

**DOUBLE ORIENTATION OF THE ARMENIAN AESTHETIC
CONSCIOUSNESS
(ON THE EXAMPLE OF ARMENIAN EARLY MEDIEVAL MUSIC)**

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Abstract. The article examines the process of formation of the aesthetic consciousness of the Armenian people during the transition from paganism to Christianity. The basis of the concept chosen as the defining one is the proposition that, having gone through a long path of cultural and historical development, the Armenian people, already in the pagan period of their existence, formed a certain “spiritual substrate”, a certain unchangeable “core”, which, having undergone a certain transformation and modification, in its main features retained stability, thereby defining the process of continuity between pagan and Christian cultures. Considering the fact that Christianity is still an absolute guiding factor for Armenian culture today, we can conclude that this unchanging “spiritual substrate” is actively functioning in our time. Having presented the “algorithm” for the formation of this substrate as a result of turning to the cultures of the West (Hellenism) and the East (the culture of Iranian-speaking peoples), it was concluded that there is a dual process that determines the process of formation of national culture. The question is that, having borrowed everything that is most valuable in these cultures, Armenian culture managed to avoid their mechanical copying, their simple imitation. On the contrary, as a result of adequate perception and assimilation of these foreign cultural values, their borrowing, Armenian culture managed not only to preserve, but also to strengthen its roots, and, in essence, to lay claim to universal recognition.

We tried to present the above said using the example of the development of the musical art of the Armenians, taking as a basis folk (peasant), folk-professional (Vipasan, Gusan) and cult (temple, church). The starting point for us was the existing consensus among musicologists that it was monodic (single-voice), even if performed by a choir, that its modes were diatonic, containing semitones, that it contained certain intonationally fixed melodic patterns, representing prototypes of the first voices, and perhaps these voices themselves (typical melodic models).

Keywords: Armenian People; Aesthetic Consciousness; West; East; Paganism; Christianity; Music; Church Music.

Introduction. One of the few peoples whose cultural values, created already during the period of paganism, were highly appreciated and recognized in the territory of neighboring countries and even the entire Great Roman Empire, was the Armenian people. It is known that already in 301 CE the Armenians were the first to adopt Christianity as a state religion. This played a crucial role in their fate, influenced the course of history and the formation of their identity. But we must also take into account the fact that even before the adoption of Christianity, Armenians were distinguished by the presence of a fairly high level of aesthetic consciousness. This is confirmed by the surviving fragments of mythology, testifying to the ancient beliefs of the Armenians, especially expressed in the cults of fire and water, as well as surviving various examples of “primitive art”, which serve as the most important means of “aesthetic organization” of their life and the environment in general. At the same time, it must be recognized that since mythological consciousness is syncretistic in nature, i.e. all its manifestations are not separated from each other and are in indissoluble unity, it is not surprising that religious ideas acquire an aesthetic connotation, and aesthetic ones are revealed in religious light. And it is a specific characteristic of the cultural values of all ancient peoples.

On the creative development of foreign cultural values

Having no real opportunity to turn to the most ancient layers of Armenian culture, going back to its primitive, tribal layers, let us consider the time period when temples dedicated to the Armenian pagan gods were erected in the cities and villages of Armenia, their statues were created, and temple music sounded. It is enough to point out such well-known cultural values as the temples of the mother goddess Anahit in Yeriz, the god of fire and war Vahagn and the goddess Astghik, known as the “chambers of Vahagn”, as well as the temple of Anahit in the city of Ashtishat, the temple of the god of light and sun Mithras in the village of Garni.

The special significance of this period is revealed in the fact that it was at this time that the process of intensive development of the aesthetic consciousness of the Armenian people took place, determined by interaction with the cultures of other peoples, among which the ancient Persians and Hellenes especially stood out. Interest in the cultures of the East and West had objective reasons, primarily due to the fact that Armenia was in a certain political and economic dependence on them and was under their protectorate. Therefore, it's not surprising that these cultures, firstly, occupying a dominant position, and secondly, having a high level of development, should have been perceived as a certain ideal, serving as a guideline for imitation, as the highest goal to which one must strive and achieve it. Naturally, this interest was accompanied by a desire to assimilate and develop everything that seemed valuable in them. Therefore, it can be argued that this was not just a passive perception of them. Consciously, and perhaps subconsciously, on an intuitive level, a truly creative development of certain artistic and aesthetic “codes” of these foreign cultures was carried out from the perspective of Armenian culture, which had already taken quite deep roots.

It is noteworthy that, passing the cultural values of these peoples through the crucible of their aesthetic consciousness, the Armenians learned to identify and appreciate the truly creative, unique principle not only in these cultures, but also in their own national culture, which contributed to the progress of the latter and the establishment of its original face. In this context, it becomes clear why, despite their dominant position and strong influence, neither the Hellenic nor the Persian cultures managed to actually subjugate the national culture, much less absorb it. For example, Hellenic culture, which had a great influence on Armenian culture for several centuries, was able to enter into a close connection with it, which over time developed into a dialectical unity, into a kind of synthesis. But nothing more. As A. Adamyan figuratively put it, “Hellenism was not the content, but only a high form in which the cultural history of the Armenian people was created and developed” (Adamyan, 1955: 15). Consequently, we can assume the presence of a two-pronged process that determines the process of formation of national culture. The point is that, on the one hand, a process was really unfolding aimed at adequate perception and assimilation of foreign highly developed cultural values. On the other hand, there was an increasing desire to develop their own national culture, to raise it to the level of highly developed cultures of that time.

About the double orientation of the aesthetic consciousness of the ancient Armenians

Based on the abovementioned, we can conclude that the aesthetic consciousness of the ancient Armenians was characterized by a dual orientation. On the one hand, it was directed into the depths of centuries and constantly returned and turned to its origins, to the very beginnings of the emerging national cultural tradition. On the other hand, aesthetic consciousness, which had already acquired national characteristics, never closed in on itself. On the contrary, it constantly strived for the perception and creative processing of everything valuable (of course, from the point of view of national consciousness) identified in more developed cultures. This means that the aesthetic consciousness of the Armenians has always been open, so to speak, to both eastern (primarily Iranian-speaking) and western (Hellenic) cultural influences. Moreover, by perceiving and creatively mastering the characteristic qualities of these cultures, the aesthetic consciousness of the Armenians was able to carry out their unique synthesis on the basis of their own national culture.

Such “readiness” and ability to creatively perceive the basic parameters of various cultures of the East and West played a huge positive role and facilitated the process of Armenians accepting Christianity as a new system of worldview and understanding of the world. Of course, there was a confrontation, a confrontation taking place between the old, pagan and new Christian forms of

worldview, which is quite natural when one worldview is replaced by another, one system of cultural values by another and, therefore, being a generally natural process, was characteristic not only of Armenia. It is well known that all of early Christianity sharply opposed itself to everything ancient and pagan in the spheres of both material and especially spiritual culture. Such a confrontation, often turning into an irreconcilable struggle, could not pass by the artistic and aesthetic sphere. The obvious denial of ancient art (especially its plastic forms and theater), the rejection of the cult of external beauty, expressed in the denial of elegant clothing, precious jewelry, and cosmetics, became some visible manifestations of this confrontation.

However, the latter was somewhat contradictory, because, while denying some ancient values, early Christianity simultaneously accepted others. The point is that many medieval aesthetic ideas grow out of pagan ones or go back to them. In particular, the famous Polish esthetician V. Tatarkiewicz noted that “Christians, while remaining in agreement with their religion and philosophy, could and did borrow a lot in aesthetics from the philosophers of Greece and Rome: From Plato they were impressed by the concept of spiritual beauty, from the Stoics - moral beauty, Plotinus has a doctrine of the beauty of light and the world. Also, the Pythagorean understanding of beauty (as proportion), the Aristotelian understanding of art, Cicero’s view of rhetoric, Horace’s view of poetry, Vitruvius’s view of architecture corresponded to their views on the world and man. “So, if a new era in the history of aesthetics begins with the emergence of Christianity, then it must be remembered that in this era there were at least as many ancient traditions as there were actually medieval views” (By’chkov, 1981: 6-7). This correctly noted feature of the medieval aesthetic consciousness of all peoples largely explains the reasons for the rise of creative thought and progress in the spheres of various types of art, which became possible already in the early medieval period.

Of course, the transition from pagan aesthetic ideas to Christian ones could not occur mechanically and painlessly. This transition also implied a significant transformation and modification of the content of all aesthetic concepts, artistic norms and principles. It is clear that such a transformation included the possibility of conflicts between the old and new understandings of them, and the possibility of their distorted, inadequate perception. However, what is more important is that it was precisely the transformation and modification of the old, and sometimes even a simple transition and borrowing. The creation of something new was not carried out from scratch, but on the basis of what already existed. A solid building of medieval, “new” art could only be erected on the solid foundation of “old,” pagan art, the classical examples of which were perceived as unsurpassed artistic values. And this means that a successive connection had to be established between the old and the new, pagan and Christian.

Thus, with all its opposition to the pagan, the Christian seemed to grow, logically follow from it and therefore, ultimately, preserved and developed many of the features contained in it. What has been said applies, of course, to a greater extent to the Eastern Christian cultural world, which includes Armenian culture, for it is well known that the early medieval West, sharply opposed to ancient culture and completely rejected it, long and painfully searched for points of contact and possible compromises between others, i.e. ancient and native art.

From paganism to Christianity: continuity as the most important factor in the aesthetic consciousness of Armenians

The painful search for points of contact between national and foreign, old and new, was alien to the aesthetic consciousness of Armenians. The ability to find these points of contact has been developed since ancient times, and the ability to creatively master the “alien” from the perspective of one’s own culture has become, as it were, an immanent quality and, perhaps, one of the most important features of the Armenian aesthetic consciousness. It is largely thanks to this ability, despite the known facts of the destruction on the territory of Armenia of a huge number of pagan artistic values - temples, sculptures, works of decorative art, musical instruments, etc., almost the entire pagan cultural heritage, the continuity of the connection between pagan and Christian cultures, providing the possibility of the transition of certain pagan cultural traditions into medieval, Christian ones, was nevertheless established.

Turning to the process of development of Armenian musical culture, as one of the most important manifestations of the original aesthetic consciousness of Armenians, through the example of which we will try to show this transition, we note that ideally the process of interest to us should be

considered throughout the entire period of the nation's existence. However, the origins of the Armenian people, and therefore the roots of their musical art, go back to ancient times, in the second millennium BC. e. It is clear that comprehensive data cannot be obtained about this distant past of the nation. Nevertheless, some famous Armenian musicologists have put forward certain general provisions regarding the origins of Armenian music, which have not been refuted up to our time. In particular, a fairly widespread opinion is that by the time they entered the historical arena as a single people with a single language and territory (second century B.C.), the Armenian tribes had gone through quite a long path of cultural and historical, and therefore musical development.

The process of consistent development of the monody of the Armenian tribes, carried out throughout this entire ancient period, from approximately the 6th century BCE), according to N. Tagmizyan, turned into the process of forming the traditions of Armenian folklore, the first stage of which was completed by the beginning of the 4th century BCE. the true flowering of Armenian music (Taghmizyan, 1977: 15). This is also confirmed by information about the art of Gokhtan singers, gusans and vipasans (storytellers), gleaned from the works of Armenian historians of the 5th century Movses Khorenatsi and Favstos Buzand.

Even in the complete absence of any written fragments of Armenian pagan music, in the musicological studies known to us, there is a unanimous opinion that it was monodic (one-voice), even if performed by a choir, that its modes were diatonic, containing semitones, that it contained certain intonationally fixed melodic models, which are prototypes of the first voices, and perhaps these voices themselves (typical melodic models).

Researchers also agree that despite the numerous influences emanating from the cultural substrates of various peoples at various stages of historical development, the Armenians were able to create an original, highly developed musical art with unique national characteristics, in which three main branches were distinguished: folk (peasant), folk-professional (Vipasan, Gusan) and cult (temple, church). The revaluation of pagan cultural traditions and pagan artistic values, carried out in the early medieval period from the standpoint of the Christian worldview and Christian humanism, didn't, as already noted, clearly lead to the rejection of everything pagan. The people continued to gravitate toward pagan culture, primarily finding spiritual satisfaction in it. Fastos Buzand wrote about this back in the 5th century, however, perceiving as the greatest sin the fact that even after the adoption of Christianity, Armenians continued to love "their mythical songs, their tales, they were brought up on them, they believed them and constantly indulged in them" (Buzand, 1953: 13). Therefore, in the fierce struggle for the spiritual perfection of mankind, for its salvation, the apologists of Christianity were forced to rely on pagan culture, and not simply turn away from it, pretending not to notice it. Essentially, Christianity never completely abandoned the pagan cultural heritage, and therefore "in the cultural development of Armenia, which had taken the path of feudalism, there was no break and no sharp separation of Christian culture from the "pagan" - Hellenistic culture" (Eremyan, 1980: 8).

There could be no "break", much less a "sharp break", in the development of musical culture, because, firstly, professional musical "practice" has always, to one degree or another, been influenced by folk music, which has a strong "pagan foundation", and secondly, it was based on the theoretical positions and attitudes of the "philosophers of music", whose musical and aesthetic views, thanks to the works of outstanding Armenian medieval thinkers, especially David the Invincible (Anakht) and David Kerakan (Grammar), went back to antiquity (Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle).

On the nature of church music

Based on these premises, let us turn to the consideration of the professional musical art of the Armenian Middle Ages, first pointing out that the origins of Christian music itself are difficult to trace. After all, Christianity, having made a long, painful journey from East to West, encountered many fairly developed national musical cultures - Aramaic, Jewish, Cappadocian and Armenian, practically adopting some characteristic features from each of them. For example, according to researchers, "the techniques of psalmody were adopted by early Christians from ancient Jewish ritual singing, and in melismatic, widely sung melodies (for example, hallelujahs) the influence of samples of eastern music from Syria, Egypt, and Armenia is noticeable. It is also known that such performance traditions of Christian singing as antiphon (alternating two choral groups) and responsory (alternating solo and choral singing) have their prototypes in Eastern models" (Livanova, 1986: 21). Following the logic, we

must also take into account the fact that if Christianity was established as the religion of the oppressed masses, then obviously Christian art at first was the result of the activities of these same masses. And indeed, as N. Tagmizyan claims, “in the first centuries A. D. e. significant masses of Armenians, along with Greeks, Jews and other peoples, take part in laying the foundations of the singing of the Christian church outside their homeland (in Cappadocia, Northern Mesopotamia, Cilicia, Syria)” (Tagmizyan, 1977: 45).

From the above it follows that some elements of this style must also have been formed under the influence of Armenian music. Therefore, it should not have been as alien to the Armenian people as, say, Gregorian chant was to most Europeans. However, despite the fact that certain elements of Armenian monody were reflected in early medieval church music, they were clearly not enough to convey its truly national character. It couldn't be any other way. After all, Christianity was formed outside of Armenia and was not actually a national religion. The Armenian Church was initially forced to follow some generally accepted norms and forms of conducting church services established in the Christian world.

Moreover, in the absence of a national script that had reached perfection, she was forced to conduct services in the Greek and Syriac languages, incomprehensible to the majority of the people, which caused resistance from the people. The masses did not want to put up with the seemingly alien system of worldview imposed “from above”; they resisted Christianity as best they could, finding aesthetic pleasure in pagan culture. But even in the absence of liturgical literature in the Armenian language and the forced conduct of services in Greek and Syriac languages and according to Greek and Syriac procedural models, the Armenian church did not reject or prohibit the various means of musical expression introduced by the people into church singing.

In particular, it didn't hinder the people in their desire to sing prayers, relying on the musical tradition that goes back to the origins of national music and is recorded in the aesthetic consciousness. On the contrary, it sought and found in it a stimulus for the development of national church songwriting. On this occasion, N. Tagmizyan writes: “The people learned the prayers and, in particular, the psalms, which were translated orally, by heart and sang, based on their own centuries-old musical practice. This is how the folk-national trend of voicing Christian cult literary texts arose and by the middle of the 4th century was firmly rooted in Armenia” (Tagmizyan, 1977: 46).

In our opinion, it was a manifestation of the process of spontaneous penetration of elements of folk music into Christian songwriting. A researcher of one of the six musical and service collections of medieval Armenian music, Euchologia or the Mashtots Breviary, A. Arevshatyan, drew attention to the fact that in the surviving oldest examples of this collection (9th-10th centuries) there are no neumykhazys, which allowed it to make the conclusion is that in Armenia, up to the 10th century, “the method of oral transmission and existence of these chants was still widespread” (Arevshatyan, 1991: 139)

We believe that this fact indicates that, together with the adoption of the rites of Baptism, Wedding, Burial, Blessing of Water, etc., into the sphere of the legalized system of Christian rituals, the church thereby contributed to the spontaneous penetration of elements of ancient folk music into Christian songwriting. Indeed, in these rituals, which, as we know, have an ancient, pagan origin, the musical factor played an important role in the form of certain chants, melodic and rhythmic turns and was, undoubtedly, firmly “fixed» in the consciousness of the people.

The oral transmission of music accompanying the ritual action could not help but contribute to the introduction of these rhythmic intonation patterns into the ritual canons imported from Byzantium, Syria and Palestine, which was one of the important factors of their Armenianization. Apparently, it was precisely this practice of psalmody and ritual that determined the church's interest in the ancient Armenian typical melodic models formed in folk music - voices, and stimulated the process of conscious appeal to them. However, not only voices, but also folk rhythms and musical form were the focus of attention of the creators of church music. According to Kh. Kushnarev, the church borrowed from folk music modes, some rhythmic intonation forms, methods for developing melody and even form in general. Of course, this borrowing was not a dead repetition, a simple mechanical copying. In accordance with new concepts about man and the world, new ideas about the salvation of mankind, elements of musical speech and form were subject to rethinking and transformation by the church. However, such transformation and modification were carried out that did not affect the qualitative originality of Armenian folk music. For example, the research of Kh. Kushnarev confirmed that “in Armenian cult music there isn't a single voice that isn't rooted in folk or folk-professional music”

(Kushnarev, 1958: 46). This very important feature of Armenian Christian church music proves the existence of close connections between the latter and folk music. It is no coincidence that Komitas defined this connection as a family connection, as a blood connection between brothers and sisters (Komitas, 1941:139). The connection between church music and folk music was so obvious for Komitas that he sought to “recreate ancient folk songs on the basis of church chants that have reached us» (Kushnarev, 1958: 88). And this attempt, according to prominent musicologists, was not unsuccessful. Komitas really managed to implement his plan.

So, the church actively used the system of means of musical expression created by the people, and therefore close and understandable to them, formed in the pagan period and fixed in their consciousness as a kind of “invariant”. Intonations that originated in the folk environment freely passed into the sphere of sacred music.

It seems important that the church consciously turned to folk music, as an inexhaustible source of modal intonation melodic turns, and consciously mastered traditional voices. It didn't shun, as noted above, even complete folk musical forms, ready-made melodic samples. This, of course, does not mean that the differences between folk and church music were erased. A significant rhythmic and formal transformation of borrowed folk music and its various elements was carried out in order to give them new content corresponding to the already formed traditions of Christian music. An attempt was also made to dogmatize vocal forms. However, neither the rhythmic nor formal transformation of folk music, nor the practice of dogmatization of vocal forms, aimed at “protecting” church music from further folk influences, could stop the process of orienting church music towards folk music. And finally, the very creation of the eight-voice system (with two additional voices) was the result of the development of the system of four fundamental voices, known since pagan times. Moreover, having undergone theoretical treatment twice (in the 5th and 8th centuries), the system of voices continued to develop further, reaching the apogee of its development by the 14th century (about 150 models). And if we remember that all eight voices of Armenian sacred music, around which 150 typical melodic models are already grouped, appeared as a result of the enrichment and branching of the four fundamental voices known since ancient times, then it will become obvious that the origins of Armenian church songwriting are in the most ancient pagan strata folk and folk-professional music.

It is thanks to the constant focus on the traditions of folk music that Armenian sacred music acquired a truly national face, originality and uniqueness. Moreover, the national originality of Armenian church music was manifested in all spheres of expressiveness - modal, intonation and rhythmic. Presented in three ways of singing - recitation, psalmody and hymnody, Armenian spiritual songwriting in none of them was detached from national origins. Thus, it retained its characteristic national features.

Conclusion. Thus, in the sacred music of the early Christian period, which was influenced by the traditions of pagan music, the originality of the musical thinking of the Armenians was clearly reflected, who always strived to the best of their ability to adopt everything that was most progressive, corresponding to the spirit of the time, but they never followed the path of blind imitation of the strict patterns, forms and norms of musical art established and generally accepted in the Christian world. An appeal to the origins of their own national culture (including music), formed, as already emphasized, in the pagan period, has become an integral quality of the aesthetic consciousness of Armenians. After all, it was precisely in this ancient period, in the depths of pagan culture, that special “core” was formed, that unique “first principle”, which was recorded in the aesthetic consciousness of the people, and for centuries performed at least three most important functions.

We mean that “Remaining unchanged in its essence, this “first principle” as an exponent of the special spiritual qualities of the people, its “soul”, firstly, protecting the Armenian culture from its absorption by other cultural substrates, and secondly, providing a connection between the past and the present, ensured the continuity of culture and, thirdly, over the course of thousands of years allowed it to appear as a unique, purely national phenomenon” (Arzumanyan, 1998: 46).

At all times and under any circumstances (even the most unfavorable) Armenians created art based on genuine national traditions. If they had to adopt some generally recognized musical form, then they certainly put truly national content into it, developed it in accordance with the national peculiarities of Armenian musical thinking and from the standpoint of one's own understanding of specific processes

occurring in world art. Thus, with all its opposition to the pagan, the Christian seemed to grow, logically follow from it and therefore, ultimately, preserved and developed many of the features contained in it.

What has been said applies, of course, to a greater extent to the Eastern Christian cultural world, which also includes Armenian culture, for it is well known that the early medieval West, which rejected ancient culture more sharply and completely, searched for a long time and painfully for points of contact and possible compromises between the alien, i.e. e. ancient and native art. The Armenian people, who formed a special rhythm and intonation system, defined as “Armenian” already in the pagan period, managed to preserve it until the present day. In this process, it is difficult to overestimate the role of Christianity, which not only did not abandon the stable voice structures created by the people (special motives, modes), but also contributed to their further development, thereby maintaining continuity in the development of music, continuing the process of consistent cultural and historical development of the people in general. «It was these traditional modes that were adopted by the church (of course, not without certain changes and schematization)» (Arevshatyan. 2020: 13). The geniuses of the Armenian people Mesrop Mashtots, Sahak Partev, Hovhannes Mandakuni, Stepanos Syunetsi and others became the authors of the first spiritual melodies - psalms. Preserving the musical traditions formed during the pagan period, they laid the foundation for the emergence of sharakans, patarag chants, ganzas, avetis, etc., thereby testifying to the high level of development of Armenian professional sacred music.

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