genocide survivor, and yet surviving is a relative term because after this experience Komitas lost his mind and spent the rest of his life in a nursing home in France (Poladian 1972: 83). According to Shaverdyan, the path trod by "Komitas [---] does not reflect so much, or solely, his personal destiny but rather the nation's" (Shaverdyan 1989: 20).[10] Also, musicologist Georgi Geodakyan has written the following:

> *In the destiny of Komitas, on his thorny and tragic path, the whole historical epoch of the Armenian nation is reflected: the rise of national consciousness, struggles, emerging hopes, and the era that concluded with the terrible tragedy of 1915, overshadowed by the most horrible pages in the history of much-affected Armenia. Komitas drank to the bottom the bitter cup of suffering that was devolved to his nation*.[11] (Geodakyan 1969: 7)

So Komitas is included in the genocide discourse. The reception of Komitas reflects how secular nationalists found in ethnohistory resources in the struggle for raising Armenian consciousness and shows that where ethnic heroism is linked to Christian martyrdom, the nation is linked to religion (Smith 2010: 13–14). Komitas has become a martyr, the embodiment of various factors of

the construction of the Armenian national identity, in which Western culture is contrasted against the Muslim Middle East – such approaches can be traced in most writings about Komitas.[12] This way, the reception of Komitas shows how music is used in the construction of national ideologies which are especially evident in comparison with other folklorists, i.e. Brutyan in the current case.

ARMENIAN MUSIC IN THE SERVICE OF WESTERN NATIONAL IDEAS

Western-type Armenian composers appeared in the context of the nineteenth-century national awakening, when national ideas spread progressively throughout Eastern Europe. The concept of nation was born in an age in which the Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm (Anderson 2006: 7), and the idea arose that instead of a dynasty one should be loyal to one's nation. Until the end of the eighteenth century, national style in music was largely a writing convention that a composer could select and change, rather than some inner ethnic character that was inherited at birth (Dahlhaus 1983 [1980]: 90). In the nineteenth century, however, national styles became associated with the ethnic origin.

Armenian musicians were no exception. After 500 years as part of the Persian and Ottoman empires, Eastern Armenia became part of Tsarist Russia (with some areas being taken from Persia in 1828, and others from Turkey in 1878). Armenian societies, cultural and educational centres and publishing houses arose not so much in the areas of modern Armenia, but also in Moscow, Tbilisi, St. Petersburg, Baku, Constantinople, Paris, Venice, Vienna, etc. Constantinople and Tbilisi became the most important centres of Armenian musical culture. Both centres had strong links with European musical culture – Constantinople primarily with France and Italy, while in 1846 Tbilisi itself became a provincial centre within the Russian empire (Pahlevanyan & Kerovpyan & Sarkisyan 2001; Samuelian et al. 2003: 26).[13]

Under those conditions, the new generation of Armenian musicians was brought up in the Western tradition and the role of the educated elite was decisive in the rise of nationalist ideas in Armenia. Their relationship to the old Armenian tradition was different. They started to evaluate their ancient culture from the 'outside'. At the same time, in search of musical materials and ideas for new national music it was natural for them to turn to Armenian folklore (Shaverdyan 1989: 40).

This school had nothing in common with earlier Armenian musicians: for centuries musical skills were passed from masters to their apprentices and

singing was predominantly monodic, but the new musicians were educated in conservatories, and they spread polyphonic choral songs, formed orchestras, organised public concerts, etc. (Geodakyan 1969: 42, 48; Shaverdyan 1989: 47; Brutyan 1985: 15–16). Some younger musicians had studied in Europe, while some were taught by Russian composers who themselves had often received their education in Germany. For example, a composer of choral music, Kara-Mourza, had studied in Odessa and was one of the first to unify European composition techniques and Armenian folk tunes (Geodakyan 1969: 18). Makar Yekmalyan, who had a strong influence on Komitas, was Rimski-Korsakov's student and was therefore well acquainted with Russian ideas about musical nationalism (Geodakyan 1969: 36; Shaverdyan 1989: 66). Tigran Tchoukhadjian (1837–1898), who composed the first Armenian opera *Anush*, had studied in Milan; Nikoghayos Tigranyan (1856–1951) in Venice and St. Petersburg, etc. (Geodakyan 1969: 18; Pahlevanyan 2005: 21). Therefore it can be seen that Armenian Western-style interest towards traditional music positions itself towards the Russian sphere of influence, while ideas about collecting and studying folk melodies originate in German comparative musicology of the late nineteenth century.

Among them, Komitas is considered as one of the most important figures. Part of the reason might be that, compared to other early folklorists, he was international and extensive in his activities: he studied musicology in Germany, gave lectures at conferences in France and Turkey, he was member of the International Musical Society, etc. Brutyan, on the other hand, remained, for most of his working career, in Alexandropol. Komitas also travelled around Europe and communicated with European musicologists just at the time when the contemporary music history writing tradition was on the rise. Thanks to this serendipitous timing, Komitas promoted cultural values that later started to re-create his myth in the writings about Armenian history.

After completing his studies at the Gevorkian Theological Seminary in Vagharshapat in 1896, Komitas went to Berlin to study at the Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm University and at the private conservatory of R. Schmidt. After graduating with a doctorate in musicology, he returned to Vagharshapat where he applied his knowledge to re-organise music studies. He formed an orchestra of western instruments and composed new music for the Armenian liturgy, Patarag (Geodakyan 1969: 48, 42; Shaverdyan 1989:47). Brutyan also received his education at the Theological Seminary in Vagharshapat, and his activities reflect the institutional changes of the period: he formed several schools and church choirs, composed Armenian polyphonic choral songs, and organised public concerts (Brutyan 1985: 15).

Along with those new ideas, the movement towards collecting folk music developed, and was supported by the belief that the collective national spirit of people is the driving force in history (Dahlhaus 1983 [1980]: 81). Therefore, fieldwork became an important part of the Armenian national movement, and researchers studied their collections with methods acquired from their Western musical education. Transcriptions were based on authentic material, but the scores had to be understandable by the average Western musician or musicologist – those being the addressee of the research and publication. Folk tunes became 'museum pieces', something to conserve, exhibit, and use for composing music in the national style.

The Western audience was important for Komitas, as he had connections with international music institutions. From 1899, he belonged to the International Music Society. In 1906 and 1914 he gave lectures about Armenian traditional and church music at international musicological conferences in Paris (Muradyan & Atayan & Tatevosyan 1956: 26–32; Poladian 1972: 83). Also in Paris, he published his arrangements of folk tunes and organised concerts of Armenian music. Komitas also introduced Armenian music to Switzerland, Italy, Russia, etc. (Geodakyan 1969: 95; Shaverdyan 1989: 71). Komitas's own way of thinking was probably nation-centred, as he considered Armenian music to be something special. In an interview to the Armenian newspaper *Azatamart* in Constantinople, after returning from Paris in 1914, he emphasised that he had succeeded in convincing guests at the conference that Armenian music was of a high artistic value and that "it has been preserved in a more untouchable way than the music of some other nations" (Shaverdyan 1989: 305).

Komitas had also many students and friends who kept alive his memory and continued his school: composers Nikoghayos Tigranyan (1856–1951), Grikor Suni (1876–1939), Armen Tigranyan (1879–1950), Romanos Melikian (1883–1935), Anushavan Ter-Gevondian (1887–1961), Sargis Barkhudaryan (1887–1973), etc. (Muradyan 1960: 273–274), and folklorists Manuk Abegyan (1865–1944), Spiridon Melikyan (1881–1933), Barsegh Kanachian (1888–1967), Mihran Toumajian (1890–1973), and Vagharshak Srvandztian (1891–1958). Those folklorists were also characterised by more normative, European way of transcribing which was typical to the era and to the early folklore movement, and their transcriptions resemble more the transcriptions made by Komitas.[14]

Among Komitas's students, the most important input came from his pupil, musicologist Spiridon Melikyan. He studied under Komitas in Etchmiadzin, Armenian religious centre, and helped him at his work with the choir. Later, in 1904, Melikyan left for Berlin, where he stayed until 1908, to study with the same professors as Komitas. He transcribed folk tune transcriptions of Komitas

from Armenian notation system, called Limondjian system, into the European one, and prepared the songs for publishing in 1931 (Melikyan 1949: 22–23).

Among Komitas's friends were many Armenian cultural figures who participated actively in creating Armenian national culture, for example poet Hovhannes Tumanyan, together with whom Komitas wanted to write the opera *Anush*. Another friend of Komitas' was literary scholar Manuk Abeghyan. Together with Komitas, he published in 1903 a collection of folk songs titled *One Thousand and One Songs* (Shaverdyan 1989: 61–62), which can be seen as an allusion to west and south Asian story compilation *One Thousand and One Nights*, which became hugely popular in Europe since the Enlightenment era and symbolises Orient.

When it comes to transcribing folk tunes, Armenian early folklorists mostly used their own notational system, one that was comfortable for transcribing monody, but which also carried strong national significance by being derived from the Armenian seventh-century notation, the *khaz* system. At the beginning of the nineteenth century music theorist Hampartsoum Limondjian (1768–1839) took some symbols from the *khaz* system and adapted them to the diatonic scale.[15] The similarity between the new notation and the *khaz* system was just visual (Kushnaryov 1958: 351–356). In the second half of the nineteenth century, western notation also became widespread, as Limondjian's system was incomplete for writing polyphonic music (Atayan 1973: 168–186). Yet, the system was later used by many folklorists – also by Brutyan and Komitas – for transcribing monodic music. There was also an important ideological aspect concerning Limondjian's system. By the early nineteenth century, the *khaz* system had reached a crisis point as musicians no longer knew how to read it (Pahlevanyan & Kerovpyan & Sarkisyan 2001). By giving the symbols a new meaning, Limondjian hoped to preserve them in the memory of contemporary musicians (Kushnaryov 1958: 351–352). When it comes to the old *khaz* notation, one more aspect has to be noted. In Armenian musicological literature, it is often claimed that Komitas had almost discovered the key to reading the old *khaz*es, but his work was destroyed in the genocide.[16] Thanks to this, the claim has become a part of Komitas's reception, in which the genocide is linked to national heroism and martyrdom.

In the nineteenth century, there was a belief all over Europe that national spirit initially revealed itself in folk tunes and would later be embodied in the classical music of this national culture. Creating art music was seen as the aim of collecting and studying folk tunes and a perfect expression of the essential spiritual characteristics of the nation once embedded in folk music (Dahlhaus 1983 [1980]: 62). So, as in many other countries, folk tunes spread into Armenian art music. The intensity of the national message that was com-

municated by composition was for a long time evaluated by a composer's level of skill in using folk tunes (Nercessian 2000: 85). Armenian composers, such as Kara-Mourza, Makar Yekmalyan, and also Komitas, composed arrangements of Armenian folk tunes (Muradyan 1960: 273–274). In larger choral and polyphonic compositions that required the musical development of folk materials, most composers followed Komitas's principles (ibid.): melody lines and voice parts were created using the modes and rhythmic patterns of a folk tune taken as the thematic material of a new polyphonic composition (Kushnaryov 1958: 599–603). This makes Komitas the key figure among Armenian composers as he laid the foundation for the polyphonic (Western choral) repertoire so that it sounded Armenian and preserved recognisable Armenian tunes (Muradyan 1960: 273–274). At the same time, Brutyan's most valuable achievement was his work as a folklorist; he collected not only Armenian folk tunes but also a wider and more Middle Eastern tradition, the *ashugh* art (Brutyan 1985: 17).

CERTAIN PECULIARITIES OF ARMENIAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC

In Armenian traditional music we find peasant folk music with its common genres, such as work songs, ritual songs, lyrical songs, dance songs, and instrumental music. But there are also various traditions of professional music. One of the oldest known traditions is the art of *gusan*s. References to this tradition date back to sources from the fifth century. The tradition included narrators, singers, instrumentalists, dancers, and actors. *Gusan*s were professionals performing to an audience and this art was handed on from a master to his disciples. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the art of *ashugh* that spread across Armenia shared some features of the art of *gusan*s; however, there were certain differences in the form and content of their music as well as in their performance traditions. The name *ashugh* appears in many languages and comes from Arabic, meaning 'in love' (Pahlevanyan & Kerovpyan & Sarkisyan 2001). *Ashugh* art was largely based on the poetic formulas of Middle Eastern literature: it had much in common with the system of melodic modes used in Middle Eastern traditional music, i.e. Azeri *mugham*s, and Persian and Arabian *maqam*s, and it was often performed to the same audience (Kushnaryov 1958: 240–258; Pahlevanyan 2005: 33–34; Atayan 1965: 26–52). *Ashugh* art was both close and important to Brutyan, who lived in the *ashugh* centre of the nineteenth-century Alexandropol, and collected many *ashugh* songs (Brutyan 1985: 15–17). Komitas, on the other hand, according to the common narrative in Armenian musicological discourse, did not consider *ashugh* art to

be 'true' Armenian music as it was strongly influenced by Middle Eastern art (Shaverdyan 1989: 106–107).

As for its structural features, Armenian music is firmly rooted in the traditions of the Middle East. Both secular and medieval religious music are monodic traditions. The scales are not based on dividing the octave and repeating the intervallic structure an octave higher or lower. In Middle Eastern and Caucasian music, *vibrato*, *glissando*, and *tremolo* are widespread and concern a different intonation of certain scale steps. Among Armenian singers, the most common ambit for *vibrato* are whole tone, semitone, or less. *Vibratos* with the ambit of third and sometimes fourth resembling *tremolo* also appear, but less frequently. However, these are common phenomena in Islamic musical culture and occur in the music of Armenian *ashugh*s (Pahlevanyan 2005: 33–34), whose art crossed the borders of various states and empires. The rhythm in Armenian music is additive and rhythmic patterns of irregular duration follow each other, contrasting against the divisive rhythmic thinking in which a larger period of time is divided into smaller rhythmic units (Sachs 1953: 25).

While describing Armenian music, musicologists often use theoretical tools that are unambiguously associated with Western culture, which is very different from the culture of the Caucasus and the Middle East. Such an approach, which was particularly widespread before the era of sound recording, is problematic. Armenian traditional music has developed in the Middle Eastern sphere of culture, and contains phenomena that are structurally very different from Western classical music. For example, while describing the pitch structures of Armenian traditional music, all leading Armenian musicologists refer to its modal, diatonic structure.[17] However, European modal scales have nothing to do with Armenian music, as they go back to the medieval church modes and belong to the European pitch structuring system. Later, during the height of national romanticism, they were performed on equal-tempered instruments.

Armenians are certainly not the only nation to apply the concept of diatonic scales when it comes to describing their traditional music. This was and still is a common practice in many countries in Eastern Europe, something that started in the nineteenth century, when Ukrainian researcher Sokalsky aimed to set all traditional music within the frames of Greek diatonic tetrachords (Spencer 2001: 625–626). In the atmosphere of national awakening, several structural features of the folk music (and poetry) of small nations were used to prove their origin in ancient civilisations and their honourably long history. The use of diatonic scales for describing different types of folk music and linking them with ancient European musical cultures stimulated national pride (Ambrazevičius 2006; Lippus 1988: 89, 91). This approach seems to apply also to the historical development of the theory of Armenian traditional music. The

founder of this theory in Armenian music was again Komitas (Brutyan 1973: 226–228; Kushnaryov 1958: 11). This was one more of his many contributions to the European discourse in Armenian music theory.

There are also cognitive reasons that make descriptions of pitch structures in Armenian traditional music by projecting them on the diatonic scales unsuitable. The musical perception of many researchers, brought up in the Western tradition, often performs this transfer unconsciously when trying to analyse music in an unknown tuning system. Therefore, sometimes, analysis may rather blend the structure of music that it should explain, which was especially the case during the early folklore movement. It seems to be the case with Armenian music as well. Diatonic octave modes are applied in the analysis of melodies that use only part of the scale steps. However, several modes contain similar tetrachords, pentachords, and even hexachords, not to mention trichordal melodies. Also, problems occur when a song contains more than seven scale steps of a diatonic octave-mode (either with smaller intervals or different intervallic structures of scale segments). Twentieth-century researchers understood that diatonic scales did not offer enough opportunities for describing this repertoire. However, for example, musicologist Margarit Brutyan has proposed that in order to describe Armenian traditional music we have to form new scales by combining different diatonic octave-modes (Brutyan 1973: 231–233). Nevertheless, this method seems to make their usage for analysing Armenian traditional music even more disputable.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THE FOLK TUNE *CHEM CHEM*

This song is a dance song and we have three transcriptions of it, all made in Limondjian system.[18] One version is by Komitas (Fig. 1) and two more are by Brutyan (Figs. 2 and 3). The lyrics are approximately the same in all three versions. The melody of *Chem chem* consists of two lines, both begin and end with C (in one transcription Brutyan has presented C in the first two bar as a lower appoggiatura to D-flat). The final segments of the lines are similar but initial segments contrast: at the beginning of the first line of the melody, a motive is repeated, 'twisting' around the initial C (the whole scale is (G)-A-B-flat-C-D-flat-E-F),[19] while at the beginning of the second line, the melody ascends from C to F, bringing in the 'oriental' gap – an augmented second or minor third (D-flat-E) – which is described in terms of the European system of diatonic modes. In the transcriptions this characteristic element of the melody is presented differently: in Komitas's transcription the movement (D-flat-E)

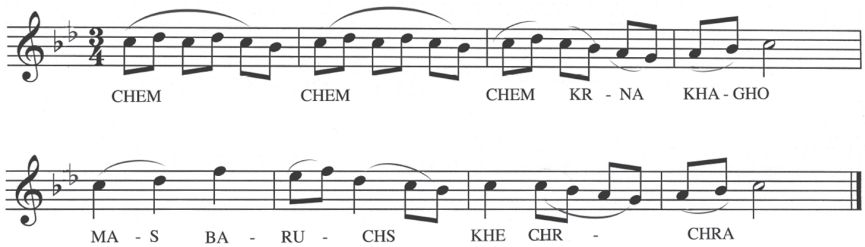

Figure 1. *Chem chem by Komitas.*

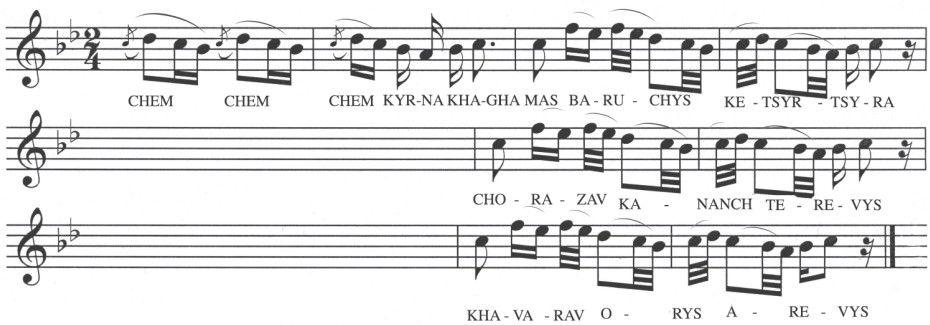

Figure 2. *1st version of Chem chem by Arshak Brutyan.*

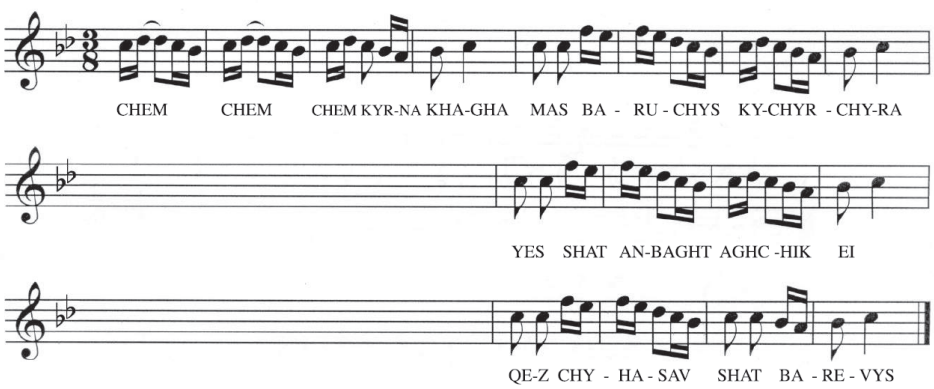

Figure 3. *2nd version of Chem chem by Arshak Brutyan.*

does not occur as a melodic interval between two consequent tones, while in Brutyan's, as we see below, that is much more prominent.

More remarkable differences between the transcriptions occur in the notation of rhythm. Armenian monodic music is melismatic and rhythms are irregular (Pahlevanyan & Kerovpyan & Sarkisyan 2001), and in Komitas's transcription this aspect is clearly smoothed, resulting in a rather simple melody in 3/4 time with relatively homogeneous movement. It is difficult to distinguish the embellishing tones from structurally more important ones. In stressed positions – such as the beginning of a bar or a beat, or a long note – the tone C prevails. Both melody lines contain four bars, just as in the structure of a classical period. As for the tonal structure, balance and completeness are not very strong, but certain developmental characteristics can be found at the beginning of the second melody line containing a rise to the high fourth. Only seconds and thirds are used as melodic intervals, although in the sixth bar this 'oriental' gap is noticeable between structurally important tones, but it does not occur directly in the melody.

Another important difference in Komitas's transcription as compared to Brutyan's is G in the final segment of both melody lines; thereby the melody in his transcription covers almost the whole octave span, confirming the impression that also tonal structure is 'adapted' to the western tradition. In this way, it would be easy to harmonise the melody and transpose it into different tonalities. This, in fact, was done by Komitas in his compilation of solo songs where the song was in G minor (Komitas 1960: 75–76). Of course, while singing or playing only the melody, it is possible to use this transcription as a scheme and perform rhythms as well as pitches more freely, so that a performer knowing the tradition would certainly be able to 'transform' the melody back to Armenian tradition.

Brutyan's transcriptions are rhythmically more diverse. He has transcribed one version of *Chem chem* in duple and the other in triple time (2/4 and 3/8). In both cases the eighth note is the basic time unit. It is quite common in Armenian folk music for the same melody to be used for dances with different time signature (Atayan 1965: 33–34). Regardless of the time signatures, the way Brutyan has transcribed rhythmic figures does not leave one with the impression of strict metrical thinking. When comparing the two transcriptions by Brutyan, one can easily imagine that it would have been possible to transcribe the two initial syllable figures in the same way: in both cases C is a short note before a much longer D-flat, followed by quickly descending to B-flat. The same closeness can be observed through the melody. Hence, live performances might not have been so different from the visual notation; rather, they just did not fit very well with the European notation system. At the beginning of the twentieth century

it was common for musicians-transcribers to consider the time-signature as something that was obligatory in notation, and they tried to convey the rhythms of various different traditions by means of using ever-changing signatures, ties, appoggiaturas, and various additional symbols to fit what they heard into the measures. In Brutyan's first (2/4) transcription, the visual image suggests stronger durational (structural) differentiation between the tones of the melody. Some notes are clearly embellishments to the longer and central tone of the syllable figure. As mentioned previously, Brutyan's transcriptions do not contain descending to G at the end of both lines, so the melody's pitch range is narrower (A-B-flat-C-D-flat-E-F). The most important difference, however, occurs at the beginning of the second line. In both of Brutyan's transcriptions the 'oriental' gap occurs between consecutive tones (in the descending passage F-E-D-flat). Although E is structurally less important, the characteristic 'oriental' sound becomes more prominent than in the transcription by Komitas. Certainly, all singers performed the song in their own way; however, a comparative analysis leaves the impression that Brutyan tried to record the melismatic character of the melody and its specific intonations while Komitas adapted it more in line with European ideas of a song.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SONG *LE LE YAMAN*

There are again three transcriptions of this lyrical song, one by Komitas (Fig. 4) and two by Brutyan (Figs. 5 and 6), all made in Limondjian system.[20] This time, Komitas has dropped the time signature and marked only structural divisions and repetitions with bar lines. The first section contains three melodic phrases that correspond to the structure of the stanza, while the second four and the second section are repeated, and therefore the form of the strophe is ABB. There are also repetitions in the phrases, with the three phrases of the first section containing two melodic motives, ABB, and the four phrases of the second section bring in only one more melodic motive that is repeated like a tonal sequence (ac1c2c3), with the last link ending in the 'tonic' G (we can think in terms of a natural *g*-minor or the dorian mode from G, but the tone E-flat or E that would define the mode unambiguously is missing and the scale is G-A-B-flat-C-D-F). Komitas has chosen longer rhythmic values than Brutyan, and the time signature is absent. This absence might have ideological meaning but in the context of Komitas's transcriptions it probably refers, with longer rhythmic values, to a slow and rhythmically-free performance in which the durations are vague and only long and short notes are clearly differentiated.

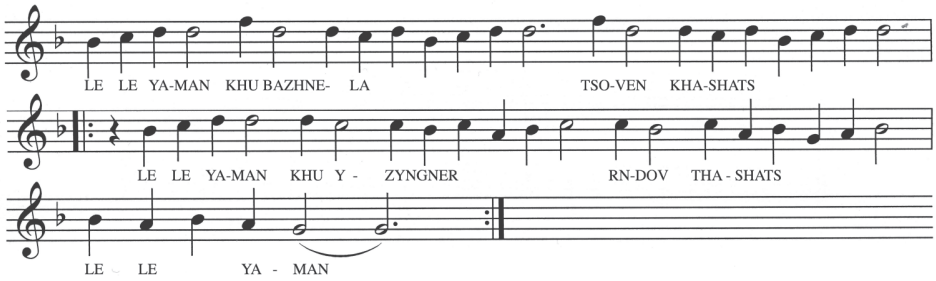

Figure 4. *Le le yaman by Komitas.*

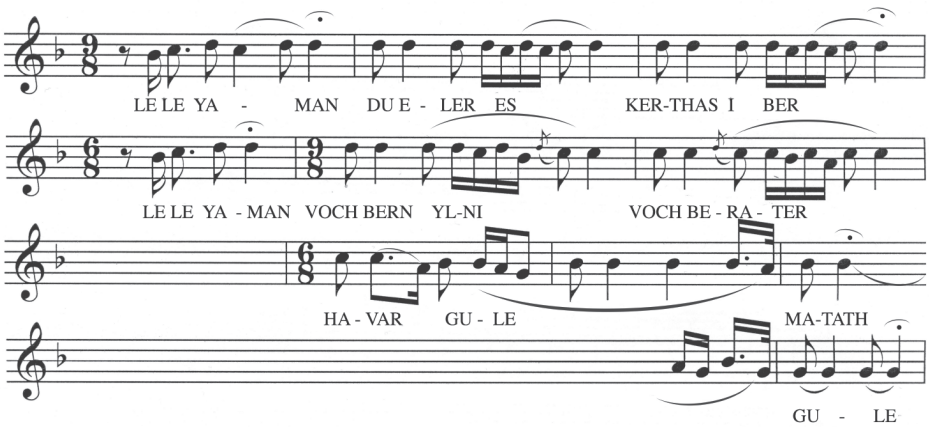

Figure 5. *1st version of Le le yaman by Arshak Brutyan.*

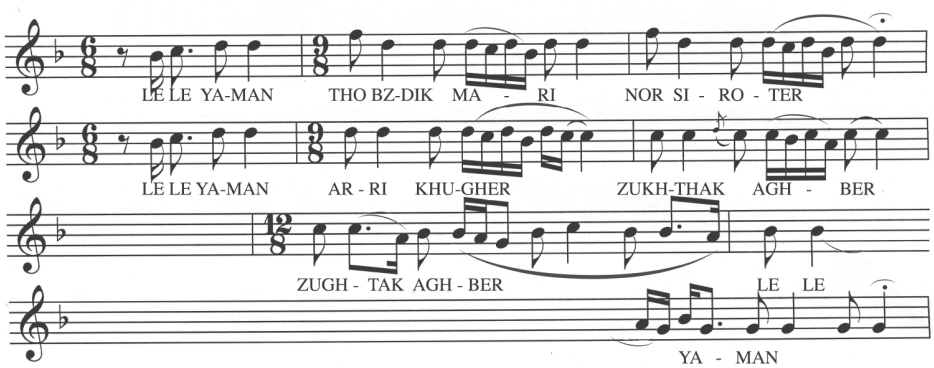

Figure 6. *2nd version of Le le yaman by Arshak Brutyan.*

Brutyan has preferred shorter note values, and has tried to record more nuances. In both transcriptions he has used the sixteenth, eighth, dotted eighth, and quarter notes, fermatas in some phrase endings, and once an appoggiatura and a tie. He has time signatures that constantly change. So his bar lines also mark structural divisions, but in this case using phrases (corresponding to the poetic lines), and not sections of the strophe.

What is more, Brutyan has recorded more small variations and embellishments in the melody and it does not seem so repetitive (schematic) as Komitas's transcription, although structural repetitions are the same. Quite an essential difference between Brutyan's own transcriptions is the lack of F in the first version, with the result that the tonal range of the melody is only fifth (G-A-B-flat-C-D). In Brutyan's second version and in Komitas's transcription, F occurs in accented positions and is an important characteristic of the song as, due to the lack of E-flat or E, the 'oriental' gap in the scale compares with the European diatonic modes.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to show how transcriptions of folk tunes can reveal ideas about national identity in a much wider cultural context.

The transcriptions of the songs that have been compared were very similar in many aspects, considering their formal and tonal structure. Evidently, to some extent, both folklorists relied on the same theoretical framework. For example, as was typical of the period, most of their notations were in G (Brutyan 1985: 18) and they used the Limondjian system. At the same time, there were remarkable and systematic differences in the transcriptions of rhythmical figures, metric (or non-metric) structures, and melodic figuration.

In Komitas's transcriptions the rhythmic patterns are simpler. It seems that he used schematised rhythms as if they were a more universal solution. Brutyan, on the other hand, seems to have tried to record the rhythmic thinking inherent in an Eastern culture in the Western notation as accurately as possible. Noteworthy differences can also be noticed concerning Komitas's and Brutyan's melodic thinking. The first, for example, is characterised by adjusting modes, 'masking' the supposed augmented second, etc. Hereby, one has to emphasise that the tendencies described above can also be seen in other transcriptions made by Komitas and Brutyan. While comparing transcriptions by both of them with live music, Brutyan's transcriptions seem more relevant. This way, an impression forms that there are so many differences in transcriptions not

because the songs were transcribed in different times and places but rather because of the priorities and personal choices made by folklorists.

As was said before, Komitas did not consider *ashugh* art to be 'real' Armenian music as it was strongly influenced by Middle Eastern art (Shaverdyan 1989: 106–107). The influences of European musical thinking can also be traced in the sound recordings: in 1912, he and his pupil, Spiridon Melikyan, were recorded performing folk tunes that they had collected. When compared to the recordings of traditional musicians, the intonations of Western classical music can clearly be heard.[21]

In contrast to Komitas, Brutyan did not work only with folk tunes, but transcribed much *ashugh* art music, and today this is considered to be his major contribution to Armenian musicology (Brutyan 1985: 17). Also, his transcriptions of simple folk melodies seem rather complex and often remind one of *ashugh* art. Unlike Komitas, Brutyan did not travel in the cultural centres of the West, but spent most of his life in Alexandropol, the centre of the *ashugh* community in the nineteenth century, and the famous *ashugh*s, Jivani and Sheram, often performed at his concerts (ibid.: 15). One can only guess how much those circumstances influenced what he valued in folk music while making the transcriptions.

Today, Komitas's folk tune transcriptions are used as an authoritative source of traditional music.[22] Indeed, they provide a good source of information for someone who knows the tradition. However, in Armenian traditional music we meet a blending of different cultures as this was a liminal space of various high cultures: Middle Eastern monody, European classical music, and traditional Armenian church singing. For that reason, the transcriptions from the nineteenth century should be approached carefully, as a comparison to recorded and living performances reveals that transcribers have 'corrected' the tunes, adapting them to the Western European system.

NOTES

[1] For example, according to Geodakyan, Komitas foresaw "his mission already in his youth, and moved towards it, obstinately and stubbornly" (S iunosheskikh let on slovno predugadal svoe predznaznachenie i otnyne shel k izbrannoi tseli priamo i uporno) (Geodakyan 1969: 48).

[2] *Ashugh*s – Middle Eastern minstrels who were narrators, singers, instrumentalists, dancers, and actors in one.

[3] Komitas: *The Complete Works*, vol. 9–13 (1999–2004); *Etnograficheskii sbornik, Armianskie narodnye pesni i pliaski*, tom 2 (Ethnographic collection, Armenian folk

songs and dances, vol. 2) (1950); *Armianskie narodnye pesni, etnograficheskii sbornik* (Armenian folk songs, ethnographic collection) (1931).

[4] Brutyan, Arshak 1985. *Ramkakan Mrmunjner* (Peasant Songs). Yerevan: Sovetakan groh.

[5] Gevonyan, Armenuhi: *Taroni zhoghovrdakan yergery* (Folk songs of Taron region) (1978); Toumajian, Mihran: *Armenian Folk Songs 4* (2005); Melikyan, Spiridon: *Armianskie narodnye pesni i pliaski 1* (Armenian folk songs and dances 1) (1949), *Armianskie narodnye pesni i pliaski 2* (Armenian folk songs and dances 2) (1952); Muradyan, Hayrik: *Rodnye pesni* (Native songs) (1980); Toumajian, Mihran: *Armianskie narodnye pesni 2* (Armenian folk songs 2) (1983), *Armianskie narodnye pesni 3* (Armenian folk songs and dances 3) (1986).

[6] Pahlevanyan, Alina: *Talin: Zhoghovrdakan yergery* [Talin: Folk Tunes] (1984). Yerevan: Sovetakan groh.

[7] Hayrik Muradyan. *Musical Relics of Armenia.* CD. Recorded in Armenia from 1958 to 1988. Digitally remastered by ADD. Sondex, 2000.

[8] Live performance by Margarit Voskanyan, four sessions on 12–14 January 2013.

[9] For such approaches see, for example, Levon Abrahamyan's *Armenia and Armenians between East and West* (www.noravank.am/upload/pdf/260_en.pdf, last accessed on October 9, 2015). See also the analysis of this topic by political scientist Ronald Grigor Suny, *Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations* (2001).

[10] In the original: "[---] zhiznennyi put' Komitasa otrazhaet ne tol'ko i ne stol'ko ego lichnuiu sud'bu, skol'ko sud'bu vsego armianskogo naroda".

[11] In the original: "V samom sud'be Komitasa, ego zhiznennom puti, ternistom i tragicheskom, otrazilas' tselaia epokha istorii armianskogo naroda. Vremia pod"ema natsional'nogo samosoznaniia, bor'by, rozhdavshikhsia nadezhd i vremia sversheniia uzhasnoi tragedii 1915 goda, zatmivshei samye strashnye stranitsy mnogostradal'noi armianskoi istorii. Komitas do kontsa ispil gor'kuiu chashu stradanii, vypavshikh na doliu ego naroda."

[12] See, for example, Geodakyan 1969, Shaverdyan 1989, Pahlevanyan & Kerovpyan & Sarkisyan 2001.

[13] This, in fact, reflects broader changes: according to Smith, there was a clear division between a Western-orientated, more liberal Armenian nationalism emanating from the diaspora in Istanbul, Vienna, and Paris, and an Eastern-orientated revolutionary nationalism which owed more to Russian populism and German thought (Smith 2010: 12).

[14] For example, Toumajian, Mihran: *Armianskie narodnye pesni 4* (Armenian Folk Songs 4) (2005); Melikyan, Spiridon: *Armianskie narodnye pesni i pliaski 1* (Armenian folk songs and dances 1) (1949) and *Armianskie narodnye pesni i pliaski 2* (Armenian folk songs and dances 2) (1952); Toumajian, Mihran: *Armianskie narodnye pesni 2* (Armenian folk songs 2) (1983) and *Armianskie narodnye pesni 3* (Armenian folk songs 3) (1986).

[15] There were some differences in intoning the scale steps *vernaghagh* (*e* in Western notation) and *nerknaghagh* (*a* in Western notation).

[16] See, for example, Geodakyan 1969: pp. 84–85.

[17] See, for example, Brutyan 1973: 226–229; Pahlevanyan 2002: 10.

[18] Transcriptions into the European system were made by the author.

[19] G occurs only in Komitas's version.

[20] Transcriptions into the European system were made by the author.

[21] The Voice of Komitas Vardapet (CD). Recorded in Paris, 1912, digitally remastered by *Anima Vox*. OCTA Records Co Ltd., 1994.

[22] See, for example, the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

House-Museum of Charents in Yerevan: *Chem chem* Komitas, fund 302, No. 131; *Chem chem* Brutyan, fund 4, No. 136; *Le le jaman* Komitas, fund 302, No. 135; *Le le jaman* Brutyan, fund 3, No. 31.

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