

NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN PRE-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUGHAM

Nationalism and cultural enlightenment in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan

The seed that gave rise to the Azerbaijani intelligentsia in the nineteenth century was planted with the European and Russian education sought by the native elites (Cornell 2011: 12). Many members of Azerbaijan's high society studied in Russian universities that were modelled on German institutions and included European works of philosophy and literature in their curricula. The ideologies they were exposed to, coupled with the religious modernization among Turkic neighbours and national awakenings in the Caucasus, all influenced the Azerbaijani intelligentsia to enact change. First, the forging of the Azerbaijani national identity was sparked and quickly gained momentum. Second, prominent figures of Azerbaijan's elite, such as Haji ZeinalAdibinTaghiyev, Musa Naghiyev, and ShamsiAsadullayev, began to invest into the arts, thereby fuelling a cultural enlightenment. The latter process, as Audrey Altstadt explains, is akin to Europe's Enlightenment rather than the Renaissance (Altstadt 2016: 1). It was led by a number of educated men who "shared a vision that learning would elevate their Muslim Turkic community to the level of contemporary Europe which they identified with enlightenment, reason, science and technology, social reform, political participation and constitutionalism" (Altstadt 2016: 1).

While ideologies related to Azerbaijani nationalism and enlightenment were borrowed from external sources, they were implemented by the native elites who subsequently established and fostered them internally. Members of the elite had close ties to the leading performers of *mugham*. One of the most prominent representatives of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia, Uzeyir Hajibeyov, wrote about this link between *mugham* and the bourgeoisie of Azerbaijan: "Musical and aesthetic needs of pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie

circles were met by the art of *sazandar* – knowers of traditional music, skilful performers who were able to induce in listeners the state of *nəşə* [a kind of intoxication with music] which led to many of them weeping” (Hajibeyov 1966: 51). According to many sources (e.g. Hajibeyov 1966; Shushinsky 1979), *mugham* performers and the intelligentsia often mingled at the same events such as *mugham* gatherings and weddings, collaborating on developing art and music. Thus, ideologies of the elites described above were circulating among *mugham* figures and affecting their activity. The forging of a national identity in Azerbaijan inspired the cultivation of *mugham*. For example, both *tar* playing and *xanəndə* singing experienced breakthroughs at the end of the nineteenth century as a result of the innovations made by *tarzən* Mirza Sadig Asadoglu and *xanəndə* Jabbar Garyagdioglu, who were from the city of Shusha. The synchronicity of these two milestones was no coincidence. While Mirza Sadig Asadoglu, also known as Sadigjan, revolutionized the structure of the *tar*, making it distinctly Azerbaijani, Jabbar Garyagdioglu was the first to introduce *ghazal* singing in Azerbaijani rather than Persian, as had been customary. Both of these changes were similar in nature because they were aimed at making *mugham* into a more uniquely Azerbaijani artistic form. In this presentation, I will discuss how the *tar* and *mugham* underwent changes in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan that reflected the formation of national consciousness at this time.

Formation of the *mugham* trio

One of the most prominent developments was the establishment of the Azerbaijani *mugham* trio. From the writings of prominent singers Jabbar Garyagdioglu (1861-1944) and Bulbul (1897-1961), it is evident that during the first half of the nineteenth century *xanəndə* performed with *tar*, *kamança* and *balaban* (double-reed wind instrument), while during the second half of that century with *tar*, *kamança* and *qoşanağara* (paired drums with rounded backs) (Shushinsky 1979: 22). The Azerbaijani *mugham* trio as it exists today was formed in the early twentieth century to become the standard national ensemble for *mugham* performance. Once it crystallized, this arrangement withstood even the most drastic upheavals of the Soviet regime and continues to be the popular medium of *mugham*.

Creation of the Azerbaijani *Tar*: Shusha's Sadigjan

The mountainous westernmost region of Azerbaijan called Karabakh is home to the nation's historically most important musical centre – Shusha. Countless acclaimed *mugham* instrumentalists and vocalists were born in and around this city, including Sadigjan, Gurban Primov, Jabbar Garyagdioglu, Khan Shushinsky, Seyyid Shushinsky, and many others. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, Shusha acquired a pivotal role in Azerbaijan's political, economic, and cultural spheres (Shushinsky 1968: 54). There was a lot of trade centred on Shusha and the city's international links directly impacted its cultural achievements. In this milieu, activity related to the native culture, including *mugham*, flourished. Furthermore, the religiosity of the city – manifested in the opulence of mosques and effervescent observance of rituals within the Islamic calendar (Shushinsky 1979: 54) – helped to cultivate *mugham*.

The formation of a single “Azerbaijani” national *tar* by Sadigjan took place at the end of the nineteenth century in Shusha. After this groundbreaking achievement, his version of the *tar* was popularized in all the main urban centres of Azerbaijan. Before this, there was much variation in the instruments played across Azerbaijan's geographical regions, and it seems that in many areas the instrument was missing. For example, historical accounts of travellers disclose that the *tar* was not as prominent in the Absheron and Shirvan areas, suggesting that it was introduced later at the turn of the twentieth century. For example, one *tar* master with whom I studied confirmed that in the Absheron region there were no instruments such as the *tar* and *kamança* before late nineteenth century. Instead, *saz* was the main instrument used in performances along with *tutek* and *zurna* (Elkhan Mansurov, interview, 27 July 2016). Likewise, the *tar* is missing in reports about the Shirvan area, where a wealthy landowner Mahmud Aga held his musical *məclisesin* in the nineteenth century. A vivid description of a musical *soirée* has been preserved in Alexandre Dumas's travel journals, offering a glimpse into the musical scene in Shemakhi at the time (Shushinsky 1979: 16).

Unlike in the Absheron and Shirvan regions, biographical data about *mugham* musicians shows that the *tar* was prevalent in Karabakh from the early nineteenth century. However, before the birth of the distinct national Azerbaijani *tar* by Sadigjan, this instrument in the Caucasus was very similar to the *tar* found across the border in Iran and was locally referred to as the

“Caucasus tar.” Only after the transformation of the *tar* by Sadigjan was a uniquely Azerbaijani *tar* called “Karabakh tar” developed:

Before, there used to be the “Caucasus tar” which was made in Tbilisi. After the innovations of Sadigjan, the new tars were made and called “Karabakh” tars and from here everything began to evolve. Presently the tar we (in Azerbaijan) play has the sound of an entire orchestra. This is the tar tied to Sadigjan. God bless him (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.36: 3).

Both secondary sources and current masters who know well the history of *mugham* assert that it was Ali Shirazi who brought the five-string *tar* to Azerbaijan (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 89; Shushinsky 1982). At the time the *tar* had five strings, 28 frets along its neck, a small belly, and was played on the knees. One knowledgeable musician reported: “Sadigjan learned from Ali Shirazi, Kharrat Gulu, and Kor Khalif. They all came from Iran, but these were Azerbaijanis. They knew *mugham* and religion well. And they came to Azerbaijan to perform in religious rituals” (Valeh Rahimov, interview, 11 December 2015). Admittedly, throughout his life, Sadigjan maintained prominent ties with Iran and the *tar* performance tradition there. Shushinsky recounts that once, when travelling to Iran, Sadigjan cut the frets (*pərdə*) on his *tar*, and intimidated Iranian *tar* players who, as a result, refused to compete with him. He also performed very well for Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-96) who then awarded him medals and gold. The Shah asked him to stay at court, but Sadigjan said that he could not live without Karabakh. However, the master did live intermittently in Iran and from 1875-78 he engaged in extensive study of the Iranian *tar* which led to his revolutionary adjustments made to the instrument.

The seventeen-fret system that characterizes Azerbaijani *tar* was Sadigjan’s primary creation (Dzhani-zade 1998: 67). Abdulgassimov underscores that the Azerbaijani fret system devised by Sadigjan is similar to other modal systems of “Eastern peoples” in terms of the quantity (17 tones), yet different in its interior structure (Abdulgassimov 1990: 33). As is evident, Sadigjan’s goal was to make the fret system match the unique modal palette of Azerbaijani music. Shushinsky states that he got rid of many *pərdə* and left only 17 in one octave. As he omitted certain frets, he also added others.

For instance, the first *pərdə* that measures a semitone from the open string is an insertion of Sadigjan. This *pərdə* is called *zabul* and according to primary sources in Azerbaijan's archives, it was added so that *mugham zabul* could be sung correctly in a lower register (Mansurov, "Bahram Mansurov's written notes", 650.1.32: 3). Another document states that in no other Eastern country are *maqam* modes played on the first *zabul pərdə* (Mansurov, "Rules about *mugham şöbə*", 650.1.25: 37).

As mentioned above, prior to Sadigjan's adaptations, the *tar* usually had five strings. The two pairs of ringing *zəng* strings and the *bas* string were other important additions of the master-performer. According to Abdulgassimov, there is great advantage in these strings as they are used in "the harmonic way" (Abdulgassimov 1990: 26). They are often played at the end of musical sentences (*cümlə*, *güşə*, and *şöbə*), or between *avaz* segments, functioning as punctuation marks that signal short pauses. These can also be used in the middle of fragments to add more colour to a *mugham* and maintain a steady background sound of one of the fundamental tones. Moreover, the *bas* and four *zəng* strings provide symmetry in the main tuning, thereby achieving balance and stability in the overall tuning system. As a result, the *tar* does not go out of tune frequently. Lastly, various techniques and virtuosic patterns are played with these strings, giving Azerbaijani *mugham* its uniqueness and brilliance. Among musicians, the following expression is notable: "A *tar* without the sympathetic strings is like pilaf without butter" (*Cingənəsiz tar yağsız aş kimidir*) (Chelebiyev 2009: 50). Importantly, Abdulgassimov writes, "having increased the number of the strings of the *tar* Mirza Sadig gained the wide use of the *tar* as a solo instrument and especially it created the solo instrumental opportunity of *mugham*" (Abdulgassimov 1990: 32). In other words, attaching the extra strings was the decisive step towards making the instrument into a solo one.

Another one of Sadigjan's inventions was the new position of playing on the *tar*: the instrument was raised to chest level instead of being rested on the knees while performing. According to musicians, Sadigjan made changes to the big and small bellies of the instrument in order to facilitate playing on the chest: these parts were hollowed deeper for a broader diameter and a more oval shape. However, Jean During counters the claim that this position for performing was an invention of Sadigjan because the school of Ali-Akbar Farahani in mid-nineteenth century in Iran was already employing it (During 1988: 57).

In addition, Sadigjan added a connecting sound post inside the bellies for support, and at the same time allowed for increased intensity of sound. This created the vibration called *xun* (sorrow) that is commonly used during a performance when the *tar* is shaken for an echo effect. Abdulgassimov again underscores the particularity of the Azerbaijani *tar* due to these features: “We would like to mention that there had not been such qualities in the musical instruments of the Eastern world” (Abdulgassimov 1990: 23). An interesting conclusion is drawn by Dzhani-zade who writes that the change in playing posture made this instrument into a Turkic one because the Azerbaijani *saz* – linked to its Turkic heritage – is held at the same height on the chest and could have served as a model for Sadigjan (Dzhani-zade 1998: 66).

Besides innovations related to the instrument’s structure, Sadigjan expanded the repertoire and the playing technique. For example, he added (a) a *şöbə* section *manəndə müxalif* to *mirzahüseynsegah*, (b) *şöbəhasarmuhali* to *zabul*, and (c) many different parts to *mahur*, thus greatly enriching these *mughams*. Moreover, the ancient dances and *rəngs* such as *turacı*, *ceyranı*, *uzundərə*, *tərəkəmə*, *vağzal* that are still played today, were all composed by Sadigjan (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.36: 3). In this way, he not only defined the specificity of the Azerbaijani *mugham* system but also contributed to the nationalization of Azerbaijani music.

The level of *tar* virtuosity was advanced considerably by the master due to the numerous new techniques and tricks he created. There are many accounts about Sadigjan’s remarkable skills, such as these below by Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov (1872-1955), a *tar* player from Baku whose lineage forebears were close to Sadigjan:

Father used to say that he [Sadigjan] played with one hand. His fingers were covered with burnt candle remains and then placed into a wool scarf. The callus that formed as a result, made his playing sound as if the right hand’s plectrum was involved when it wasn’t (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.32: 3).

Once Sadigjan and Lazar [famous tar player from Sadigjan’s time] were present in one məclis. After playing for a bit, Sadigjan suddenly took a knife and cut off the frets on his tar. He began to play without them. The audience was mesmerized (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 106).

Shusha's significance for the evolution of the *tar* is highlighted by another crucial circumstance: performers of *mugham* showcased their art at public concerts for the first time in 1897. Subsequently, similar events were introduced in other cities such as Baku. Hence, another context for *mugham* was created and musicians began to perform for various organized charity events (Ismailzade 2006: 46). Prior to this, traditional music could only be heard at weddings, religious rituals, and *məclis* gatherings, all of which were exclusive to a certain degree. The new venue for performing *mugham* publicly also contributed to the development and enhancement of the Azerbaijani *tar*. The *tar* was not only brought on the stage but also made into a solo instrument, superseding its former role as an accompaniment instrument. Bagirova explains that the *tar* was transformed in the nineteenth century, establishing the tradition of solo instrumental performance of *mugham* (Bagirova 2007: 144).

Sadigjan maintained a very strong link to the Absheron musicians. He first came to Baku in 1878 when he was invited by Meshedi Melik Mansurov (1845-1909), the head of the main Absheron "Mansurov" *tar* lineage. Afterwards, he always came to participate at the *mugham məclis* gatherings held by Meshedi Melik Mansurov. Mahmud Aga, a wealthy patron of traditional music in the Shirvan region, also heard about Sadigjan and sent a golden carriage with Arabian horses to fetch him. Thus, Sadigjan cultivated connections to the main *mugham* regions in Azerbaijan at that time, and this certainly promoted his new instrument which soon spread all over the nation and became the standard version. As Chelebiyev notes:

The new Azerbaijani tar [Sadigjan's version] spread in North [Caucasus] and South [Iranian] Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and later in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Dagestan, and Turkey. In all the named places, up until this day, musicians play precisely on the new Azerbaijani tar, meaning on the tar of Sadigjan. From the time of Sadigjan to current days, Azerbaijan is the country of the tar, similar to the opera tradition of Italy. The old tar is only used by Persian musicians (Chelebiyev 2009: 13).

While Chelebiyev stresses the geographical dissemination and popularity of the *tar*, he also refers to this as an instrument representative of Azerbaijan. As highlighted before, all the advancements of Sadigjan were aimed at

creating a uniquely Azerbaijani *tar* in line with the nationalization that dominated this era. Certainly, many comments presented above by today's musicians and scholars accentuate the fact that Sadigjan's changes made the instrument more "Turkic" and separated it from the Iranian version that had been predominant in Azerbaijan before.

Baku *tar* lineages: Absheron *məclis* tradition and the development of *mugham*

Similar to Shusha, there were public concerts, *xanəndə* schools, and *məclis* esin Baku and the Absheron suburban towns. Out of these three, it seems that the musical *məclis*es were especially conspicuous and pivotal in this region. Here, musicians, poets, dervishes, writers, and members of the intelligentsia worked together to transform *mugham*, with particular focus on developing the consonance between music and words. Young musicians and poets participated in these gatherings and learned by performing and receiving criticism from the connoisseurs. Hence, the *məclis*es were also known as "schools" (Imrani 2000: 3). Shushinsky describes these *məclis*es as meetings for high-class people in which *xanəndə* sang full *dəstgah*s and no dancing was allowed (Shushinsky 1979: 20). Indeed, this is where the most elaborate and complex forms of *mugham* were performed. These "musical *məclis*" as Shushinsky (1979) calls them were different from religious or wedding gatherings that also featured *mugham*. The former did not seem to have a specific function except for aesthetic enjoyment and development of the music's structure. Moreover, discovering the virtuosic potential of performance was highly encouraged in this context, aligned with ideologies of identity formation and nationalism characteristic of the times.

The first *tar* player in the Mansurov legacy was Meshedi Melik Mansurov. His father, Aga Salah (1800-48), was the figure in charge of the first underground musical gatherings in Baku prior to his son. These well-off landowners owned a very spacious house in the Old City of Baku near the Juma Mosque where the meetings took place. The *məclis*es of Meshedi Melik Mansurov, unlike those that were being held before, were focused on *mugham*. Furthermore, they strengthened the networks among musicians from different regions in Azerbaijan and beyond. As a result, with these *məclis* that began in the 1880s, the *mugham* system was developed in an unprecedented manner. In order to build up his *məclis* enterprise, Meshedi

Melik Mansurov began to befriend all visiting musicians and host them at his house. He even made arrangements for his servants to guard main roads that led into and out of Absheron and watch for any people with instruments. Soon Meshedi Melik Mansurov developed an extensive network of musicians and began to gather them for performances of *mugham*. As the news about his *məclis* spread throughout Azerbaijan, leading musicians and poets from Karabakh and Shirvan started to join these musical happenings on a regular basis. In the beginning, the *məclises* featured only performances of *mugham*. With time, the sessions evolved to incorporate discussions about *mugham* and collaborative effort towards expansion and organization of the system.

One of the few people who could equal Meshedi Melik Mansurov's musicianship and knowledge at that time was Sadigjan and the two were very close friends who always consulted with each other on matters regarding *mugham* (Mansurov, "Bahram Mansurov's written notes", 650.1.32: 5).

Another contemporary of Meshedi Melik Mansurov, Mirza Faraj (1847-1927) was also from the Old City of Baku. Like Sadigjan, he made significant changes related to the *tar*, but his innovations were mainly techniques appropriate to the new version of the instrument (Chelebiyev 2009: 13). He was a virtuoso and a knower. His granddaughter described him as such: "Grandfather was a lover of *ghazal* poetry. He recited *ghazals* in Azerbaijani and in Persian with great inspiration" (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 23). It is probable that this insight into the poetical aspect of *mugham* fuelled his creativity in terms of *tar* technique. There are recollections about him being unable to finish one *dəstgah* in three hours because of the imaginative engagement he demonstrated with *mugham* through technique (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 29).

Meshedi Melik Mansurov had two sons who continued the Mansurov musical legacy: Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov and Mirza Mansur (1887-1967). Just like their father, the Mansurov brothers both helped to develop the *məclises*. Imrani explains:

If in the məclises of Meshedi Melik (from 1863 to 1909) the focus was on the rules and regularities of the whole dəstgah form and the link between music and poetry, the meetings of Meshedi Suleyman (from 1909 to 1920) continued to evolve the foundations of instrumental playing established in the school of Meshedi Melik, systematizing them.

Meshedi Suleyman's mæclises also stressed the musical interludes – tæsnif, ræng, diringæ.

Mirza Mansur, continuing the tradition of mæclis (from 1920 to 1964), centred his activity on problems associated with the techniques of playing on traditional instruments. Advancing the methods of modulation, he developed the improvisational aspect of mugham performance. He had a great role in creation of methods for teaching tar playing (Imrani 2000: 32).

Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov had very close ties to all the *mugham* performers of those days and therefore was pivotal in the musical scene: “Meshedi Suleyman remained in history as one *mugham*’s distinguished knowers. There was no artist, no musician at this time, who had not been a guest at his house” (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 9). Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov’s *tar* was exemplary of the late nineteenth century since it had 11 strings, 17 tones in an octave, and 22 frets along the neck (Abdullayeva 2000: 96). This was Sadigjan’s new version of the *tar* that by this time became the popular model in Azerbaijan. Indeed, Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov was a devoted friend of Sadigjan, just like his father. There are memoirs of Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov, written by his son Bahram Mansurov (1911-85):

For the wedding of Shamsi Asadullayev’s son Mirza, Sadigjan and his trio were invited from Tbilisi to Baku. 500 gold units were offered. I [Suleyman Mansurov] was the best man at this wedding. They began to play hūmayun. I was looking at the players and listening. I saw that everyone is playing but all the performers are in such unison that it all sounds like one. The xanəndə was also singing. Only when they were playing the cadence, it became clear that all three were performing. I could not stand it and began to cry. Shamsi Asadullayev approached and asked “Suleyman, why are you crying? This is a wedding!” I said “Uncle, you do not understand the way they are performing” And what did I do? I announced to everyone “one diamond ring, now.” I told the groom to bring his ring and give it to Sadigjan – there was never a player like this, and there never will be! (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.36: 2-3).

Conclusions

The Azerbaijani elites joined forces striving to improve the status quo of the community they represented within the Russian empire. The gradual growth of local nationalism spilled into the activities and ambitions of native *mugham* musicians. For example, at the Karabakh and Absheron *məclises*, poets and singers worked together with master-instrumentalists to develop the *mugham* system. This collaboration unfolded within musicians' broad networks between major cities in Azerbaijan and musical centres in the vicinity, such as Tehran and Tbilisi. One central achievement that characterized the pre-Soviet context in Azerbaijan was the creation of a unique Azerbaijani *mugham* trio. Another milestone was the creation of the Azerbaijani *tar* by Sadigjan. This new version of the *tar* was soon popularized in all the regions of Azerbaijan and beyond, becoming an important symbol of the emerging national identity.

Key words: mugham, tar, Sadigjan, Shusha, Absheron.

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Polina Desyatniçenko (Kanada)**Sovet dövrünə qədərki Azərbaycanda milli özünüdərk
və muğamın inkişafı**

Məqalədə XIX əsrin sonu – XX əsrin əvvəllərində milli identikliyin formalaşmasının və mədəni maarifin çiçəklənməsinin muğamın və tarın inkişafına təsiri nəzərdən keçirilir. Sadıqcan tərəfindən Azərbaycan tarının təkmilləşdirilməsi birinci dərəcəli əhəmiyyətə malik olmuşdur ki, bu da sonralar Bakıda yeni alətin populyarlaşmasına və yayılmasına gətirib çıxartdı. Bununla yanaşı, bu günə qədər muğam ifaçılığının əsas forması olan üçlüyün formalaşması baş tutdu. O dövrdə muğamın inkişafına təsir göstərən mühüm amillərdən biri musiqi məclislərinin qurulması idi. Burada muğam-dəsgah janrı formalaşmış və bununla əlaqədar olaraq muğam təkmilləşmiş, diferensiallaşaraq İran rədifı kimi digər modal musiqi sistemlərindən ayrılmış, beləliklə də unikal Azərbaycan milli identikliyinə mühüm göstəricisinə çevrilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: muğam, tar, Sadıqcan, Şuşa, Abşeron.

Полина Десятниченко (Канада)**Национальное самосознание в досоветском Азербайджане
и развитие мугама**

В статье рассматривается влияние формирования национальной идентичности и расцвета культурного просвещения в Азербайджане на развитие мугама и тара в конце XIX и начале XX веков. Первостепенное значение имело усовершенствование азербайджанского тара Садыхджаном, что привело к последующей популяризации и распространению новой формы инструмента в Баку. Наряду с этим произошло

формирование трио, которое является основной формой исполнения мугама по сей день. Одним из важных факторов, повлиявших на развитие мугама в то время стала среда мажлисов. Здесь сформировался жанр мугам-дастгах, и в связи с этим, мугам был усовершенствован и дифференцирован от других модальных музыкальных систем, таких как иранский радиф, став, таким образом, важным показателем уникальной азербайджанской национальной идентичности.

Ключевые слова: мугам, тар, Садыхджан, Шуша, Абшерон.