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Armenian Tagh Art: A Historical Review and Contemporary Analysis

Armėnų tagų menas: istorinis požiūris ir šiuolaikinė analizė

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Abstract

Armenian medieval professional songwriting is one of the oldest in the world. Among its diverse branches lies Armenian *tagh* art, tracing its origin to the fifth century. Later, it experienced further development in the works of both famous and unknown authors, continuing until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Tagh is one of the key genres of Armenian monodic music, characterized by a monumental decorative style that has undergone various stages of development. Although tagh art has been studied in Armenian philology and musicology, many questions remain unanswered.

This paper deals with the discovery and analysis of previously unidentified samples of taghs and provides new insights into the history and study of Armenian taghs. Additionally, it reexamines previously discovered samples through a new analytical lens and emphasizes their peculiarities. The practical study focuses on the features of the musical components of taghs including melodic development, intonation-rhythmic structures, modal system, composition, and the interrelationships of poetic and literary texts.

Using the historical-comparative method, the unique stylistic peculiarities of the Armenian medieval authors' taghs is studied and brought to light, emphasizing musical expressions that are distinctive to their compositions. These aspects have not been previously addressed by musical scholars in the history of Armenian music. The results of our research enable us to enhance the history of tagh art, enriching it with newly discovered samples sourced from manuscripts.

The innovation of this article lies in the transcription of several taghs from New Armenian notation into modern music notation, using manuscripts stored in the archives. This effort introduces newly refined versions of these samples into scientific discourse, forming the basis of a new analyses.¹

Keywords: Armenian sacred music, *tagh*, *gandz*, *meghedai*, St. Grigor Narekatsi, St. Nerses Shnorhali, *Tagharan*, monumental-decorative style, intonation-rhythmic structures, mode.

Anotacija

Armėnų viduramžių profesionaliosios dainos – vienos seniausių pasaulyje. Tarp įvairių jų šakų yra ir armėnų *tagų* menas, kurio ištakos siekia V amžių. Jį plėtojo žinomi ir anoniminiai autoriai iki XVIII–XIX a. Tagai – vienas pagrindinių armėnų monodinės muzikos žanrų, kuriam būdingas monumentaliai dekoratyvus stilius, išgyvenęs įvairius raidos etapus. Nors tagų meną tyrinėja armėnų filologai ir muzikologai, daugybė klausimų lieka neatsakytų.

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjami anksčiau neidentifikuotų tagų pavyzdžiai, pateikiama naujų įžvalgų apie armėnų tagų istoriją ir tyrimus. Be to, anksčiau atrasti pavyzdžiai aptariami naujai ir pabrėžiami jų ypatumai. Praktiniame tyrime daugiausia dėmesio skiriama tagų muzikinių komponentų aspektams, įskaitant melodinę plėtotę, intonacines-ritmines struktūras, modalinę sistemą, kompoziciją, poetinių ir literatūrinių tekstų sąsajas.

Taikant istorinį-lyginamąjį metodą, tiriami ir atskleidžiami unikalūs Armėnijos viduramžių autorių tagų stilistiniai ypatumai, pabrėžiant jų kompozicijoms būdingą muzikinę raišką. Šie aspektai anksčiau nebuvo nagrinėti armėnų muzikos istorijos tyrinėtojų. Mano tyrimų rezultatai leidžia praplėsti tagų meno istoriją, praturtinti ją naujai atrastais pavyzdžiais, aptiktais rankraščiuose.

Straipsnyje pristatoma novatoriška kelių tagų transkripcija iš naujosios armėnų notacijos į šiuolaikinę muzikos notaciją, atlikta naudojantis archyvuose saugomais rankraščiais. Taip moksliniame diskurse atsiranda patobulintų šių pavyzdžių versijų, sudarančių galimybę naujoms analizėms.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: armėnų sakralioji muzika, *tagai*, *gandzai*, *mechedai*, šv. Grigoras Narekaci, šv. Nersesas Šnorhalis, *Tagaran*, monumentalus-dekoratyvus stilius, intonacinės-ritminės struktūros, dermė.

Introduction

Armenian musical culture is one of the oldest in the world. Since the first century AD, Christianity had already spread in Armenia. In 301, one of the most significant and determining events in the history of the Armenian people took place: Christianity was adopted as the state religion.

The Church progressively took control of cultural and musical regulations. During this period, Church music was in the process of formation. According to Komitas Vardapet, psalmody was the main form of chanting in Armenian churches. “What types of melodies were used to sing the psalms is not apparent; they were probably ancient folk melodies” (Komitas 2007: 97). The musical samples

that have survived to this day indicate that psalms had an accentuated recitative form.

The creation of the Armenian alphabet by St. Mesrop Mashtots (ca. 360–440) in 405 marked the beginning of Armenian literature. Due to the efforts of two outstanding figures, St. Mesrop Mashtots and Catholicos of All Armenians St. Sahak I Parthev (338–439), the Holy Scriptures were translated into Armenian and their influence on Armenian sacred chanting art is inestimable. Melodies chanted on the base of Psalms and Prophets' Blessings were introduced in the Divine Service. St. Sahak Parthev and St. Mesrop Mashtots initiated the regulation of the Divine Office of the Armenian Church and, along with their disciples, translated Liturgical books, including the Missal and the Breviary, and ordered the system of *Utdzayn*, i.e., the Armenian Octoechos. The Church ritual was reformed and became Armenian.

The newly developed Armenian professional musical art gave rise to *Armenian independent sacred chants*. Initially referred to as *ktsurd* (the prototype of *sharakan*, a canonical hymn), these were short chants of three verses attached to the aforementioned Psalms and the Prophets' Blessings. St. Mesrop Mashtots created charming samples of sacred chants, known as *Repentance Hymns*. St. Sahak Parthev authored chants devoted to Palm Sunday and the Holy Week. St. Movses Khorenatsi (410–490), the father of Armenian historiography, theologian, translator, and hymnographer, composed chants dedicated to the Nativity and the Resurrection of the Lord, as well as other Feasts and Saints. Hovhan I Mandakuni (403–490), Catholicos of All Armenians, poet and musician, created *sharakans* devoted to Pentecost, St. Translators, etc.

Thus, Armenian sacred music, after a century of preliminary fermentation, rose to a high level of Armenian professional chanting art with the invention of the Armenian alphabet, appearing on one of the major paths of world development (T'ahmizyan 1985: 18–19).

The origin of the tagh genre

During this “Golden” era of flourishing of Armenian culture, literature and music, the *tagh*—one of the key genres of Armenian medieval sacred chanting—was born. Ancient examples of taghs, preserved in the medieval Armenian manuscripts, are attributed to St. Sahak Parthev and St. Movses Khorenatsi. Considering this, Komitas Vardapet (birth name: Soghomon Soghomonian, 1869–1935)—the founder of Armenian national classical music and prominent musicologist and ethnographer—reached the significant conclusion that the origin of Armenian tagh art can be traced as far back as the fifth century (Solomonean 1894: 223).²

This assertion has been further elaborated upon in modern Armenian medieval studies. Notably, N. Tahmizyan has advanced the idea that the creation of taghs between the fifth and eighth centuries, represents a valid phenomenon (T'ahmizyan 1979: 26–27, 29–30). A. Arevshatyan also posited that several samples of tagh art have appeared since the early period of our national hymnography (Arevshatyan 1992: 145–146). Building upon Komitas's principle, M. Navoyan inferred that taghs have pre-Christian origin, with roots extending deeply into ancient worship hymns. Furthermore, characteristic traits of taghs are closely parallel those found in epic art (Navoyan 2001: 15; 173–174).

In Armenian musicology, the term “tagh” has been interpreted in different ways.³ Komitas Vardapet identified it as an ode and wrote “The content of the tagh illustrates, directly or metaphorically, Christ's ministry, the lives of the Saints, and any famous and impressive act of martyrdom” (Komitas 2007: 98). According to K. Kushnaryan:

‘tagh’ is basically lyrical song containing elements of concentration, meditation, contemplation, and sometimes drama; [...] One important feature of the “tagh” as a lyrical or lyricodramatic work is the emotional elevation of its subject matter, which in individual cases has a tinge of festive solemnity or haughty prophecy, and sometimes even ecstasy. (Kushnaryan 2016: 125)

R. Atayan articulated that the taghs' expanded vocal monodies were similar in content and development to vocal or instrumental arias (At'ayan 1985: 229).

The next stage in the development of the tagh genre is associated with Stepanos Syunetsi (ca. 680–735), a theologian, commentator, poet and musician. Two of his taghs are known, both dedicated to the Holy Cross. His sister, Sahakadukht Syunetsi (eighth century), was also a renowned author. She composed numerous taghs, *meghedies*, and *ktsurds*, among which the tagh “Saint Mariam” was particularly recognized.

It should be noted that the precious taghs of authors from the fifth to eighth centuries have reached us only in their literary forms, leaving us with no information about their musical components.

An unprecedented upsurge of tagh art in the work of St. Grigor Narekatsi

The art of taghs reached an unprecedented peak in the tenth century through the works of St. Grigor Narekatsi (Gregory of Narek, ca. 947–1003), the greatest philosopher, theologian, poet and musician, who was proclaimed as the 36th Doctor of the Universal Church by Pope Francis in 2015.⁴ The main work of St. Grigor Narekatsi is the poem “The Book of Lamentations”, a collection of ninety-five

prayers, each of which is subtitled “Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart” by the author. “The Book of Lamentations” is a masterpiece not only of Armenian but also of world literature.⁵ Narekatsi begs the Almighty God for mercy in his poem not only for his own salvation, but also for the salvation of all mankind:

A new book of psalms sings with urgency through me,
for all thinking people the world over,
expressing all human passions
and serving with its images
as an encyclopedic companion to our human condition,
for the entire, mixed congregation of the Church universal
... (Chapter 3:2).⁶

Some parts, sung from “The Book of Lamentations”, have survived to this day and now hold a fundamental place in the Divine Service of the Armenian Church.

St. Grigor Narekatsi is the founder of the genre *gandz* (literally: “treasure”), named after the opening words of his poems and dedicated to the Feasts of the Lord, Saints of the Universal and the Armenian Apostolic Churches, as well as to the Holy Church and Holy Cross. Narekatsi meticulously organized his *gandzes* and taghs to align with the Church calendar, culminating in the creation of individual miscellany known as “*Gandzetr*” (“*Gandzbook*”), which was the basis for the future *Gandzaran*.⁷

Thus, Grigor Narekatsi’s name is associated with both *gandzes* and taghs, and he is credited with the priority of presenting them in a special classification and as a separate collection. (K’yoškeryan 2008: 55)

St. Grigor Narekatsi is the author of taghs and meghedis, dedicated to the Feasts of the Lord and Saints. His taghs have been described in Armenian musicology as typical examples of the initial stage of the monumental-decorative style of Armenian professional song art (Кушнарев 1958: 133–134; T’ahmizyan 1985: 9–10, 203–204, 323). They are characterized by their majesty, vivid imagery, excitement, and colorful statements. The main musical features of taghs include cantilena, musical thinking free from Utdzayn canons, improvisation, rich ornamentation, rhythmic freedom, and a wide range and scale of form.

According to R. Atayan, taghs, especially their early examples, are marked by a kind of restraint. Their emotionality is far from exaltation, just as their majesty is far from heaviness, beauty from prettiness, and clarity of expression from simplicity of thought (Атаян 1981: 230–231). In the taghs and meghedies of the early period, “the ecclesiastical modal principle which was the main feature of sharakan music has been overcome and in its great prominence has been placed on the unconstrained free development of the melody. By virtue of intensive modal and melodic progression, the sacred taghs have an expansive and diverse

structure” (At’ayan 2013: 84). In the modal respect the taghs of the tenth and eleventh centuries, as a rule, preserve their closeness to folk music; they are based on diatonic modes of folk origin (Кушнарев 1958: 114).

St. Grigor Narekatsi’s poetic-musical legacy, the peak of Armenian sacred tagh chanting, radiated from Narekavank in the Rshtunyats province of Greater Armenia to the other monasteries and churches of Armenia and Cilicia. This heritage found its preservation in *khaz* (neume), notated Liturgical books, and following the advent of New Armenian notation in the nineteenth century, it was also documented in manuscript and printed miscellanies. The New Armenian notation was created from 1813 to 1815 by the musician Hambartsum Limonjyan from Constantinople (1768–1839) with the help of other musicians. It represents a non-linear notation that followed the *khaz* (neumatic) notation.

Komitas Vardapet recorded a number of Narekatsi’s taghs, such as “Bird”, “The Bird, the Bird Woke up”, “The Cart Coming down the Mountain Masis” and “This Mighty Voice I Heard”. These samples are among the masterpieces of Armenian sacred tagh music and are examples of high artistic merit. The Resurrection tagh “This Mighty Voice I Heard” Komitas published in his first musicological article (Solomonean 1894: 223). As an example, let us introduce the tagh “Bird”, which expresses the universal admiration and joy of the Resurrection of Jesus. It stands out for its lofty, epic nature, festive solemnity, melodic deep breadth, great artistic expressiveness and compositional–dramaturgical perfection (example 1).

How deeply the rich possibilities of modal and intonation transformations were used to express the subtlest shades of feelings and thoughts. The high level of professionalism, that gives an opportunity to present and solve the most complex artistic problems, is evident here, G. Gyodakyan wrote about the tagh “Bird” (Гюдакян 2006: 33)⁸

In the original text, Narekatsi used allegories: the peerless One is God the Father, and the Bird is Christ (Бахч’инян 2016: 246):

A bright Bird perched
On that wing of the cross.
It had a silver-plated wing,
Like the ray(s) of the sun.
Who is like the peerless One?
O peerless One.⁹

It is necessary to mention that the unique gramophone recording of Grigor Narekatsi’s tagh “Bird”, performed by Komitas Vardapet in 1912 in Paris, has been preserved.¹¹

Narekatsi’s taghs, which were passed down through oral tradition until the nineteenth century, were also recorded by other musicians. Such samples are included in the manuscript collection in New Armenian notation, survived from the Charkhapan St. Astvatsatsin—Holy Mother of

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Ծանր

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 հ հ քս - սահ -
 նս - նս
 թի - ին. սին. սին.
 նս - նկան - սին.

Example 2. St. Grigori Narekatsi, *I Speak of the Lion's Roar*.¹⁴

Lion because of His royal nature” (Grigor Tat’evac’i 1740: 113). This symbolism takes on a distinctive form in the musical component of the tagh “I Speak of the Lion’s Roar” (example 2). Its majestic and mysterious melody uniquely captures the essence of this interpretation with its expansive and wide flow of development. In the melodic texture of tagh, characterized by its compositional and dramaturgical integrity, special significance lies in certain intonations, such as the “sigh” (line 1), a phrase with an upward leap of a fourth (line 2), and ultimately, a culmination marked by tumultuous acclamations, leading to gradual descending denouement (line 5–6). The melodic image is meticulously crafted through ornamental passages, descending sequential structures (in the final sections of the three-part composition), and diverse rhythmic units, including the so-called “Lombard” or other dotted rhythm formulas.

The development of tagh art in the eleventh to twelfth centuries

Ani, the capital city of the Bagratid dynasty, stood out as a prominent medieval cultural hub, earning the name of “the town of 1,001 churches.” Culture was prospering in churches and monasteries, which also served as medieval universities. These institutions operated as educational centers where music theory and practice were taught, and various manuscripts were written in numerous scriptoria. Among the notable figures from Ani was Hovhannes Sarkavag Imastaser (ca. 1045–1129), philosopher, theologian, poet and musician, acclaimed for his significant contributions to sacred chanting and musical aesthetics. He not only composed a variety of sacred chants, but also possessed a deep understanding of neumography. One of the preserved works of Hovhannes Sarkavag is the tagh dedicated to the Holy Resurrection, characterized by a richly ornate melodic style, as evidenced by its khaz notation (T’ahmizyan 1985: 239).

In all probability, the art of taghs was highly developed in Ani under the immediate influence of Grigor Narekatsi’s traditions. This is evidenced by a sample that has survived with its musical component: the tagh “Holy Mother of God” of the Crucifixion of Jesus (twelfth century), the author of which cannot be identified with any certainty to this today. This tagh was recorded by Komitas Vardapet (Komitas 1998: 173), who heard it from one of the clergy of Etchmiadzin Monastery. Komitas Vardapet himself sang the tagh in 1914 at the Congress of the International Music Society (*Internationale Musikgesellschaft*) in Paris, when he delivered a lecture about Armenian music, revealing the inimitably unique character of Armenian music. The speech and performances of the famous Armenian scientist was received with great admiration by prominent composers and

musicologists such as Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Adler, Sachs, Wellesz, Schering, Wolfrum, Laloy, Gastoué, and many others. Commenting on this event, the *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* highly appreciated “above all, the remarreport by R. P. Komitas on ‘Armenian folk music’, which gained special vividness through virtuoso sung examples” (“vor allem die ausgezeichneten Ausführungen des R. P. Komitas über ‘armenische Volksmusik’, die durch virtuos gesungene Beispiele besondere Anschaulichkeit gewannen”) (Wolf 1914: 263).

The musical culture of Ani made a significant contribution that, to some extent, led to the rapid development of professional chanting art in Cilician Armenia.

After establishing sovereignty in 1080 in the Armenian state of Cilicia, science and culture, literature, architecture and miniatures experienced an unprecedented rise. A great boost was given to the development of education and the art of writing. During this period, Armenian professional music, sacred songwriting and neumography also reached incredible heights. Some monasteries, such as Sis, Hromkla, Drazark, Arkakaghin, and Skevra, Karmir Vank became centers of sacred music and khazology. Many musician-philosophers (the term used to denote professional musicians in medieval Armenia), received their education in monastic schools, and greatly contributed to the prosperity of musical art. They composed a large number of multi-genre sacred chants that were included in the *Gandzarans* and *Tagharans*, copied many musical-ritual books and actively participated in their editing. The musician-philosophers were skilled experts in khazology and the theory of modes, making significant contributions to their development (Mušelyan 2022).

One of the distinguished musicians of the Cilician musical culture is Grigor III Pahlavuni (1113–1166), Catholicos of All Armenians, poet and musician, whose multi-genre sacred chants include also taghs. One of them, composed for the Feast of the Theophany of the Lord, is called “O Wonderful Mystery”, and up to now is performed at the Water Blessing Service in the Armenian Church.

The second revival of tagh art in the work of St. Nerses Shnorhali

On the background of these activities, one of the prominent figures of Cilician and Armenian medieval musical culture on the whole, the giant image of St. Nerses Shnorhali (Klayetsi, 1101–1173) arises. He was Catholicos of All Armenians, an eminent statesman, theologian, poet–musician, and hymnographer. Nicknamed *Shnorhali* (the Gracious) for his multiple natural talents, he also earned the nickname *Melodos* for his brilliance as a singer, musician, and composer. He bequeathed an immense and multi-genre legacy, revised and completed almost all Armenian musical–ritual

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 ի յան - բա - նից
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 կաց բա - ըն - զե - ցար եւ ի հով - նաց
 փա - ռա - տը - ըն - զար.
 ընդ որս եւ զմեզ ու - թա - ւա - ցո՛,
 շնոր - հիւ օրհ - նեալ Ծը - նին -
 դեան Բո: Ե - կայք ման - կունք նոր Սի - օ - նի
 սա - ցոք փա - ղու Տխառնի ս -
 մէ - նի: Տէր n -
 յոր - մեա՛:

Example 3. St. Nerses Shnorhali, *Lord Have Mercy. Creator of the Youths*.¹⁵

books. Shnorhali composed for the *Sharaknots* (Hymnary) numerous *sharakans*, as well as sacred chants for the Breviary and Liturgy. He introduced also new genres.

One of the main places in the musical-poetic legacy of St. Nerses Shnorhali are occupied by his *gandzes*, taghs and meghedies, devoted to the Feasts of the Lord and the Saints of the Universal and the Armenian Apostolic Churches. By the works of Shnorhali Armenian tagh art reached a new peak of its history. In his *taghs* we observe two paths of development. One of them originates from Grigor Narekatsi's works, an example of which is the *tagh* devoted to the Nativity of Jesus "Lord Have Mercy. Creator of the Youths", recorded by Komitas Vardapet (example 3). St. Nerses Shnorhali depicted the great joy and happiness expressed on the occasion of the Birth of Jesus through limited musical means of expression. The tagh has a solemn, noble, and celebratory character, further emphasized by the use of the major mode. It is characterized by a melodic texture dominated by simple intonation-rhythmic steps, described by N. Tahmizyan as "virile intonations" (T'ahmizyan 1973: 66). The universal joy expressed in celebration of the Lord's Birth is highlighted in the climax (line 7), supported by the high register and the high pitch of the melody with its culminating tone (B-flat of the second octave).

In the melodic structure of the tagh, frequently used *nachshlags* can be noticed, which, while adding a special charm to the texture, also have a unique functional meaning: they bring liveliness to the slow tempo and balanced metrical rhythm. In contrast, the *vorschlags* used in the coda of the tagh (lines 11–12) are not just melismas; due to their special emphasis, combined with the main notes, they create unique "Lombard" rhythmic structures. The tagh "Lord Have Mercy. Creator of the Youths" is primarily set in the Second mode, but there are also a number of altered notes (C-sharp, D-flat, G-flat), which indicate interesting trends in the evolutionary development of this mode. Additionally, there is an observation about the relationship between the literary and musical texts. The verse begins and ends with the same words, "Lord Have Mercy." In the musical structure, the prologue (line 1) and the coda (lines 11–12) correspond to these words, though they have different implications in terms of musical organization and dramaturgical development.

A new stylistic direction in tagh art originated and flourished significantly in the works of St. Nerses Shnorhali, representing the second stage of the monumental-decorative style in Armenian monodic music (T'ahmizyan 1985: 323). This style was further developed in the works of Cilician authors of the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The main features of the taghs from this period include the free combination of several modal structures, the use of rich ornamentation and melismatics, jubilis, and brilliant passages of the instrumental type, requiring high-performing skills, the use

of modulations, alterations, chromaticisms, and a wide variety of rhythmic figures, leaps, wide range, etc. Additionally, the taghs of this period display an obvious connection with the art of the *gusans*—professional folk singers.

Examining the samples of taghs from this period, the musicologist K. Kushnaryan also underlines their multi-theme structure, a broad spectrum of diverse musical images, the expansion of forms, and the secondary role of words. Consequently, monody adopts the character of vocalization. Modes with altered degrees are extensively applied in taghs, a development attributed to the deepening psychological aspects of the music's content, reflecting individual nuances, personal experiences, and life conflicts. Summarizing his observations, K. Kushnaryan concludes:

The scale of the form of the tagh and their embellishment with figures of a jubilatory kind enables them to be compared with contemporary monuments of architecture in the monumental decorative style. (Kushnaryan 2016: 201)

The profound essence of this is reflected in St. Nerses Shnorhali's "New Flower" tagh of Resurrection, recorded by H. Cherchyan, and also discovered in the manuscript collection of Armash (example 4). Beyond its unique melodic composition, the piece showcases masterful musical dramaturgy (based on through-composed development principles). The gradual revelation of the plot line not only unfurls a rich narrative tapestry but also delves into the profound emotional depths of the individual. Each of the three parts of the tagh represents a complete image. With each subsequent part, the composition reaches a higher phase of development, culminating in the peak of emotion in the third part. The key moments of melodic development are interval motifs that make up the second-fourth-octave, around which characteristic patterns of different modes develop and revolve. Among the special techniques are various modifications of dichord, trichord or tetrachord structures, sequential development, the presence of descending syncopated structures, the application of natural and altered versions of one sound.

The compositional completeness of the tagh, the revelation of one image through multi-layered creative means, the richness and diversity of intonation-rhythmic structures, the artistically sophisticated invention of melodic texture, and the virtuoso brilliance characterizing the "New Flower" tagh are highly regarded not only in St. Nerses Shnorhali's works but also in medieval tagh art in general.

New flower that shown bright,
today from the new grave.
Multicolored plants of the soul
have turned green with life.¹⁶

It is important to note that the majority of St. Nerses Shnorhali's taghs and meghedies are preserved in

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Example 4. St. Nerses Shnorhali, *New Flower* (fragments).¹⁷

the Gandzarans and Tagharans, recorded with khazes. Although only a few samples with their musical component have survived to the present day, these samples provide a comprehensive understanding of the stylistic features of the tagh art of the great Melodos. The development of tagh art during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was influenced by Shnorhali's musical art, which, according to K. Kushnaryan, represents one of the pinnacles of Armenian monodic professional music (Кушнарев 1958: 218).

Further development of tagh art in Cilicia and Greater Armenia

Building upon the rich musical traditions established by their predecessors, medieval Cilician musicians made invaluable contributions to the evolution of tagh chanting. Among the prominent representatives of tagh art are: Nerses Lambronatsi (1153–1198)—state and church figure, theologian, philosopher, interpreter, translator, poet and musician; Gevorg Skevratsi (1246/47–1301)—scientist, grammarian, poet and musician; Costandin Srik Ssetsi (thirteenth century)—poet and musician; and Grigor VII Anavazetsi (date of birth unknown –1307)—Cilician Catholicos, hymnographer. In the different monasteries of Cilicia worked reknowned tagh authors such as Christosatur, Hovsep Vardapet, Andrias Vardapet, and two brothers of the Cilician King Hetum I—Barsegh and Hovhannes Arkayeghbayr (literally: King's brother).

From the musical heritage of Cilician musicians the tagh “The Cross appeared aforeside” of Costandin Ssetsi, “Today the First-Born of the Godfather” of Andrias Vardapet and many samples of anonymous authors, have been preserved with musical components, which were recorded in the nineteenth century.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, medieval music, particularly tagh art, also flourished in Greater Armenia. Musical education was paid great attention to in medieval universities, such as the University of Gladzor (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries) and the University of Tatev (fourteenth to fifteenth centuries). One of the three main auditoriums in these universities was devoted to the study of music, neumography and musicology. Grigor Tatevatsi (1346–1409), rector of the University of Tatev, was one of the greatest thinkers of his time and has the title of *Trismegistus*, i.e., Thrice-Greatest Philosopher; he was a prominent musician and studied various musicological, theoretical and esthetical issues in his works and is known for his study of church modes. Among his students was Arakel Syunetsi (ca. 1350–1425), an eminent poet and musician, theoretician, khazologist, philosopher, grammarian, and teacher, who made significant contributions to the development of Armenian tagh art. His taghs, dedicated to the Feast of the Resurrection of the Lord, were preserved

with a musical component and wrote down with Armenian notation by N. Tashchyan and Komitas Vardapet.

Medieval universities operating within the monastic complexes of Armenia were known for their philosophers-musicians. One such figure was Khachatur Taronetsi (twelfth to thirteenth centuries), the prior of the Haghardzin monastery, a celebrated poet and musician who played an important role in the development of Armenian khaz notation. He composed, among many other works, the chant “O Mystery Deep,” which is performed during the priest's vesting before the beginning of the Holy Liturgy. Although this chant is later referred to as *sharakan*, its stylistic characteristics, compositional features, solemn and majestic melody and melismatic style align closely with the samples of tagh art. R. Atayan called “O Mystery Deep” “*der streng contemplative Tagh*” (“a highly contemplative tagh”) (Ataian 1970: 250), further noting that this chant, in by all its musical parameters, adjoins the tagh genre (At'ayan 1985: 6)¹⁸.

In the further development of Armenian tagh art, several renowned figures made significant contributions. Among them was Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi (1230/35–1297/1300), a historian, teacher, poet and musician, who resided in the monastery of Geghard and created the *gandz* “My Heart is Trembling,” performing at the ceremony of the Washing of the Feet in the Armenian Church. Another is Hovhannes Yerznkatsi Pluz (ca. 1230–1293), a church and public figure, scholar, philosopher, grammarian, poet and musician, who authored numerous taghs as well as sacred and secular chants. During the Middle Ages, many Armenian musicians maintained close ties with representatives of Cilician musical art, spreading their achievements in sacred chanting and khazology to Greater Armenia.

Armenian tagh chanting flourished in the work of Grigor Tserents Khlatetsi (1349–1425), a prominent church and public figure, historiographer, writer, poet, musician, miniaturist, commentator, editor, and teacher. Renowned for his musical talent, he was a skilled singer and mastered the art of khaz notation. He is also known as the author of writings on the Armenian rite.

One of Grigor Khlatetsi's most significant undertakings was the editing of the miscellany *Gandzaran* (1399–1400), an event of major historical and cultural importance. The profound influence of Grigor Narekatsi in shaping and advancing the chantbooks *Gandzaran* and *Tagharan* has been extensively discussed. Centuries later, Grigor Khlatetsi meticulously revised *Gandzaran* to reflect changes and additions to the Church calendar. He enriched the ritual book with new compositions and refined existing ones. Each cycle within this miscellany was dedicated to a certain Feast and comprised four genres: *gandz*, tagh, *pokh* (or *hordorak*), and *meghedi* (Grigor Narekac'i 1981: 21–39; K'yoškeryan 2008: 24–45; Навоян 2010: 344–345). The *gandz*, characterized

ԳՐԻԳՈՐ ԽԼԱԹԵՏԻ
ԳՈՉԷՐ ՀՐԵՇՏԱԿՆ
ՅԱՐՈՒԹԵԱՆ

Ծանր ԳԶ

Գո - չէր
կա - նայք, հրեշ -
դար տակն
զի առ զի -
զար - հմ -
վին
ըիք

վա - արն
Յա -
լա - լալ,
լու -
լալ

լու - լալ
ըի - լալ, թի -
սու -
վին.
զկն
ըս -
ըին:

Example 5. Grigor Khlatetsi, *The Angel Exclaimed*.¹⁹

by its narrative–descriptive nature and recitative style, held a central role within each cycle. The other three units: the tagh, the pokh, and the meghedi, each contributed artistic embellishments and lyrical depth to enhance the accessibility and understanding of the material (K’yoškeryan 2008: 39). Among these, the tagh held leading prominence, serving as a vehicle for impassioned retelling characterized by vivid imagery, thereby infusing the poem with emotionality and musicality (K’yoškeryan 2008: 35). Khlatetsi was an excellent scribe and copied a number of Gandzarans, which are preserved in Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran.

Grigor Khlatetsi wrote a large number of gandzes and taghs, dedicated to the Feasts of the Lord, the Saints of the Universal and the Armenian Apostolic Churches, as well as the Armenian martyrs and national heroes. The work of St. Grigor Narekatsi had a profound influence on Khlatetsi, becoming a significant source of inspiration. Like Narekatsi, Khlatetsi composed his chants using the personal acrostic *Grigor*, and began gandzes with the same word “gandz”. As a sign of honor to his outstanding teacher, Khlatetsi dedicated a gandz to Narekatsi with a personal acrostic.

As a result of our scientific studies, we have discovered that the tagh for the Resurrection, “The Angel Exclaimed,” is attributed to Grigor Khlatetsi. This work has been preserved with a musical component and is known through a recording by Komitas Vardapet (example 5). The tagh is characterized by its solemnity and rhetorical-pathetic nature, which is emphasized from the very beginning through the “Lombard” rhythm of an upward leap of a fourth. The second phrase is more expressive, and due to the modification of the leap interval, the intensification of the emotional elements, tumultuous acclamations and the high register, it reaches the peak of dramaturgy. Syncopated

and dotted rhythmic formulas also play an important role in the musical texture of the tagh. The tagh is composed entirely in the Third mode, a rare phenomenon for that historical period. From this point of view, the tagh is unique because, during that period, taghs were characterized by the combination of several modes and modulations.

In “The Angel Exclaimed,” we encounter significant ideological content, laconicism, architectonics, and compositional integrity, along with a perfect harmony between music and literary text. The author created a musical miniature in which the individual feelings expressed on the occasion of the Lord’s Resurrection are elevated to a high level of generalization.

Arakel Baghishetsi (ca. 1380–1454) is one of the well-known Armenian poet-musicians, who created many gandzes and taghs dedicated to the Holy Mother of God and the Feasts of the Nativity and Resurrection of the Lord. Unfortunately, the musical components of these compositions have not survived.

One of the prominent representatives of tagh art is Grigoris I Aghtamartsi (sixteenth century)—Catholicos of the Aghtamar diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church (1512–1544), a church and cultural figure, poet and musician. Of his numerous taghs, the one that has survived with its musical component is “The Temple of the Increate,” dedicated to the Holy Mother of God. This tagh was discovered by us in the handwritten collection of the Monastery of the Holy Mother of God in Armash. This highly artistic work is distinguished by its delicate taste and provides a complete view of the author’s unique musical thinking (example 6). “The Temple of the Increate” is characterized by a graceful cantilena-type melody, vivid expressiveness, gently decorated passages, and a bright and full depiction,

ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻՍ ԱՂԹԱՄԱՐՏԻ
ԱՆԵՂԻՆ ՏԱՃԱՐ

Ա - նի
 ղին - տու -
 նար, Բու -
 նին
 քա - ղն -
 քար,
 զե - քա - գյն
 գոլ - կալ
 Տի - քա - մար
 ղն յա - մն
 ղն զԱստ - նած
 լիզ - ու:
 ծը - նար:

Example 6. Grigoris Aghtamartsi, *The Temple of the Increate*.²⁰

with compositional integrity and a close interconnection between the literary text and musical component. Through the tagh’s magnificent melody, a luminous image of the Holy Mother of God is symbolically created.

Grigoris Aghtamartsi, a talented cultural figure of the Armenian Middle Ages, was very skilled in poetic art, music, and miniature painting. The image of the Virgin Mary, apart from this musical-poetic work, was also created by

Aghtamartsi in 1530 in a miniature called “Annunciation” (Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran, Ms. No 962, fol. 322v). In this portrayal, the elegant artist adorns the joyful scene of the Annunciation of St. Virgin with a palette of rich colors. It stands among the best examples of Armenian miniatures. In this context, the tagh “The Temple of the Increate” is a unique remnant, a brilliant example of the symbolic fusion of the three arts.

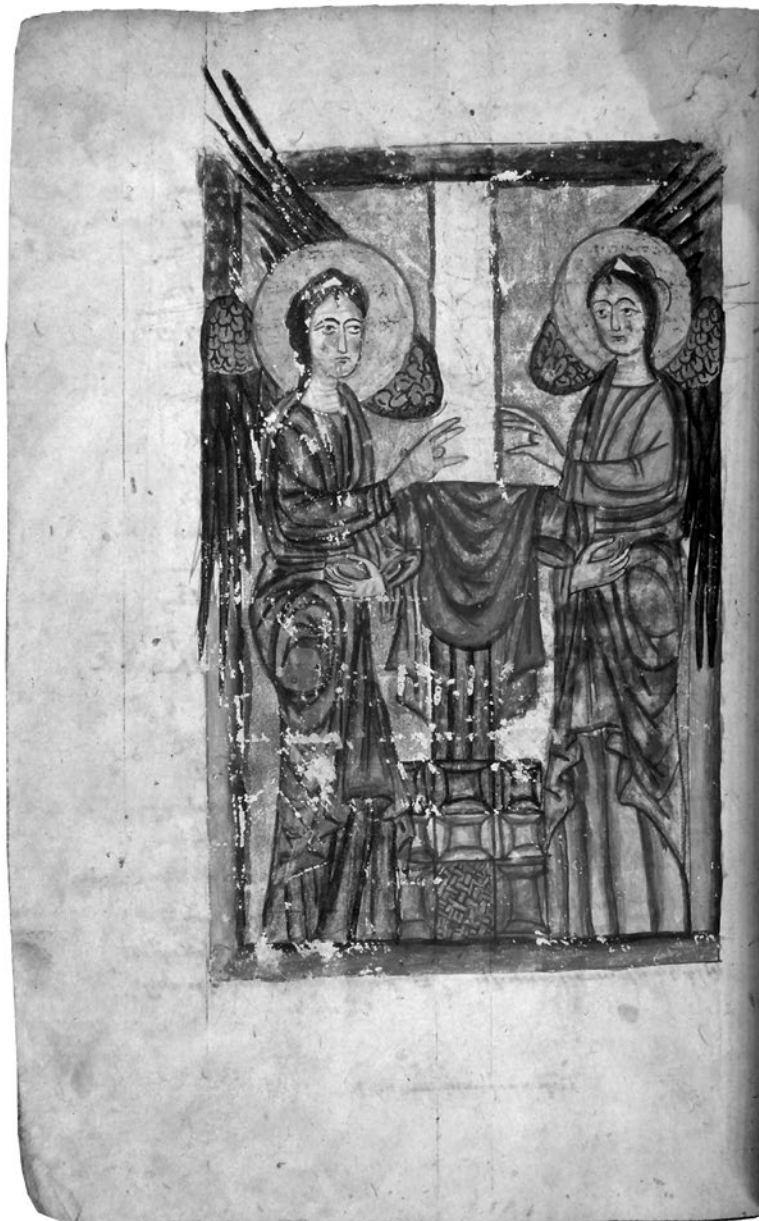


Figure 1. Grigoris Aghtamartsi, *Annunciation*.

The formation of the Tagharan chantbook and the earliest surviving samples

St. Grigor Narekatsi's Gandzaran would later serve as a cornerstone in the development of the Tagharan chantbook. The rapid development of tagh art in Narekatsi's works marked a new stage in the genre's evolution, inspiring subsequent poets and musicians to create new sacred chants. This creative surge resulted in a significant number of taghs and megghedies, leading to the necessity of compiling a new chantbook—Tagharan (or Taghbook), where the leading role was attributed to the tagh. Following the tagh in the cycle was the *pokh* (from Armenian: Փոխ or Փոխիլ զձայնն, literally meaning “change the mode”), a chant sung in a different mode than

the tagh. Alternatively, in some cycles, *bordorak* was included instead of *pokh*, known for its livelier character and faster tempo. The cycle was then rounded off with *meghed*, which shared stylistic similarities with the taghs.

Considering various factors, such as the development of tagh art in the works of Narekatsi and subsequent authors, as well as their regional creative activity, it is plausible to suggest that the earliest handwritten Tagharans were compiled and copied during the eleventh to twelfth centuries²¹ in the renowned scriptoria of Cilician Armenia.

The oldest surviving manuscript of Tagharan (kept in the National Library of France, Ms. No. 79) dates back to 1241 and was copied in Cilicia within the scriptorium of the Drazark monastery by the scribe Hovhannes. Originally

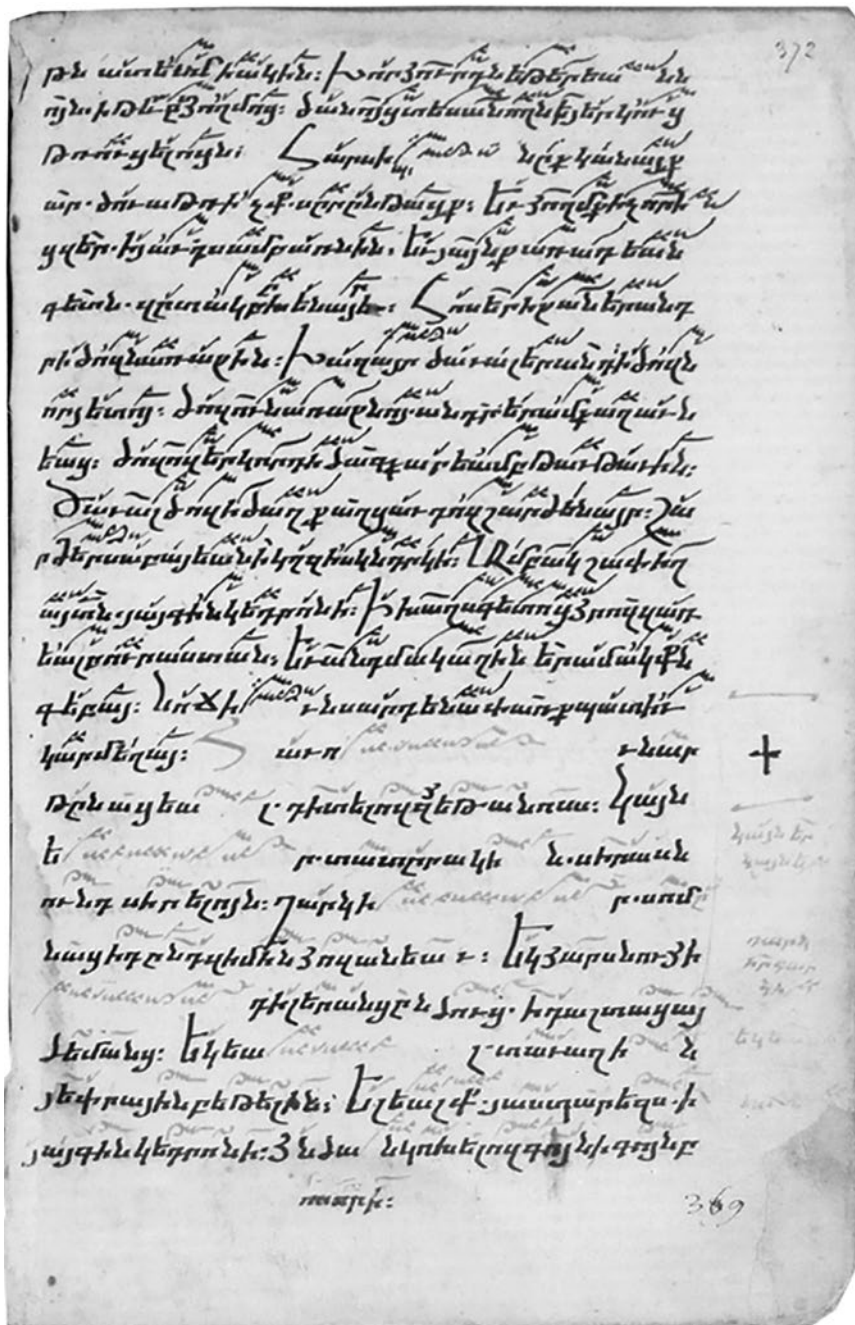


Figure 2. Tagharan, 1241, fol. 372.

from Greater Armenia, Hovhannes embarked on an extensive search before finally obtaining the manuscript he sought in Cilicia. In the colophon (fol. 402v), he extends gratitude to the influential Cilician musician Hovsep Vardapet, who generously provided him with the “excellent and most valuable” authentic sample of Tagharan. The colophon within the manuscript holds historical significance. The scribe’s notes about an existing copy within the monastery’s library, along with the observation that “neither Gandzaran nor Tagharan” were available at hand (fol. 403), serve as evidence of the existence of earlier examples of the Tagharan

chantbook. This also demonstrates the widespread distribution of Tagharan within the musical and professional circles of Armenia and Cilicia.

The Tagharan of 1241 holds immense historical value as the oldest primary source documenting not only the earliest examples of Armenian tagh art, such as the chants of St. Sahak I Parthev, St. Movses Khorenatsi and Stepanos Syunetsi, but also the majority of the taghs and meghedies by St. Grigor Narekatsi and St. Nerses Shnorhali. Additionally, the ritual book contains chants by Cilician musicians, including Grigor Pahlavuni, Nerses Lambronatsi, Gevorg

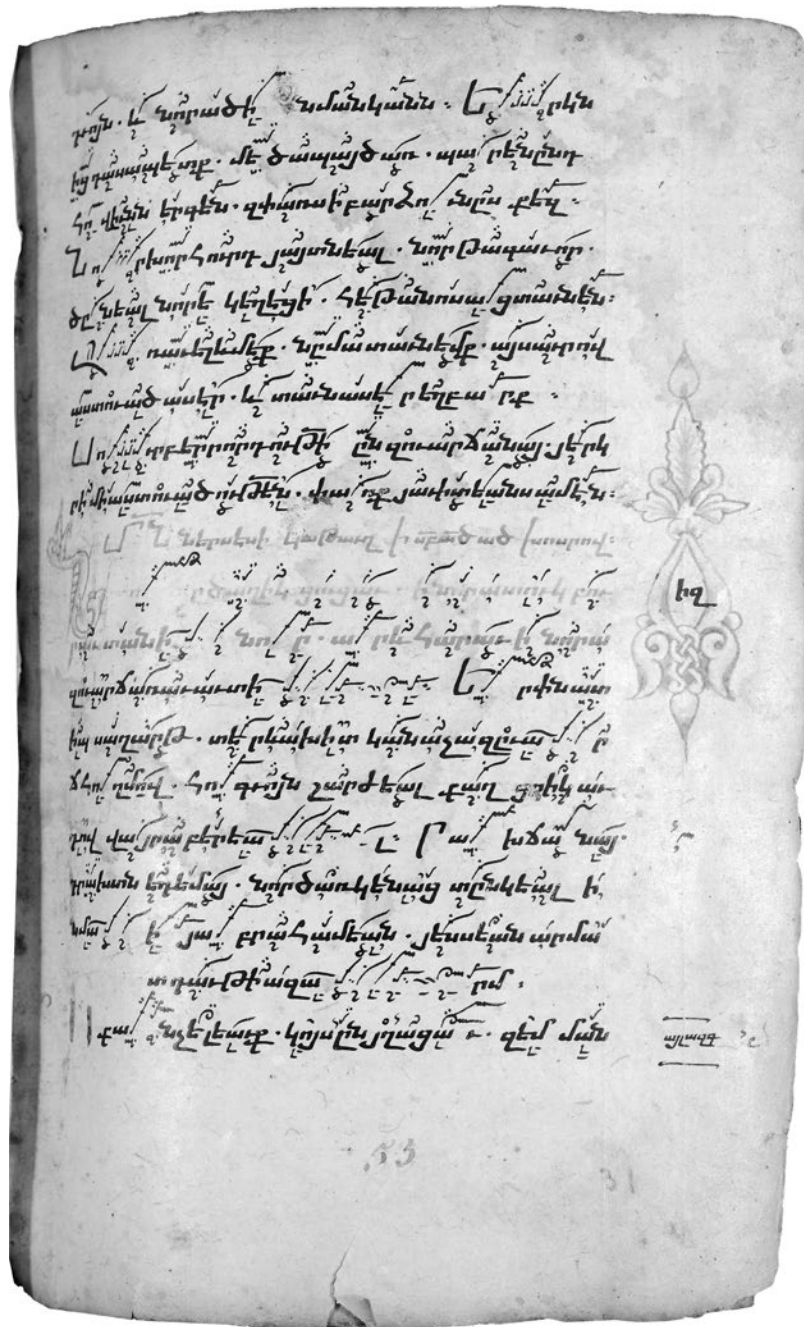


Figure 3. Tagharan, 1348, fol. 31.

Skevratsi, and Costandin Ssetsi. Works by anonymous authors also hold important place within the miscellany.

The most significant manuscript of Tagharan (preserved in the library of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice, Ms. No. 2070), copied in 1348 in Sis (Cilicia) by the noted musician-philosopher and miniaturist Hesu Areveltsi, stands as a pivotal milestone in the evolution of the chant-book, reflecting the renewed flourishing of *tagh* art in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Notably, in contrast to canonical chanting books like Sharakan, access to newly created works in Gandzaran or Tagharan was more readily

available. Over time, the miscellany was enriched with multi-genre songs composed for the same Feasts. Moreover, the introduction of new Feasts into the Church calendar necessitated the creation of new chants.

In this dynamic context, both the structure of Tagharan and the *tagh+pokh+meghedi* system reflected significant changes that had unfolded in the preceding century. Most notably, the total number of *tagh* units included in the miscellany expanded considerably (by more than a third), incorporating songs by both well-known and anonymous authors that had gained widespread popularity, while

excluding those that were gradually fading into obscurity. The Tagharan of 1348 attained such vast recognition that it evolved into an educational manual for musicians, serving as a cornerstone for several generations of students in higher schools within monasteries. This manuscript set a standard from which numerous copies were produced over the ensuing decades.

While the copying of the Tagharan chantbook persisted in scriptoria across different regions, only a few copies have survived to the present day. By the fifteenth century, a mixed type of book has emerged, in which scribes began to include not only sacred taghs but also taghs on secular topics.

It can be asserted that the Tagharan chantbook effectively encapsulates the 1,500-year history of Armenian tagh art, thus emerging as the most crucial primary source for its study. The Tagharans, copied in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, serve as evidence of the high scientific and educational standards of medieval Armenia's monastic schools, the professionalism of the musician-philosophers, and their skill in musical art, khaz art, and the theory of modes.

Armenian tagh art development in the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries

The further development of tagh music proceeded along the two aforementioned paths, progressing significantly until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the musical culture in Armenia went through a period of decline because of the complicated political situation and social-economic difficulties. Nevertheless, beginning in the seventeenth century, a period of active renewal and deep interest in ancient and medieval art was observed. New and profound commentaries on the works of St. Grigor Narekatsi's and St. Nerses Shnorhali were written, and literary and musical works of various genres were composed under the influence of their legacy. Notable examples include sharakans and taghs by Mkhitar Sebastatsi (1676–1749)—theologian, scholar, and educator—and prayers and taghs by Simeon Yerevantsi (1710–1780)—Catholicos of All Armenians, theologian, poet and musician. In the eighteenth century Petros Ghapantsi—poet and musician—was known for his taghs.

In the nineteenth century, based on the monodic samples of the “Notated Chants of the Holy Patarag” recorded by N. Tashchyan, Makar Yekmalyan (1856–1905) wrote “Chants of the Divine Liturgy” (for different types of choirs)²², one of the significant works of the oratorio and cantata genres in Armenian composition art. Between 1914 and 1915 Komitas Vardapet created his “Patarag” (Liturgy) for male choir, a masterpiece of Armenian polyphonic music.²³ Both Armenian composers masterfully arranged medieval Armenian taghs and meghedies in their works.

The recordings of Armenian taghs

Armenian medieval music, including taghs, was meticulously recorded using khaz (neume) notation. Medieval musicians were proficient in khaz notation and also engaged with the historical, theoretical, and aesthetic aspects of musical art. Special emphasis was placed on the artistic interpretation of taghs. In the manuscripts, musician-scribes not only described the character of the chants as “beautiful,” “tasty,” or “noble,” but also detailed the manner of performing chants as “gently” or “sweetly.” It should be noted, however, that the musical material—not only of Tagharans but also of other chantbooks written with khazes, which constitute a significant portion of the extensive heritage of Armenian sacred songwriting—remains unknown to us today. This is because by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the key to reading the khazes had already been lost. As a result, only a relatively small number of examples with a musical component have been preserved from the extensive heritage of tagh art.

Armenian taghs and meghedies, which were copied by monastic scribes in the Middle Ages using khaz notation in handwritten books, were passed down through oral tradition. They survived despite the threat of extinction and, in the nineteenth century, were preserved by professional musicians who documented them using New Armenian notation. Among them, special mention must be made of Komitas Vardapet, as well as other distinguished musician-theorists such as Hambartsum Cherchyan (1828–1901), Nikoghayos Tashchyan (1841–1885), Yeghia Tntesyan (1834–1881), Amy Abgar (1863–1942), and others.

The musical legacy of Komitas Vardapet forms a separate chapter in the history of Armenian music, recognized as integral components of UNESCO's cultural heritage and enshrined in the Memory of the World Register.²⁴ Komitas recorded many samples of sacred taghs and meghedies, compiling a kind of anthology that spans from the early until the late Middle Ages. These recordings hold great value, including works by St. Grigor Narekatsi, Grigor Pahlavuni, St. Nerses Shnorhali, Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi, Hovhannes Yerzknatsi, Arakel Syunetsi and others, as well as works by unknown authors. As a prominent musician, Komitas did all this with a scientific approach towards the sacred musical legacy. The result, as recounted by his tutor Richard Schmidt at the Berlin Conservatory, was the creation of a new “noble and original style,” which Schmidt referred to as the “Armenian style”.

As a musician-scientist, Komitas studied Armenian sacred music and songs in detail, deeply and multilaterally elucidating their unique characteristics. He proved that Armenians have an original form of music that is as national, original and independent as their literature and language. For the different choirs he conducted, Komitas

made highly artistic polyphonic arrangements of monodic taghs and meghedies. These pieces were performed during concert tours in Europe and elsewhere. Komitas himself had a melodic voice and sang taghs and meghedies at concerts and lectures, as well as recording them on gramophone.

A portion of the vast heritage of Armenian sacred chanting was preserved through the recordings of N. Tashchyan, which were included in the volume “Notated Chants of the Holy Patarag (Liturgy),”²⁵ certified by the Armenian Church. In 1873 Catholicos Gevorg IV initiated the recording of the chants of the Liturgical books Sharakan (Hymnary), Zhamagirk (Breviary) and Patarag (Liturgy) with Armenian notation. The whole process was set by N. Tashchyan having several other musicians as assistants under his disposal. N. Tashchyan’s recorded collections in Armenian musicology have been recognized for their significant scientific and artistic merit. N. Tahmizyan, in particular, regarded the aforementioned collections, such as the Liturgy, as primary sources that embody the essence of Armenian sacred music, which reflect the sacred and professional song-art of feudal Armenia, characterized by their rich content and pure style (Тahмизян 1977: 8).

N. Tashchyan wrote down numerous taghs and meghedies with Armenian notation for the Liturgical ceremony, intended for performance on the Feasts of the Lord and Saints. It appears that in Etchmiadzin, N. Tashchyan had access to medieval musical manuscripts, which he examined and compared with the examples being performed (Тahмизян 1977: 8–9). Indeed, the recorded Liturgy encompasses nearly the entire historical evolution of Armenian tagh art.

N. Tashchyan’s recordings include two of Grigor Narekatsi’s taghs: “Sealike Eyes” and “Watching over the Gentiles.” However, according to N. Tahmizyan (Тahмизян 1985: 110), these were rearranged during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries by Cilician musicians to align with the evolving requirements of the melismatic style of songwriting. A significant portion of the volume consists of tagh samples created in the Cilician period, a time when Armenian musical art reached unprecedented heights, leaving behind a distinguished legacy created by many honored and anonymous composers.

Hambardzum Cherchyan played an indisputable role in the preservation of Armenian medieval sacred music and, in particular, tagh chanting. He was a musician and theorist and recorded in Armenian notation the Hymnary and the Breviary, as well as Tagharan. As we have mentioned, H. Cherchyan was the musical director of Armash monastery school. Under his leadership, with the active participation of his students—most notably the prominent musician Hakobos Ayvazyan—and the school’s apprentices, the Armash manuscript collection with New Armenian notation was created. Studying the manuscripts

reveals an entire cultural heritage—a unique tradition of monastic chanting, in which the Armenian rite and the art of sacred chanting, with its multifaceted manifestations, have been preserved intact. The manuscripts contain an extraordinarily rich selection of materials, encompassing nearly the entirety of Armenian professional songwriting and spanning a wide range of genres. Most of the recordings are attributed to Cherchyan himself. The collection includes taghs and meghedies of St. Grigor Narekatsi and St. Nerses Shnorhali, alongside works by other medieval authors.

Conclusion

Armenian medieval professional song art, encompassing taghs, is among the oldest traditions in the world. Its origins date back to the fifth century, with luminaries such as St. Sahak Parthev and St. Movses Khorenatsi. The tagh genre saw significant development in the eighth century through the work of Stepanos Syunetsi and Sahakadukht Syunetsi. The genre reached a pinnacle of prosperity thanks to the substantial contributions of St. Grigor Narekatsi and St. Nerses Shnorhali, whose vast musical and poetic legacy endures as a testament to Armenia’s cultural richness and profound artistic expression. These two outstanding figures had a monumental influence on the entire history not only of tagh art but also of Armenian sacred songwriting as a whole. The impact of their musical and poetic language is reflected in the works of subsequent authors in nearly every aspect, from vocabulary to characteristic melodic turns. Under their influence, Armenian tagh art flourished, leaving an indelible mark on generations to come. One of the major innovations of our work is the discovery of previously unknown recordings in manuscript collections, including the taghs “I Speak of the Lion’s Roar” by St. Grigor Narekatsi, “New Flower” by St. Nerses Shnorhali, and “The Temple of the Increate” by Grigoris Aghtamartsi. For the first time, we are introducing these recordings into scientific circulation. Additionally, our research has yielded a key finding in Armenian musicology: the tagh “The Angel Exclaimed,” recorded by Komitas Vardapet, is actually a composition by St. Grigor Khlatetsi.

In conclusion, our study contributes significantly to the understanding and appreciation of Armenian tagh art, an essential genre of Armenian monodic music with a rich history spanning over 1,500 years. Employing the historical-comparative method, we have highlighted the unique stylistic features and musical expressions of taghs, thereby enriching the study of Armenian sacred music’s history and theory. Furthermore, our transcription of taghs from New Armenian notation into modern music notation ensures the accessibility and preservation of these musical treasures. Through this work, we aim to promote the recognition

and appreciation of Armenian tagh art on international scholarly platforms, emphasizing its significance as a vital component of the world's musical heritage.

References

- 1 I would like to thank Professor Meri Yesayan for taking the necessary effort to review the article.
- 2 Archimandrite (in Armenian).
- 3 See about *taghs* of different authors: (Кушнарев 1958; Ата'ayan 1959: 83–87; Ага'ян 1981; Grigor Narekac'i 1981; T'ahmizyan 1985; Ата'ayan 1985; Nerses Šnorhali 1987; Łazinean 1995; Navoyan 2001; K'yoškeryan 2008; Nersisyan 2008; Utidjian 2014, 2020; Вах'č'inean 2016, Sarkisian and Arlen 2024, etc.).
- 4 https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/la/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_2015412_gregorius-narecensis-doctor-ecclesiae.html [date of access: 10.05.2024].
- 5 “The Book of Lamentations” by St. Grigor Narekatsi has been translated into different languages around world, including Lithuanian. In the twentieth century, the famous poet and great friend of the Armenian people, Eduardas Mieželaitis translated several chapters of “Book of Lamentations” by St. Grigor Narekatsi (Eduardas Mieželaitis, Antakalnio barokas, Vilnius: Vaga, 1971). Later the complete (95 chapters) translation of Narekatsi's “Book” was done by a poet and translator Sigita Geda (Grigoras Narekaci, Sielvartingų giedojimų knygos. Vertėjas: Sigita Geda. – Vilnius: Vaga, 1999). In 2021 a new, luxurious edition of this translation was published Grigoras Narekaci, Sielvartingų giedojimų knygos, Vertė: Sigita Geda, Vilnius: Odilė, 2021; for the presentation, see: <https://arm-consulate.lt/en/the-book-of-lamentations-published-in-lithuania/> [date of access: 10.05.2024], parallel to which the audio book was also released: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONGD4bpiajU&list=PLYXp5zPGQujoUqipaPN2uEW74s0bJ7> [date of access: 10.05.2024].
- 6 Translated by T. Samuelian (St. Grigor Narekatsi 2021: 9).
- 7 For more detailed information about the *gandzes* and *Gandzaran* see (Solomonean 1994: 223; Komitas 2007:100; K'yoškeryan 1971; Grigor Narekac'i 1981: 21–31; T'ahmizyan 1985: 82–85; K'yoškeryan 2008: 26–32, 55–65; Аревшаг'ян 2016; Вах'č'inean 2016: 19–23, 26–29, etc.).
- 8 About the *tagh* “Bird” see also (Ата'ayan 1959: 84–86; T'ahmizyan 1985: 208–218; Тагмиз'ян 1977: 279–281).
- 9 Translated by A. Terian (Terian 2016: 197–198).
- 10 See (Komitas 1998: 170).
- 11 <https://soundcloud.com/most-media-169346190/komitas-havik> [date of access: 10.05.2024].
- 12 Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran, New collection, Mss. No 5, 6, 29, 95–99, 103.
- 13 Translated by A. Terian (Terian 2016: 171).
- 14 Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran, New collection, Ms. No. 96. We have presented examples of notes 2–6 of our article according to the manuscripts preserved in Yerevan Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran and Yeghishe Charents Museum of Literature and Art. The transcribing of the samples from New Armenian notation to modern music notation was performed by Astghik Musheghyan and musicologist Nane Misakyan.
- 15 Yeghishe Charents Museum of Literature and Art. Komitas archive, Ms. No. 332.
- 16 For translation see here: https://arak29.org/sharakan_php/index.php?iw=1&by=1&lid=2&unth=2&cmd=select&id=33&dy=500&tw=NaN&exp=yes [date of access: 10.05.2024].
- 17 Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran, New collection, Ms. No. 103.
- 18 See also (T'ahmizyan 1985: 279).
- 19 Yeghishe Charents Museum of Literature and Art. Komitas archive, Ms. No. 339.
- 20 Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran, New collection, Ms. No. 103.
- 21 According to A. Keushgerian (K'yoškeryan 2008: 109), the first examples of *Tagharans* were created in the period following the works of Narekatsi.
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- 24 Komitas's works were registered in the UNESCO International Memory of the World Register, <https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/collection-works-composer-komitas-wardapet> [date of access: 10.05.2024].
- 25 The first publication was in 1874, the second in 1878.

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas Armėnijos viduramžių *tagų* giedojimas, kaip gyvybinga armėnų monodinės muzikos šaka atsiradęs V a. žymių autorių šv. Saako Partevo ir Movse-so Chorenaci kūrinuose. Atsižvelgdamas į šį faktą, armėnų nacionalinės muzikos kūrėjas, muzikologas ir etnografas Komitas Vardapetas padarė išvadą, kad armėnų tagų meno ištakos gali būti siejamos net su V a. Vėliau buvo iškelta prielaida, kad tagų kilmė yra ikikrikščioniška, o jų šaknys glūdi senovinėse garbinimo giesmėse. Be to, būdingi tagų bruožai labai panašūs į epinio meno bruožus. VIII a. tagų žanras toliau vystėsi formuojamas Stepanos Siuneci ir Saakaducht Siuneci kūrybos, o IX a. pasiekė neregėtas aukštumas ypač genialaus poeto ir muzikanto šv. Grigoro Narekaci (X–XI a.) didinguose kūrinuose, skirtuose Viešpaties ir šventųjų šventėms. Armėnų muzikologijoje jo giesmės apibūdinamos kaip armėnų ankstyvojo profesionaliojo giedojimo emblematis monumetaliai dekoratyvus stilius. Narekaci tagams būdingas monumetaliai dekoratyvus stilius, epinis-lyrinis pobūdis, didingumas, ryškūs vaizdai, pakylėtumas ir iškalbingi teiginiai. Pagrindiniai muzikiniai tagų bruožai apima kantileną, laisvą muzikinį mąstymą, t. y. be armėnų oktoechų, kanonus, improvizaciją, pagrąžinimus, ritminį lankstumą ir ekspansyvias formas.

Nauja stilistinė tagų meno paradigma atsirado ir sukles-tėjo dėl didžiulės žybaus poeto ir muzikanto šv. Nerseso Šnorhalio (Maloningojo, XII a.) įtakos. Jo kūriniai yra antrasis monumetaliai dekoratyvus stiliaus etapas armėnų monodinėje muzikoje. Šis stilius buvo toliau plėtojamas XII–XIV a. Kilikijos autorių kūrinuose. Šnorhalio tagų bruožai – laisvas kelių modalinių struktūrų derinimas, gausus ornamentikos, melizmatikos naudojimas, instrumentinio tipo jubiliacijų pasažai, reikalaujantys išlavintų atlikimo gebėjimų. Be to, juose gausu moduliacijų, variacijų, chromatinių elementų, įvairių ritminių schemų ir šuolių. Šio laikotarpio tagams būdingos daugiatemės struktūros, keistos dermės ir antrinis žodžių vaidmuo, dėl to monodija įgauna vokalizacijos pobūdį. Tai siejama su psichologinių aspektų gilinimu muzikos turinyje, atspindinčiu individualius niuansus, asmeninę patirtį ir gyvenimo konfliktus.

Taguose yra aiški sąsaja su gusanų – profesionalių liaudies dainininkų – menu.

Šv. Grigoras Narekaci ir šv. Nersesas Šnorhalis suformavo tvarią tagų žanro trajektoriją, katalizuodami jo raidą ir klestėjimą. Jų monumetalus palikimas skamba ne tik tagų mene, bet ir visoje armėnų religinių giesmių kūryboje. Muzikinės ir poetinės šių asmenų kalbos ilgalaikis poveikis persmelkia vėlesnių autorių kūrinius, pasireiškia niuansuotu žodynu ir būdingais melodiniais motyvais. Viduramžių universitetai, vienuolynai ir vienuolynų mokyklos atliko svarbų vaidmenį plėtojant Armėnijos viduramžių muziką, neumografiją ir ypač tagų meną. Šiose institucijose išsilavinimą įgiję ir dirbę muzikai filosofai atliko neįkainojamą vaidmenį kuriant religines giesmes, tagus ir mechedus, taip pat plėtojant muzikos tradicijas ir perrašant liturgines knygas. Tęsdami savo protėvių muzikines tradicijas, jie daug prisidėjo prie armėnų profesionalaus giedojimo meno raidos. Žymus tagų meno istorijos etapas yra *Gandzarano* mišiolas, priskiriamas šv. Grigorui Narekaci, taip pat XIII–XV a. suklestėjusi *Tagarano* giesmynų knyga. Šie rinkiniai yra aukščiausio tagų žanro išsivystymo šiuo laikotarpiu pavyzdys.

Remdamiesi turtingomis muzikinėmis tradicijomis, kurias sukūrė pirmakiai, Armėnijos viduramžių muzikai iki pat XVIII–XIX a. įnešė neįkainojamą indėlį į sakralinio tagų giedojimo raidą, tarp jų – gausybė žymių ir anoniminių poetų-muzikantų. Nuo XVII a. prasidėjo aktyvaus atsinaujinimo ir didelio susidomėjimo senovės ir viduramžių menu laikotarpis. Buvo sukurti nauji ir gilūs šventųjų Grigoro Narekaci ir Nerseso Šnorhalio kūrinių komentarai, veikiant jų palikimui buvo kuriami įvairių žanrų literatūros ir muzikos kūriniai. Armėniškieji tagai ir mechedai, kuriuos viduramžiais vienuolynų raštininkai iš pradžių perrašinėjo *chazo* notacija rankraštinėse knygos, išliko per žodinę tradiciją. Šie kūriniai išliko, nors ir buvo kilusi išnykimo grėsmė, o XIX a. juos išsaugojo profesionalūs muzikantai – jie užrašė juos naudodami naująją armėnų notaciją. Armėnijos viduramžių tagų menas liudija Armėnijos kultūros turtingumą ir gilią meninę išraišką, jis pagrįstai pretenduoja užimti garbingą vietą pasaulio muzikos paveldo lobyne.

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