

ПРАКТИЧНА КУЛЬТУРОЛОГІЯ

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RABIZ: THE UNINTENDED CHILD OF 1960S' URBAN CULTURE

The article discusses the ideological, social and cultural conditions that made possible the formation and development of "rabiz," a form of urban musical folklore, in the 1960s. Rabiz is described as an undesired result of the Socialist modernization process. It had received certain important aspects from the preserved forms of pre-Soviet urban culture but for some of its key features owes to the soviet cultural policy of the 1930s and the socio-cultural tendencies of the Soviet Armenia of the 1960s and 1970s. Rabiz was a side effect of the industrialization and urbanization of the 60s and was then radically transformed and degraded during the process of post-Soviet deindustrialization.

Keywords: urban musical folklore, folk music and its institutionalization, urbanization, industrialization/deindustrialization, colonial legacy, cultural policy.

Formulation of the problem. The period of Khrushchev liberalization and the years following it were a time of transformation and extension for the capital of Soviet Armenia Yerevan. Parallel to the development of a new metropolitan culture, in some sense an opposite process was taking place—the construction of new districts and rapid growth of population at the expense of the rural population. This was partly justified by the industrial needs of Yerevan. If the first general plan of reconstruction and development of Yerevan approved in 1924 (architect Alexander Tamanian) was intended for 150,000 inhabitants, Yerevan's population had reached 1 million during the 1980s, which comprised about one-third of the country's overall population.

Analysis of research and publications. The soviet study is represented by works of such researchers as J. Cadiot, T. Martin, D. Hoffman, A. Nercessian, R. Stites.

Purpose of the article. The purpose of the study is to analyze the phenomena of the formation and development of "rabiz," a form of urban musical folklore, in the 1960s.

Exposition of the main material of the study. The emergence of a new urban culture also meant the nationalization of the city. This was a common cultural tendency in literature, art, and cinema, which was also expressed in the process of rethinking the urban space. It was during this period that a few symbolic buildings and statues appeared in Yerevan—the statue of the hero of the national epic the David of Sassoun, the Mother Armenia monumental statue (on the pedestal of Stalin's statue, which had been removed), and the memorial to the victims of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Turkey. Along with the formation of a new national intellectual stratum, a new national narrative was being formed in literature and other fields of cultural expression. This era, this process of transformation is commonly called a "national awakening." Nevertheless, the nationalist framework was too narrow to confine the cultural diversity of those years. It was rather eager to oppress, to expel, or even to assimilate than to tolerate the newly-emerged marginal forms among which, ranging from ethnographic song and dance to rock music, a form of urban musical folklore, one might call it a subculture, came forth named "rabiz." There is no consensus on the emergence and the stages of development of rabiz. Although in the recent years it has often been talked and written about, it has actually not been studied properly, and one of the purposes of this article is to outline a certain research approach to it. In this respect, two things need to be taken into account: rabiz, which has been gradually spreading and becoming popular since the 1960s, should not be considered the continuation or a simple survivor of Yerevan's "Eastern" folklore of the pre-Soviet and early Soviet era and should not be identified with the music that bears the

same name today either. Thus, I will try to describe rabiz as a Soviet phenomenon, as an undesired result of the Socialist modernization process, which of course had received certain important aspects from the preserved forms of pre-Soviet urban culture but for some of its key features owes to the socio-cultural tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, my opinion is that rabiz came forth and was formed as a side effect of the industrialization and urbanization of the 60s and was then radically transformed and degraded during the process of post-Soviet deindustrialization and, more generally, demodernization.

Some historical facts could be helpful to start the discussion around rabiz. For many centuries, as a result of being under the rule of different conquerors, Yerevan's Muslim (Turks, Persians, Kurds) population outnumbered the Armenian inhabitants significantly. For almost a century, since Eastern Armenia joined the Russian Empire in 1828 up until the foundation of the first Republic of Armenia in 1918 and the establishment of the Soviet rule shortly afterwards (1920), Yerevan, despite being subjected to significant democratic, economic, and urbanistic transformations, mostly remained a multiethnic "Eastern city" not only with its crooked streets and clay houses, which are often mentioned in the descriptions of the city, but with its culture as well. One can get a clear idea of this cultural situation with the help of 1920s' press and fiction literature and memoirs of those times. During the 20th century, this heavy colonial heritage proved to be much more durable and influential (especially in the case of musical folklore) than many would want it to be.

Meanwhile, in the cultural centers of the Russian Empire such as Petersburg, Moscow, and Tiflis, Eastern Armenian secular intellectuals of the 19th century, responding to the ideas of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, had developed a new, modern conception of Armenianness and the national ideology. In 1920s, having access to this knowledge created during many decades and having the desire of building a modern country, a big number of intellectuals and professionals came to Yerevan from Europe and Russia, who, despite difficult economic and unfavorable cultural conditions, engaged in the realization of programs of institutionalization and development of architecture, fine arts, classical music, art as well as other cultural practices.

The New Life of Folk Music

Even the consistent Soviet cultural policy and the efforts of the intellectual elite were not sufficient for the urban culture characterized as "Eastern" to disappear within a few decades. I use quotation marks to emphasize that here the meaning of "Eastern" is the result of comparison with the capital of the Soviet Armenia that had adopted the modernization path and, apart from being descriptive, has

a negative if not a contemptuous connotation. (Let us note that, for instance, the above-mentioned general plan of Yerevan was, in particular, inspired by English architect E. Howard's idea of a "garden city.") And in case of *rabiz* "Eastern" first of all refers to the songs and melodies full of Eastern-style ornaments. Below I will try to demonstrate the decisive role of the Soviet cultural policy and social transformations in the formation of *rabiz*.

Decisive shifts for folk music and urban folklore took place in the Stalinist era. Generally, the 1930s could be characterized by the return of the "national" tradition into the Socialist modernity. The attention toward folklore increased. Traditional stories borrowed from the pasts of different nations were being published. Cultural *dekady* (ten-day-long art festivals) and exhibitions were being organized. However, they were not authentic recovered traditions but were invented by the state with the enthusiastic participation of the national elites [2, c.161-182; 1, c. 227]. This allowed modern forms of collectivity to be articulated through the reconstruction and invention of traditions, where the nation was legitimized as a carrier of a national narrative, which in turn was part of the social-ism-building meta-narrative.

During this period, a good example of a tradition that emerged within the discourse of the socialist development of nations is the so-called folk-instrument ensemble and the dominant style of folk and bard songs established by these ensembles since the 1930s. Through these Eastern folk-instrument ensembles, created to resemble Western orchestras, this music seemed to be "raised" to the level of the Western model of music. The first folk-instrument ensemble in Armenia was founded in 1926. For many years, the ensemble was led by Aram Merangulyan and has borne his name since his death in 1967.

Pluralism was characteristic of the popular music of the 1930s' Soviet Union. However, as opposed to the 1920s, "it was a carefully controlled pluralism that did not indicate freedom of form and style." In the center of this pluralism was the Stalinist "mass" song, which was also spread through movies ("Volga-Volga," "Circus," and others). It "tended to affirm the happiness and enthusiasm of the new era of socialist construction in optimistic, humanitarian, and positive lyrics and accessible tunes." [4, c. 26]. The Cultural Revolution was in the past, jazz had been successfully Sovietized and neutralized, and folk music was once again held in high regard. At the end of the decade, all the republics had folk ensembles, and some also had pop music orchestras.

American researcher Andy Nercessian claims that the Soviet cultural policy had a much more significant impact on folk music than on any other music genre. He describes this impact through a few interconnected processes—the "institutionalization", "professionalization", "standardization", and "ensemblization" of folk music and its performance. This particularly meant a transition from amateur groups to professional ensembles, and it was the creation of folk ensembles that changed everything related to performing and listening practices of folk music. This complex process meant modeling folk music based on the more developed pattern of classical music and required literate and educated musicians as well as reconstruction of instruments and refinement of skills based on the Western model (particularly in order to reach compatibility among different instruments) and so on. The context of playing and listening to music was being changed. Folk music moved from the rural environment to the city. It was performed in recording studios and concert halls, broadcast through the radio and television instead of being played at

festivities, weddings, and funerals. This music had a high quality and very wide audience [3, c. 154-155].

As Nercessian notes, the central figure of the process of standardization of musical practices was the conductor of the orchestra, who also carried out the work of musical arrangement. The harmonization of the song not only distorted the melodic line of Armenian monodic music but also eradicated the local features (mode, rhythm, and so on) and its whole folklore diversity for the sake of a single common style, which could be and in fact was considered "national." He concludes that the ensemblization of folk music led to "ever-increasing standardization, rather than the preservation of individual musical dialects. The existence of a conductor-arranger culture should therefore be regarded as a prime factor in the process of musical standardization in Armenia" [3, c. 160]. Thus, Soviet Armenian folk music was a result of a process that in a paradoxical way combined Westernization (the classical model), Sovietization (standardization), and nationalization (the erasure of musical dialects).

Let us note that the "discovery" of the ancient and original Armenian music different from Turkish, Arabic, or Persian music took place as early as in the 19th century by the efforts of a group of musicians and musicologists who collected, performed, and popularized the folk song. Nercessian notes that in the second half of the 19th century the attitude of Armenians toward music was formed under a strong influence of a nationalist ideology, bringing forth "the inclination to assess and perceive musical activity within a national framework." Further on, he notices that the collection and transcription of folk songs was carried out by musician who had received Western-type education and were applying corresponding technics. Their work, harmonization in particular, inevitably led to a transformation, although minimal, in the sense of Westernization. [3, c. 150-151]. Thus, national and Soviet approaches to folk music had certain similarities, while the key difference was that within the Soviet project the advancement of folk music, cultivation of folk ensembles was done for the sake of socialist interests, and "all of these national musical schools would eventually come together within a single Soviet musical institution." [3, c. 152].

The Old and Modern Rabiz

The word "rabiz" most probably stems from the Russian abbreviation RABIS (RABotnikilSkusstva), which came forth in 1919 as the name of the trade union of art workers. Eventually, a slightly altered version of this abbreviation was assigned to a certain type of folklore song. Here, I will mostly discuss this meaning of "rabiz," although the social and cultural meanings of the word will not be completely neglected either. It seems that the negative connotation of the word has been formed gradually, when this music gained cultural and social significance and became a subject of discussion.

Despite being widespread among Armenian population, *rabiz* did not have access to music halls and radio and television and was available for unmediated listening only at certain restaurants, while mostly being distributed through home-made records. Later on, in the 1970s, due to the availability of record-players and tape-recorders, radical changes were made in the distribution and consumption of music and *rabiz* in particular.

A more extended meaning of the word *rabiz* referred to a certain culture, mostly youth lifestyle: the speech, manners, clothes, values, all of which implied a certain social stratum. I think this aspect allows to speak about a certain subculture that emerged during those years, which was almost exclusively masculine (*rabiz* musician were men as well). I emphasize this since in the official forms of popular music (folk,

pop) there were a lot of women. To describe someone as rabiz would mean to imply that he was not progressive and was retrograde and tasteless. Alternatively, rabiz can be characterized through the opposition between a provincial (villager) and a civilian (Yerevanian), although the opposition was in fact between the center and the suburbs of the city. The former was a place for ardent modernization and a formation of a new urban (and national) culture, while the latter was mainly inhabited by former villagers.

Since in the Soviet Union such marginal forms as rabiz were not given an opportunity to represent themselves, tell a story of themselves, if such a story could be imagined at all, one could learn about rabiz only from others, first of all from the intellectuals, and it was only a rejecting, disparaging opinion (even if they had a different opinion in their minds). Therefore, rabiz was a low, retrograde, in one word an "Eastern" music, although we will see that rabiz was actually a strange mix of the conservative and the modern.

It is clear, and my personal experience and perceptions only confirm this, that such modernization of bard and folk culture could also, to a certain extent, distance, alienate this culture from the masses. My assumption is that rabiz was able to fill the gap resulted from the modernization of the folk and oppression and exclusion of everything "Eastern." It was meant to satisfy the needs of the audience which could not be satisfied by folk and bard as well as Armenian and Soviet popular music. We also should not forget about the musicians who found in rabiz what was missing in or was made secondary in cultured folk music—the amateur spontaneity, the opportunity for improvisation, and, after all, the "Eastern" that was loved by the masses. I think it can be assumed that rabiz was moving away from the refined folk (i.e. the national) and other forms of popular music in two directions—toward local musical dialects and toward the regional "Eastern."

Further on, one can ask the question of what the audience of rabiz was in terms of the social class, age, gender and also what the actual extent of its popularity was. Although today one can only make assumptions about these things, the answers to these questions should be sought for in the rapid demographic changes in the Soviet Armenia and Yerevan in particular: during the process of industrialization and urbanization that gained a new momentum in the 60s, the population of Yerevan was multiplied and a new extensive urban class—the laborers—was formed at the expense of the rural population. I think rabiz was first of all the culture of this stratum—the urbanized villagers—driven out from the village, the traditional rural environment to the city. They were the key consumers of this essentially urban culture, or, to put it differently, rabiz was the participant and the reflection of their experience, their process of socialization and was to satisfy their uncultured taste. Thus, in the post-Stalinist liberalization era, despite being officially rejected, rabiz, as a music that satisfied the cultural needs of a gradually-extending audience, enjoyed its marginal existence. It evidenced the existence of a large mass of people that were neglected by the socialist and national ideologies as well as by the cultural policy. Finally, as implied above, rabiz was not a folklore culture in the common sense, and it was different from the old forms of urban folklore. On one hand, one can observe in it signs of resistance against the dominant forms of cultural modernization (socialist and national). On the other hand, it contains elements of a newly-emerged subculture, which was not devoid of the modern manners.

In this respect, one of the characteristic features of rabiz is the language of the songs. Since it is not the village dialect, one can assume that it might be the urban slang (and this perhaps would be yet another manifestation of

resistance), but, in reality, it is the almost-clean literary Armenian. This choice becomes clear when we pay attention to the topics and plots of the songs, which were much closer to the urban romance and were, at the same time, impossible for folk and bard songs. Thus, the language and rhetorical forms necessary for rabiz could only be found in the literary language.

Then there were the instruments with which this music was played: accordion, clarinet, and, later on, the violin but not national instruments, although duduk could be used for accompaniment. Those were European instruments, which had already been familiar and available to the musicians for a few decades through the pop music orchestras. How is it possible to explain this selection of instruments? In my opinion, there are a few factors that seem convincing: the tendency of rabiz to become a new urban culture within the modernizing society; the wider performing possibilities provided by these instruments (as in the case of literary Armenian), which allowed the musicians to demonstrate their skills as well as left more space for their stylized self-expression and for fulfilling the expectations of the audience.

Love, especially unrequited and disappointed love, is among the main themes of rabiz if not the main one: pain, suffering, sadness, and so on mostly expressed through an imaginary narrative, stereotypical topics, repeated phrases and rhetorical techniques, primitive lyrics. Those were songs that, perhaps allegorically, spoke about things that were not usually discussed in a country that was building socialism and enjoying a period of "national awakening": the common hardship brought by the socialist modernization, the heavy human consequences of the radical social and cultural shifts...

Conclusion

I will very briefly describe what happened to this music in the post-Soviet Armenia. First of all, it is not marginal or rejected any more. On the contrary, it is aggressive, ambitious, and all-absorbing, having occupied the central spot on the popular culture scene. The post-Soviet process of degeneration of rabiz, which is a result of a number of factors—the extinction of the corresponding social class, the disappearance of the Soviet cultural canon and the "high-low" hierarchy, the spread of consumerist culture, and so on—led to a new type of mass culture. A not less important factor was the migration of a large number of musicians to rabiz from other genres dictated by survival concerns during the years of post-Soviet economic crisis. As previously, it borne on itself the traces of a centuries-long foreign domination that were clearly recognizable and which, once having penetrated the cultural tissue and public taste, cannot be rejected or thrown away as simply something foreign. They perhaps can be transformed and dissolved into new hybrid forms born out of the interaction of the Soviet Armenian popular musical heritage with global cultural tendencies. Nevertheless, the above discussion allows to conclude that rabiz—the unintended child of the 60s' urban culture—has now become the only legal successor of the Soviet popular musical culture.

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РАБИЗ: НЕЖЕЛАННЫЙ РЕБЕНОК ГОРОДСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ 1960-Х

В статье рассматриваются идеологические, социальные и культурные условия, которые сделали возможным формирование и развитие "рабиза", формы городского музыкального фольклора, в 1960-х годах. Рабиз описывается как нежелательный результат процесса социалистической модернизации. Он унаследовал определенные важные аспекты от сохранившихся форм досоветской городской культуры, но некоторые из его ключевых особенностей обусловлены советской культурной политикой 1930-х годов и социально-культурными тенденциями Советской Армении 1960-х и 1970-х годов. Рабиз был побочным эффектом индустриализации и урбанизации 60-х годов, а затем был радикально преобразован и деградировал в процессе постсоветской деиндустриализации.

Ключевые слова: городской музыкальный фольклор, народная музыка и ее институционализация, урбанизация, индустриализация/деиндустриализация, колониальное наследие, культурная политика.

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РАБИЗ: НЕБАЖАНА ДИТИНА МІСЬКОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ 1960-Х

У статті розглядаються ідеологічні, соціальні і культурні умови, які зробили можливим формування і розвиток "рабіза", форми міського музичного фольклору, в 1960-х роках. Рабіз описується як небажаний результат процесу соціалістичної модернізації. Він успадкував певні важливі аспекти від збережених форм дорадянської міської культури, але деякі з його ключових особливостей обумовлені радянською культурною політикою 1930-х років і соціально-культурними тенденціями Радянської Вірменії 1960-х і 1970-х років. Рабіз був побічним ефектом індустріалізації і урбанізації 60-х років, а потім був радикально перетворений і деградував у процесі пострадянської деіндустріалізації.

Ключові слова: міський музичний фольклор, народна музика та її інституціоналізація, урбанізація, індустріалізація/деіндустріалізація, колоніальна спадщина, культурна політика.

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МІСТО І ПАРК: ВІЗУАЛІЗАЦІЯ СМИСЛІВ

Стаття присвячена взаємозалежній ідентифікації міста і парку, яка здійснюється шляхом візуалізації протилежності їх сутнісних смислів. Проаналізовано підстави для розгляду міста як простору відтворення власне людського та необхідності його адекватного, сутнісно орієнтованого, міждисциплінарного вивчення. У цьому контексті парк розглянуто як візуальний легітиматор міста, місто ж – як відкриту динамічну структуру, що потребує різномірних, у тому числі непрямих, ідентифікаторів. Таким чином, пропонується нова – кореляційна – модель їх дослідження, побудована на здатності візуальності фіксувати і передавати смисли.

Ключові слова: візуалізація смислів, взаємозалежна самоідентифікація, мультівізуальність, візія міста, органічне бачення, зони візуального компромісу.

Постановка проблеми. На шляху усвідомлення людиною простору свого буття місту належить особливе місце. У той час, як світ наблизився до кожного на відстань простягнутої руки – дистанцію до екрану монітора, воно все більше виявляє свою незвіданість. Це виглядає парадоксально, адже канали самоідентифікації з необхідністю пролягають й крізь означники малої батьківщини, залишаючи вічні мітки у людському самосвідомленні: мій дім, мій двір, моя вулиця, парк біля школи тощо. При цьому місто як сформована цілісність залишається річчю у самому собі, будь воно містечком чи мегаполісом. Цей своєрідний парадокс, звісно, дочекається свого дослідника, що відкриє багато несподіваного, пов'язаного, зокрема, із стосунками всезагального з одиницею людського буття. Однак і тоді, і сьогодні не втратить актуальності розуміння ролі міста у долях людства, адже, створене людиною, воно стало реальним "діагностом" проблем її існування і водночас проектантом її майбутнього.

Цей факт ще вповні не усвідомлений, та відчуття його наявності імпліцитно присутнє у багатоаспектності вивчення міста. Теорія "осьового часу" відкрила портал наукового інтересу до нього. З того моменту він не тільки не вичерпався, а й суттєво розширився, увібравши в себе проблеми життєздатності сучасного людства, які неухильно нарощують свою актуальність. Поява таких проектів, як "Проект Венера" Жана Фреско з його ресурсо-орієнтованим стрижнем, – переконливе тому свідчення. У ньому місто виступає в універсально-перетворювальному значенні – як осереддя й основа кардинальних змін і трансформацій глобального характеру.

Хиткість "ґрунту" для самоідентифікації, сьогодення редуція духовних орієнтирів роблять місто об'єктом надзвичайної притягальності, індивідуально-особистісної та аналітичної. Звичайно, мається на увазі не територіальна одиниця і не щось на кшталт індустріалізованого села. Йдеться про простір, здатний максимально сприя-