ARMENIAN FOLK MUSIC AND THE EAST-WEST DICHTOMY
(On example of Komitas Vardapet and Grikor Suni)

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By the turn of the twentieth-century, the Armenians, a people who have historically been divided politically and geographically were entering a period defined by a “powerful process of self awareness.”¹ This process took many forms, but perhaps one of the safest grounds on which Armenians, regardless of geographic location, could agree on the growing awareness of their nationality, was through an important part of their culture: music. This ability of music to act as a unifying national agent is facilitated by its status as a “nonrepresentational medium,” which is often treated “as an autonomous and politically innocent domain of social life”². This paper will look at the role of music in developing a national awareness amongst Armenians at the turn of the century by tracing the “national professional music” that emerged during this time³. To do this, I will look into two composers and folk music collectors, who are representative of the diversity of the term ‘Armenian’.

In 1828, a formal “carving up” of Armenia between the East (Russia) and the West (the Ottoman Empire) took place. Sylvia Alajaji has noted that by the end of the nineteenth century ”two ‘Armenias’ were in existence.”⁴ Armenia’s society was separated not only geographically, but also through its class divisions. Both Western and Eastern Armenia were occupied primarily by rural Armenian peasantry (giughatsiner). The urban cities, however, and in particular, Constantinople in the West and Tiflis in the East, had become cultural Meccas for educated and intellectual Armenians.

The development of an intelligentsia on either side was significant. In the East, the pre-Revolutionary Socialists hailing from Russia were influential in shaping urban Armenians’ attitudes about the large peasant classes, raising awareness about the inequalities and injustices of such class divisions, and inspiring working class uprisings. In the West, Armenians educated under European values had a considerably different take on the ‘rustic’ life of the Armenian peasant. It was the

³ This is a term I have adopted from Robert Atayan’s musicological scholarship in this field. See: Robert Atayan, “Preface: Grikor Suni and his Choral Works,” in Grikor Suni: Choral Songs, trans. Artsvi Bakhchinyan (Yerevan, Armenia: Hayastan Publishing House, 2013), p. 82.
intelligentsia’s exposure to and activities within the regions of Armenia’s political and cultural ‘superiors’ that solidified tensions, with disastrous results, in the early twentieth century.

The first composer this essay will investigate is Komitas Vardapet. An Armenian priest who was born in Western Armenia, spent the early years of his life learning about Armenia’s liturgical music in the country’s ancient spiritual center, Echmiadzin Cathedral. He relocated to Western Europe to continue his ‘formal’ education in music and musicology and his life came to a tragic end due to the atrocities spurred by rising political tensions. In Armenia, Komitas’ legacy has come to resemble the place Béla Bartók’s occupies in Hungary, as a “national cultural hero.” His legacy is not only significant for his contributions to Armenian music; The tropes surrounding Komitas’ cultural achievements have become a resilient piece of Armenia’s contemporary cultural narrative. His story in many ways symbolizes that of the Western Armenian, who today exists only in the Diaspora. While during the majority of Komitas’ lifetime, this was not the case, Western Armenia’s mythical status in the Armenian community has romanticized modern interpretations of Komitas.

Komitas’ contributions were unarguably invaluable to the preservation of Armenia’s rural folk. Without devaluing his actual achievements, I hope to shed a more rational light on the place his legacy occupies in the Armenian community today. Alajaji has written of the canonization and revered status of Komitas’ persona within these communities:

… [W]hether the focus was on pop, folk, or classical music—so long as it was Armenian—the conversation led, in one way or another, to Komitas. More than once, these conversations elicited tears from the interviewees. For many, his work allowed for the very possibility of an Armenian music, in whatever genre. More than that, however, Komitas’ life and work embodied all the tropes and signifiers that have come to characterize the Armenian diasporic narrative...

The second composer under investigation is Grikor Mirzadian Suni, whose roots were based in Eastern Armenia. In comparison with Komitas’ enduring legacy, Suni’s work has faded into relative obscurity over the twentieth century. It was revisited in the 1980s and 90s by a Soviet-era Armenian musicologist, folklorist, and composer, Robert Atayan, who compiled a collection of Suni’s choral arrangements, which was only published in 2013. As I will demonstrate briefly in the next section,


6 Christopher J. Walker has observed, “to be a Western Armenian is, with few exceptions, either to be dead or in exile.” See: Christopher J. Walker, Armenia: The Survival of a Nation, 2 Sub edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), p. 12.

Atayan’s scholarship raises certain concerns about continuing nationalist agendas within musicological research on Armenian composers.

This paper will address to Komitas and Suni’s interpretations of folk music and their approach to its arrangement within Western forms as a measure of each composers’ ties to either East or West. I will conclude by comparing, side by side, two choral arrangements of the same folk melody, ‘Alagiaz,’ to demonstrate the differences between Komitas’ and Suni’s approaches in practice. In doing so, I hope to shed light on the contrasting, and at times opposing, forms of burgeoning Armenian nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century. The “symbolic capital in folk music” makes it a valuable source to deconstruct competing interpretations of Armenian nationalism. Its representational value, Philip Bohlman suggests, is derived out of a discourse for which “the stakes were...very high indeed, for they raised questions not only of ethnic identity but of racial purity and of national integrity.”

Nationalist Historiography

Before moving forward, however, I must acknowledge a historiographic issue regarding Atayan’s scholarship. Under Atayan’s supervision, twelve volumes of Komitas’ works have been published; each beginning with lengthy notes ‘From the Editor’ and concluding with musicological sketches of the works contained. The extensive ‘Preface’ to Suni’s choral work is also authored entirely by Atayan. It is one of two primary sources I relied on in deconstructing Suni’s story. The second is a translation of Suni’s autobiography made available to me by his grandson.

During my research into the origins of each composer’s musical decisions and their treatment of folk music, I noticed on many occasions that these two sources did not align. A great deal of information from Suni’s autobiography has been omitted from Atayan’s biographical account, particularly regarding his political activities and affiliations, despite the fact that Suni’s autobiography is quoted many times over the course of the ‘Preface.’ Additionally, great efforts are made to fabricate a relationship between the two composers, amidst evidence that the two disagreed on a great many things musically and politically. Upon closer inspection of Suni’s life and music, Komitas’ activities during this period of history allude to a somewhat less hagiographic narrative; one of bourgeois Western intellectualism and elitism.

The majority of Atayan’s work was produced during a period of Soviet history following Josef Stalin’s oppressive reign. During this time, new and increasingly

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9 Ibid., p. 66.
10 Atayan, “Preface: Grikor Suni and his Choral Works,” Ibid.
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liberal policies towards culture fostered the rehabilitation cultural icons; a nationalist renaissance. Soviet historian Ronald Grikor Suny mentioned Armenia’s losses during Stalin’s bloody purges that, “for a small nation like Armenia, the loss of a poet or a political leader is an especially heavy sacrifice.” Thus, the emphasis of this period was two fold. First, importance was placed on re-interpreting already canonized cultural icons, such as Komitas, and second, scholars sought to salvage and shed light on lesser-known contributors to Armenian national culture. Atayan’s efforts stem out of the urge to recover from those losses. This, however, has some consequences for how new composers are integrated into the historiography of Armenia’s national music.

Atayan’s writings on Suni very much adhere to an underlying narrative; that of a unified and singular Armenian culture, or as Suny has said, the “notion of a single explanatory formula for all of Armenian history… a unifying theme of purpose.” This universally Armenian culture is unified under Komitas’ legacy. Even Armenia’s state conservatory bears his name. Despite the success of Soviet Armenian composers such as Aram Khachaturyan, whose music in the twentieth century is celebrated by Armenians as a source of great national pride, Soviet Armenia’s musical achievements were considered, and still are, to be tainted by the approval of Soviet officialdom. As a result, Komitas and his reception have emerged the essential vision of Armenian culture. This narrative has proved extremely resilient, even in the face of blatant contradictions.

However, their differences are not entirely neglected by Atayan. At points, Atayan admits to contrasting approaches to the differing compositional strategies and folk arrangements of the works of both Suni and Komitas. In the original manuscript of Komitas’ vocal arrangement of the folk melody ‘Keler, tsoler’ (‘He walked, he shone’), see Figure 1), lies one of the only pieces of evidence that the two men had friendly interaction over their lifetimes. This score was presented to Suni from Komitas in 1910, when the two supposedly met in Trabzon (a region located in modern-day Turkey). Through this example, Atayan acknowledges the contrasting

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13 Soviet historian Ronald Grikor Suny’s is coincidentally the grandson of Grikor Suni. The variation in their last names is a by-product of the inconsistent conversion of Armenian letters to their Latin equivalents. Suny, Looking toward Ararat, p. 158.

14 Ibid, p. 4.


musical styles of both Komitas and Suni. When comparing the two composers’ styles, he says, ‘Keler, tsoler’

...shows most clearly their fundamentally different positions on Armenian folk song arrangement, indeed the almost completely opposite direction of their approaches to arrangements.17

Atayan’s admission of the composers’ “opposite approaches to arrangements” is, however, mediated by an increased emphasis on a friendship between the two composers. The script on the second page (Figure 1) says: “A gift to my dear Grikor. Komitas Vardapet. 1910, June 5, Trapizon.”18 Atayan’s comments place the scenario within a narrative depicting the two as collaborators, portraying Suni within the boundaries of Komitas’ achievements:

...Suni was warmly received by Komitas in Trabzon...Unfortunately, neither Komitas nor Suni left any other information on this meeting during which, in all probability, they had a long nostalgic conversation about Armenian music, discussing creative and stylistic issues19.

On another occasion, Atayan highlights Suni’s critical nature. In a letter dated February 6, 1926, Suni wrote to a friend that he had written some compositions with an incorrect understanding of the “foundation” of its “intonations” and admits to destroying some of his own works. Of this incident, Atayan writes admonishingly:

If one goes deeper into the matter, he would see probably another important phenomenon in Armenian musical culture. Specifically, [Suni] did not appreciate the important novelty and value of Komitas’ work…20

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17 Atayan, “Preface: Grikor Suni and his Choral Works,” p. 72.
18 Atayan’s ‘Preface’ indicates that initially, Komitas had indicated the date and location ‘May 5, Batumi’ (Georgia). Atayan notes, “Komitas made a mistake in mentioning the location and date and corrected himself.” The nature of this edition remains unknown. Strangely, there is no other evidence of this encounter and it is not mentioned in Suni’s autobiography. See Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 70.
20 Ibid., p. 79.
Figure 1. Copy of Komitas’ original manuscript to ‘Keler, tsoler,’ with dedication to Suni on second page.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., pp. 66–67.
Atayan’s situation was comparable to Béla Bartók’s efforts towards identifying and promoting Franz Liszt’s Hungarian nationalism occurring at the turn of the century. Liszt’s Hungarian ethnicity and references to Hungarian folk gypsy music made his iconic status in Western Europe important to Bartók. However, Bartók found gypsy music to be a despicable threat to the Hungarian nation. Bartók’s search for a unifying Hungarian narrative required his writings to mediate his version of Hungarian nationalism without negating the cultural capital that Liszt’s legacy afforded. In this situation, the same dilemma arises: how do historians and collectors of folk music uphold their nationalist agendas in the face of apparent contradictions? Ultimately, Atayan has bridged the composers’ stylistic differences, not by admitting to the reality of Armenia’s divided nationalism, but by squeezing Suni’s story into the narrative:

In the hierarchy of the oldest generation of Armenian composers, Grikor Suni is not placed next to Komitas or after him, even though he was his contemporary, and even his successor. Instead, he is situated in the pre-Komitas stage of the general development of Armenian music. At that stage his historical significance is undeniable.”

He continues, “From a stylistic point of view, Suni’s work was the product of a different period of the development of national professional music.” It is the curious use of the term ‘professional’ that I will address in the next section.

What Is ‘Professional’?

Armenian music has historically been divided into three categories: religious, folk, and professional. However, most of Armenia’s music, regardless of ‘categorization,’ has certain common and identifiable features. It is, for example, a historically monodic music, based on shifting modal centers and unmetered singing. The notion of ‘professional’ in Armenian music has its foundations in 400 CE. ‘Professional’ musicians and entertainers were Armenian troubadours (ashughner and gusanner) whose livelihoods depended on providing entertainment to wealthy patrons. While these Armenian troubadours may often have initially been influenced by regional Armenian folk music, their survival depended ultimately on an ability to please their patrons who were often ethnically Persian, Georgian, or Turkish.

23 Atayan, “Preface: Grikor Suni and his Choral Works,” p. 79.
24 Emphasis added. Ibid.
25 Alajaji, “Diasporic Communities and Negotiated Identities”; Koskoff, “Armenia.”
In the service of their wealthy, high-ranking employers, the ‘professional’ sector of Armenian music had, over the centuries, undergone a great deal of ‘borrowing.’ The outside influences it had acquired from these exchanges were observed by Komitas who perceived these alterations as distortions of “Armenian sacred music, cast[ing] it into Turkish Arabic modes and enrich[ing] it with longwinded curlicues and arabesques.” Resultingly, the term ‘professional’ began to conflict with issues of ‘authenticity’ and class divisions. Poladian writes that Komitas:

… [A]s a matter of deliberate policy, did not collect popular songs and folk songs of the cities, although he arranged some of them, because his primary interest was the identification and definition of authentic and indigenous traditional Armenian music.

However, as cultural interactions between Europe and Armenia increased over the nineteenth century, the term ‘professional’ came to denote something very different. It still retained its cosmopolitan associations, but rather than designating the music of travelling entertainers, it referred to music that was emerging in the service of Armenian nationalism – claims which could only be taken seriously through the legitimization of larger, imperial forces. Where composers sought this validation was dependent on a great many factors. As I will demonstrate, while Suni looked Eastward towards Russia and the Socialist revolutionary movements, Komitas’ looked Westward, towards Europe and its romantic ideals and Orientalist “desires, repressions, investments, and projections.”

**Komitas and the West**

Komitas Vardapet was born Soghomon Soghomonian in Kütahya, Ottoman Empire in 1869. Orphaned as a young child, Soghomonian was offered the opportunity to study at a seminary in the Holy See of Echmiadzin Cathedral in Armenia in 1881, where he began his formal studies in the liturgical music of the Armenian Apostolic church. He became skilled in the modern method of musical notation employed there. In 1894, he was ordained as a celibate priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church and adopted the name Komitas after the revered seventh-century Catholicos, poet and hymn composer. The next year, he obtained a doctorate in Theology, which is reflected in the title Vardapet following his name. He later moved to Berlin to study musicology for several years.

Komitas’ ambitious career came to a tragic end in 1915 when, on April 24, the Young Turks, a Turkish nationalist political party, gathered and deported over one hundred Armenian intellectuals and political figures. What followed was a brutal massacre that spurred a large-scale Genocide against the Armenians, committed

28 Ibid.
behind a mask of atrocities that made up World War I. Komitas was included in the group of intellectuals deported. However, his ties to Western Europe and highly regarded reputation had afforded him influential connections, most notably, the United States' Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau, who was able to intervene and save him from execution. But as a result of the trauma of witnessing the torture and murder of those less fortunate than him, Komitas never recovered and died in a psychiatric ward in 1935. Rita Kuyumjian suggests that it is this aspect of Komitas' biography that caused Armenians in the twentieth century to regard his life symbolically. In a way, his "martyrdom" represents Armenians' "own personal and collective anguish... Indeed, members of the Armenian Apostolic Church have recently proposed his canonization".

Nevertheless, Komitas was very active between the years of 1890 and 1913. His writings, reflections, and compositions from this period demonstrate the influences of his Western education, where he studied in Berlin at a time when the field of comparative musicology was introducing new approaches and agendas to the study of non-Western music. He was highly regarded in the Western European intellectual circuit and was even a founding member of the La Société Internationale de Musique. In 1906, after a performance given by Komitas in Paris, Louis Laloy reflected on the positive reception of Komitas' presentation of Armenian music received in Paris, saying: "None of us... could have imagined the beauties of this art which is essentially neither European nor Oriental, but has a unique character of its own...." Komitas' emphasis on demonstrating Armenia's 'distinct' character to the Western elite highlights some interesting parallels to Suni's musical development in the East.

**Suni and the East**

Grikor Mirzoyan Suni was born in 1876 in Getabek, an Eastern region located in modern day Azerbaijan. At the age of two, his family relocated to the Shushi...
province of Karabakh, a particularly militant region of Eastern Armenia. The son of a famous ashugh from the Siumik region of Armenia, the young Suni displayed an early talent in music. In 1891, he was offered a place to study in Echmiazin’s Gevorgian Seminary. His time at Echmiadzin overlapped with that of Komitas. Of Suni’s relationship with Komitas during their overlapping time at Echmiadzin, Atayan proposes, "though there is no firm evidence that Suni studied under Komitas, it is certain that they became friends."33 Seeming to contrast Atayan’s depiction, Suni’s autobiography indicates the two composers may not have been so close. Another important figure in Armenian national music, Kristapor Kara-Murza, was also there at that time. Kara-Murza was, like Suni, an Eastern Armenian and Suni’s autobiography indicates a strong friendship with him, for Kara-Murza was his teacher in basic European theory and harmony. Yet according to Suni, Komitas and Kara-Murza had a fraught relationship, for Komitas was highly disapproving of the latter’s approach to harmonization of Armenian liturgical music:

Soghomon was not close to Kara-Murza and, in addition, he led the reactionary group that waged a struggle against him, lowering himself by insisting that ‘God was one, so there must be one voice in music too,’ to which Kara-Murza wittingly (sic) replied, ‘You’re forgetting that God is the union of three beings.’ This would lead to the dismissal of Kara-Murza and his being replaced by Soghomon himself. Kara-Murza gave [me] all his belongings and strongly encouraged [me] to go to Tiflis, Moscow, or Petersburg to continue [my] music training and general education34.

In 1895, Suni followed Kara-Murza’s advice and continued his formal musical education, not in the West, but in St. Petersburg, Russia where he was awarded a scholarship to study under Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, an integral member of the “New Russian School.” Russia had – like Armenia, but with greater resolve – spent the latter half of the nineteenth century pursuing a “national musical language.” To this end, its success in producing artistic works that gained the attention of even Europe would later convince nationalist composers elsewhere “that following the Russian model would ensure the authenticity of their own efforts”35.

Atayan refers to the works composed during Suni’s “conservatory period” as skillfully organized with “elements of originality, attributable to his outstanding teachers, especially Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov, and Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov, men who deeply respected the folk music and originality of other cultures.”36 Suni’s employment of Armenian folk culture was not limited to melodies. He was also notorious for his attempts to “improve folk instruments” and create a “new type of orchestra using them.”37 One of these

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34 Suni, “Autobiography.”
36 Atayan, “Preface: Grikor Suni and his Choral Works,” p. 66.
37 Ibid.
experimental concerts was attended by journalists at Mshak, a nationalist Armenian newspaper based out of Tiflis, which wrote of the event: “As an Armenian, you feel that he is singing your song, but in four-parts.”

There is, however, another dimension to the environment in which Suni’s folk compositions were received. His activity during Russia’s pre-revolutionary period had important consequences for the direction his version of “national professional music” would take. Levon Hakobian suggests that the political environment of this period was hostile to the “marvelous and bizarre revolution in aesthetic and intellectual attitudes…” Although, he admits, many artists, including Suni, were “naïve enough to see in the October Revolution an analogy with their own aspirations and the confirmation of their own ideals…”

At the same time, tensions were rising politically within Armenia; despite a collective desire for an independent Armenian nation, political parties were divided between their ties to East and West. Accordingly, Suni’s musical activity reflected his growing political resolve and adopted Socialist revolutionary themes tying him firmly to the East; Russia in particular. Suni’s autobiography clearly indicates his political activism and the threats it posed for him. He began to compose songs about workers that also had no precedent in Armenian life. In these songs, he calls upon the serfs, laborers, and villagers to unite “to support the cause of labor and open the road to socialism”.

This aspect of Suni’s persona made life for him increasingly dangerous. In the hopes of realizing an independent and unified Armenia, the nationalist parties surfacing at that time often turned to intimidation and terrorism. These same parties, whom Suni vigorously opposed, also hoped that loyalty to Western Europe, and particularly Britain, would help them to achieve that independence. During this time, Suni’s autobiography indicates that he moved around frequently to escape the threat of persecution of these nationalist parties. Atayan’s writings, however, make very few references to Suni’s political activities over his lifetime, attributing these relocations to Suni’s “restlessness” and “unique artistic character”.

In 1921, in a severely weakened state, Eastern Armenia, or what remained of it, was one of the first republics to accept membership to the Soviet Union. Suni rejoiced over Armenia’s Sovietization, but by 1922, his deteriorating health forced him to relocate for the last time, to America. His exile from Soviet Armenia encouraged his patriotism with particular urgency and he released a collection of

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41 Suni, “Autobiography.”
42 Suny, Looking toward Ararat, p. 88.
songs in 1934 called Nor Kianki Yerger (‘Songs for the New Life’), which contains, as Atayan has described, “sketchy, mediocre versions of ‘songs of the new lifestyle’.” By 1939, Suni’s death saw the passing of an “enthusiastic singer of Soviet Armenia’s working class.”

Opposing Views

In 1900, a collection of ‘Popular Armenian Songs’ was released in Paris, which was received scathingly by Komitas. The review accused the volume’s editor of misrepresenting Armenia’s national music, the consequences of which Komitas considered grave. Komitas review deconstructed each song in the collection on the basis of its regional origins, its melodic features, its text placement, harmonization and allusion to European forms. At one point, he observed, “… the F sharp is foreign and altogether contrary to the Eastern spirit.”

Komitas’ careful appropriation of this ‘spirit’ is represented in his folk choral arrangement, ‘Alagiaz,’ published in 1906 and named after a mountainous region in Armenia. The same melody was also arranged for a four-part choir by Suni two years later. Suni’s arrangement of ‘Alagiaz’ is, like many of his pieces, based on Komitas’ transcription of the original folk melody. However, the original form of the melody – notwithstanding Komitas’ transcription – does not exist today. It is, therefore, difficult to predict how much of the melody’s original metric ‘irregularity’ has been upheld in Komitas’ version or to what extent Komitas’ interpretation highlights certain features (to maintain the illusion of ‘authenticity’ or to attract his Western audience) in comparison to the ‘original’ is unknown.

What separated Komitas from his predecessors was his commitment to the ‘authenticity’ of the melody’s original musical characteristics, particularly its rhythmic irregularity. In comparison, Suni’s arrangement of the same song employs a much stricter treatment of rhythmic phrasing, to the neglect of certain distinguishing and idiosyncratic features, which Komitas would have argued were central to the overall ‘spirit’ of the music. Consequently, one may observe a
significantly different interpretation of folk music’s “symbolic capital”\(^{50}\). In the interest of space, I will limit my analysis to comparisons of each version regarding the following: melodic subdivision and phrasing, allusions to European forms, ornamentation, harmonization, and texture. Atayan’s writings indicate a clear bias in favor of Komitas’ approach.

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\(^{50}\) Bohlman, *World Music*, p. 65.
Figure 2. Komitas’ arrangement of ‘Alagiaz’ from *Yerkeri Zhoghovatsu* (Songs of the People), Vol. II\(^5\)

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Suni’s most notable alteration deals with the subdivision of the melodic line. This, I argue, is an attempt to tailor the folk melody to a “structure that governed musical form for much of the 18th century, extending below and above the period itself, from two- and four-bar phrases to entire movements.” The modifications of the melody’s rhythm in Suni’s version suggest an adherence to the eighteenth century Viennese waltz form. Metrically, Suni employs a traditional 3/4 waltz meter, while Komitas’ version uses 6/4. Had Suni remained true to Komitas’ original melody, the first beat of m. 4 would not land on a half note. The half note downbeat, and the eighth note rising figure on the third beat of the even-numbered bars reinforce the waltz rhythm. This quality is not entirely absent from Komitas’ arrangement, but his melodic subdivisions are significantly different from Suni’s. Suni’s ‘Alagiaz’ can be subdivided as follows: 4+2+2, with the last four bar extension echoing the previous 2+2 phrase. Suni’s take on the melody shortens Komitas’ original sixteen-bar (if translated in a 3/4 meter) phrase. In Komitas’ arrangement, the song is divided into two eight-bar parallel phrases.

Komitas’ ‘Alagiaz’ does not openly employ such formal divisions of distinct and neatly arranged phrases. Instead, his setting of the melody allows the ends of phrases to elide into one another, never fully coming to a halt. Additionally, he employs several ornamental gestures (highlighted in blue), which may function as an attempt to represent the capacities of folk instruments this piece was performed on or imitate the flexible voice of the Armenian peasant. That his arrangements demonstrate a skillful handling of European elements, implied in his intricate voice leading and varied harmonization, provides additional ‘legitimacy’ to his arrangements (See Table 1).

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52 Grikor Mirzaian Suni, Grikor Suni: Choral Songs, pp. 119–120.
Table 1. Roman numeral analysis with figured bass of the harmonization of Komitas’ eight-bar period in ‘Alagiaz.’

Suni’s version, on the other hand, contains no ornamental figures. It employs a rather strict adherence to a clear and unambiguous melodic line. While both versions employ independent vocal parts, Komitas arranged the underlying voices primarily for harmonic support. Suni’s rendition, however, abides by the rules of imitative counterpoint and with almost mathematical precision. The soprano and tenor come in with the original melody. The alto and bass parts follow the melodic contour of the original melody, but altered to suit the contrapuntal needs of his arrangement.
Figure 4. Translation (from top to bottom): “The Alagiaq mountain has four peaks. The structure of the song ‘Alagiaq,’ written by Suni.”

Suni’s ‘Alagiaq,’ in comparison to Komitas’ appears conservative and formulaic. Nevertheless, while Suni’s adherence to his strict training appears to supersede his Armenian patriotism, the analysis in Figure 4, drawn by Suni himself, reveals otherwise. Suni’s alteration of Komitas’ original melody is ‘justified’ by his symbolic

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55 It may appear outwardly contradictory that Suni, raised and educated in the East, adheres more formally to European conventions than the Western Komitas. This seeming paradox can be explained by Russia’s interpretation of cosmopolitanism within European musical forms and Said’s observation the resistance of the West, demonstrated in Russia’s attempts to surpass Europe and devise their own “Russian musical language,” paradoxically suggest a reliance on the West for legitimacy.
interpretation of Armenia’s natural landscape. Figure 4 demonstrates Suni’s analogy between the peaks of Alagiaz mountain and the contours of the melodic line. Suni’s apparent ‘conservatism’ is contrasted by a liberal, and rather symbolic, interpretation of Armenian representation. Paradoxically, Komitas’ emphasis on ‘authenticity’ and originality of Armenian music makes his parameters for the arrangement of folk music significantly more ‘conservative’ than Suni, in the sense that he adheres to rules for the sake of preserving a folk ‘tradition’.

Conclusion

Komitas’ disparaging review of the folk song collection described earlier is a useful text for revealing his profound concern for Western, and specifically European, approval. He wrote:

Only by this (sic) means can we impart some idea about our folk melodies to foreigners generally and to European musicians in particular… [Otherwise] a mistaken and converse opinion will be formed about our moral and intellectual life, our past and our present.”

His emphasis on the ‘distinct’ and ‘authentic’ ‘Eastern spirit’ of the rural Armenian peasant raises an important question: how could he possibly satisfy both the West and Armenian nationalism?

In truth, Armenia’s political and geographic realities would have made it quite impossible for Komitas to ‘satisfy’ both. Of the “two Armenias” that existed in the early twentieth-century, Komitas’ life and work was representative of those whose affiliations and interests lay Westward, not only culturally, but also politically, as apolitical as his work may outwardly appear. The Eastern Armenia from which Suni hailed identified Western Europe’s intellectualism as bourgeois elitism. Suni’s approach to folk culture interpreted rural Armenian peasants as symbols of the ‘working class,’ whom the Bolshevik revolutionaries were intent on uniting and liberating. Ironically, the ‘working class’ of the communist party was not a rural one, but a highly industrial one, but this contradiction was overlooked by many, including Suni. Suni’s approach to the music of this ‘working class’ peasant embodies these industrial, progressive, and symbolic values, while Komitas’ reflects the Enlightenment-era individualism and cosmopolitan values of Western Europe.

The purpose of this paper has not been to assign value judgments on the work of either composer, assessing, as Komitas did, which arrangements more ‘truthfully’ or ‘authentically’ embody the ‘Armenian spirit’. Such claims are extremely difficult to validate. Instead, demonstrating Komitas’ and Suni’s differing interests in preserving ‘authenticity’ of folk music sheds light on Armenia’s geographical, political, and ideological divide between East and West.

56 Komitas, Armenian Sacred and Folk Music, p. 162.
Armenian scholars’ continuing efforts to demonstrate a “unifying formula,” as in the case of Komitas and Suni, reflects the residual effects of the division, which was formalized by the turn of the twentieth century57. Ironically, the emphasis on a unified cultural narrative propagated by Atayan constantly forces Armenians to revisit the need to choose between either East or West, Russia or Europe, perpetuating the polemics between the two. Atayan’s attempts to unify a geographically and politically divided ethnicity through the musical styles and fabricated relationship between two composers of Armenian “national professional music” in the face of surmounting contrary evidence exemplify Alajaji’s assertion that “just ‘what’ an Armenian is problematizes the telling of the historical—and musical—narrative from the start”58.

ՀԱՅԺՈՂՈՎՐԴԱԿԱՆ ԵՐԱԺՇՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԵՎ ԱՐԵՎԵԼՔ-ԱՐԵՎՄՈՒՏՔ ԵՐԿՃՅՈՒԳՈՒՄԸ (ՊՈՓԻՆԱՍՆԻԹ ՈՒ ՊՐԵԽՈՐ ՊԱՏԱԿԱՆ ՍՏԵՐՎԵՐԱՇՐԵՐ)AMENTI (ԱՄՆ, ՎԱՇԻՆԳՏՈՆ)

ԱՆԵՐՈՒՄՆԱԿ

Արևելք-արևմուտք երկճյուղում (Պ. Ս. Արարատի մասին) և Պոփինասի արարողությունը Պոփինասի արարողությունների համակարգում տարածված հայ ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում հայ ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում հայ ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում հայ ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։ Պոփինասի արարողությունները երկճյուղում ազգային երաժշտության ազգային համակարգ է։

57 Suny, Looking toward Ararat, p. 4.
58 Alajaji, “Diasporic Communities and Negotiated Identities,” p. 34.
АРМЯНСКАЯ НАРОДНАЯ МУЗЫКА И ДИХОТОМИЯ ВОСТОК - ЗАПАД
(на примере сочинений Комитаса и Григора Сюни)

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Резюме

Сравнительный анализ творчества двух армянских композиторов и этномузыковедов – Комитаса (уроженца Западной Армении) и Григора Сюни (уроженца Восточной Армении) явствует о том, что собранные ими образцы народных песен были обработаны для хорowego исполнения в западном стиле. Указанные песни свидетельствуют о наличии дихотомии Восток - Запад в армянской действительности рассматриваемого периода.