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BOOK REVIEWS

The Music of Central Asia. Theodore Levin, Saida Daukeyeva, and Elmira Köchümkulova, eds. Indiana University Press. 2016. 703 pp. (ISBN-13: 9780253017512)

How central is the music of Central Asia? Before discussing the music of Central Asia, we need to raise an epistemological question: whose perspective makes it central? Reaching almost 700 pages and trying to be politically neutral, *The Music of Central Asia* first debates the history of the name and the geographical control practiced by Russia, China and Great Britain, reminding the reader of colonial studies. The colonizers, especially the Russians during the 19th century, tried to homogenize the region. Central Asia embraces overlapping identities: 90% of the inhabitants associate themselves with Turkic and 10% with Iranian ethnicity. The collaborations of three editors and twenty four contributors with different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds help *The Music of Central Asia* to celebrate and discuss the diversity of Central Asian culture, which is an amalgamation of Iranian, Turkic and Mongolian traditions. The book is divided into four parts: "the Music and Culture of Central Asia", "The Nomadic World", "The World of Sedentary Dwellers", and "Central Asian Music in the Age of Globalization". The musical productions of nomads and sedentary inhabitants are meticulously explained in 27 chapters. The remaining 5 chapters elaborate on the effect of globalization.

The fifteen chapters of "The Nomadic World" are centered on epic, a popular narrative genre, with a complex plot that highlights the nomadic tradition of Central Asia. After general information regarding epic backgrounds, heroes and themes (chapter 3), different epic traditions are introduced. "The Kyrgyz Epic" (chapter 4)

highlights Kyrgyzstan's trilogy of *Manas*, its historical significance, geographical scope and influential poets like Sayakabay Manaschy, titled by his countrymen as the Homer of the 20th century. "The Oral Epic in Kazakhstan" and "Music of the Karakalpaks" (chapters 5-6) introduce and fully elaborate *jyrau* and *baqsy* bards, their transcendental qualities, shamanism, incentives, performance, stylistic conventions, and vocal charms. The lullabies, written and oral literature, origins, influence of Ferdowsi (Persian epic poet), genre, musical setting, and epic practices of the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras are traced until the decline of epic recitation in the 1980s with the collapse of *qyssakhan* master-pupil lineage. "The Art of the Turkmen" (chapter 7) illustrates the inseparable part of Turkmen's social life, *bagshy* (the combination of bard and shaman). It covers *bagshy* performance, different types, styles and schools characterized by their geographical regions like Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap, and Mary. The foci of these schools are different, varying from the central role of epic narration to singing and music. This part tries to create a balance between technical information on musicology and musical instruments in "The Turkmen *Dutar*" (chapter 7), "Singing Traditions of the Kazakhs" (chapter 11), "Narrative Instrumental Music" (chapter 14), and "Kyrgyz Jaw Harps" (chapter 15); thematic factors in "Kyrgyz Wisdom Songs" (chapter 9), "Kyrgyz Funeral Laments", and "Wedding Songs" (chapter 12, 13); and ethnographic issues in "Poetry Competitions among the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz" (chapter 10).

The influence of Islam is more vivid in the sedentary rather than the nomadic settlers. The patterns of culture show that they are merged with pre-Islamic beliefs. The Islamic tradition in the treatment of music is diverse. Two kinds of music are introduced in the book: the desirable (*mustahabb*) and the forbidden (*harām*). The chanting of the Quran (*tajwīd*), call to prayer (*adhān*) and any rehearsal that leads to a mystical union with the Divine are considered desirable musical practice. It is claimed that secular music is mostly considered a forbidden type. However, the book does not mention that Islamic jurisprudence introduces a spectrum of musical practices ranging from desirable and permissible (*halal*) to undesirable (*makrūh*) and forbidden. These musical patterns are explained in "Religious Music and Chant in the Culture of Sedentary Dwellers" (chapter 22).

The unifying element in the culture and civilization of Central Asia is the predominance of Islam. The melodies in the songs and stories of public sermons, Quran recitations, and call to prayer were heard everywhere. Popular Islam found its way into the hearts of people through entertainment (*tamasha*), songs of religious story tellers and wandering dervishes (*qalandars*) advocating Islamic values. That is how music has intermingled with official and popular Islam. Beside Muslim holidays like Rama-

dan, Shi'itic traditions of mourning ceremonies in the first ten days of the month of Muharram (*Ashūrā*) were popular among both Sunni and Shi'a. Mostly preserved by Bukharan Iranians, *taziyah* is the narration of and mourning for the martyrdom of the Prophet Mohammad's son-in-law and his grandsons. Because of being one of the most popular musical practices, the Soviet banning of *taziyahs* could only push its performance from the public realm to private houses. Similarly, the Modernization Movement in early 20th century Iran sponsored by the government could not terminate this artistic practice. In these cases, *taziyah* was sometimes interpreted as a political act of resistance. Different forms of religious chanting, spiritual gathering, Sufi music, female practitioners of religious traditions, textual format and musical notes are painstakingly introduced and discussed in 12 different chapters.

The social context plays an undeniable role in the composition of music and the popularity of musical practices. Islamic influences are not limited to social traditions and contexts since it is woven into the rhythm, theme, acoustics, and Islamic aesthetic sensibility. "*Maqom* Traditions" and "The Uyghur *Muqam*" (chapters 18-19) show the variety of one art in both popular and sophisticated urban art (i.e. "classical music" / "court music"). Geographic diversity and musical brotherhood made *maqom* the transnational, one-millennium old musical tradition embracing different local and regional dialects in Central Asia, the eastern Mediterranean, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and North Africa. Islamic visual arts portrayed in calligraphy and the symmetrical decoration of carpets, minarets, and mosques are linked to the structural repetition and symmetry in the sonic ornament of *maqom*. The expansion of *maqom* is rooted in the works of medieval polymaths like al-Farabi. Influenced by Plato's model of liberal art and Greek philosophy that viewed music as science, this Persian thinker contributed to different branches of science like metaphysics, epistemology, political theory, mathematics, logic and musicology. Thus, in the Golden Age of Islam (8th-13th c.) the science of music (*ilm al-musiqi*) was introduced.

Sufism serves as the most long lasting and wide reaching example of the music of Central Asia ("New Images of Azerbaijani's *Mugham*", "Religious Music and Chant", "Sufism and the Ceremony of *Zikr*", and "Music in the City of Bukhara" [chapters 20, 22, 23, 26]). The influence of Sufism, which was rooted in the 10th century, continued until the 21st century. That is why "Sufism and the Ceremony of *Zikr* Ghulja" (chapter 23) is solely dedicated to the Sufi heritage in music. The effect and popularity of Sufism in the Uyghur culture of northwestern China is discussed in the ceremony of the Remembrance of God (*zikr*). The musical traditions were led by Sufi masters in the centers of Islamic spirituality and culture such as Samarkand and

Bukhara. Like governmental prohibition in 20th century Iran and the Soviet Union, the Cultural Revolution in China affected the Sufi brotherhood in so far as prayer houses (*khanaqas*) were closed and religious practices, including music, were banned. The traditions and practices of different *zikr* with the details of musical notes and examples are explained.

The social marginalization of entertainers reveals the moral ambiguity in Islamic culture to the extent that in some areas like Bukhara, public celebration and dancing was prohibited. During the Taliban government, any musical performance met serious censure and punishment. Despite the negative attitude of early Islam (7th c.) or hardline governments (20th c.) toward entertainment and music, pre-Islamic ritualistic dance and chant were incorporated into Islamic practices. One of these social contexts is festive gatherings like a wedding, the birth of a child, a boy's circumcision, Muslim holidays and most importantly Persian New Year (*Nowruz*). Opposite in the audience to popular music, music for the elite flourished under the patronage of the aristocrats. The historical development of *maqom*, highlighting a long history of patronage, represents a good example. Some poets like Rumi are an inseparable part of the Silk Road both in the popular and the elite realms. He is in the *moqam* traditions of Tajiks and Uzbeks (chapter 18), *gasoid-khonī* of the Wakhan Valley (chapter 29) and the *maddoh* tradition of Badakhshan (chapter 28). *Falak*, the spiritual songs of Tajikistan and Iran (chapter 30), and the popular music of Tajikistan (chapter 35), Iran and Afghanistan all demonstrate the influence of Rumi's musical style, philosophy and mysticism. Because of cultural globalization, the social context of the 20th century brought multidimensional practices to music.

Different interpretations of Islamic traditions brought different gender roles. Thus, gendered festivity and assigning different social roles to men and women implies different musical practices. Some musical instruments have strong gender associations. While *dutar* (two-stringed lute) and *doira* (drum) are mostly played by women, louder instruments which are used in public celebrations are typically played by men. Gendered musical traditions are not similar among nomadic and sedentary dwellers. The Soviet Union disrupted previously male-dominated musical traditions since it integrated women into the work force and performing arts. The "Oral Epic of Kazakhstan" (chapter 5) well narrates how the apprentice/disciple (*shākirt*) learns from her master (*ustaz*). "Female Musicians in Uzbekistan" (chapter 25) exclusively discusses the role of women in musical traditions. The multiplicity of women's roles is represented through diverse performances and performers: from *Otin-oys* to the divas of *maqom* and from domestic to professional music. *Otin-oys* are middle-aged women

who are the spiritual leaders within female communities.

The conquest of Central Asia by Russia in the 19th century and the absorption of this territory into the Soviet Union during the 1920s brought inevitable changes to local music, not only artistically but also politically and ideologically. Cultural continuities, ethno-linguistic and local identities were marginalized. Ambiguities were corrected and each musical tradition was assigned to one political boundary of five Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenia and Uzbekistan. A specific role was assigned to art. Among different artistic genres and forms, only social realism could reflect the life of the proletariat. Thus, musicians adapted the local music to express socialist themes like the glories of collective farms. The new lyricism of music expressed the cultural enlightenment of the Soviet Union. The old instruments and small groups gave way to systematic choirs, orchestras and pianos that were tuned to play the more complex harmonies of the new system. European cultural models of pedagogy challenged and destroyed the oral transmission of musical traditions between the master and disciple (*ustad* and *shogird*) since the new musical notations prevented the creative process of the performers. Musical scales that were the legacies of Persians and Arabs were labeled as feudal and religious. Interestingly, the new artistic creation bridged East and West. In the post-Soviet Union era, Soviet-inspired hybridity was promoted by state-sponsored apparatus. The new generation tried to build a bridge between international artistic networks and their indigenized musical practices. "The Popular Music in Uzbekistan" (chapter 33), describes the tricky and illusive terminology of popular music, *estrada*. Terms like "national", "world", "Europeanized", "foreign", "wedding", and "commercial" are added to *estrada* to explain this type of public performance. Integrating diverse influences from Syrian, Persian and Asian folk music to pop-rock, Uzbek *estrada* went beyond the Soviet Union and found its way to independent Uzbekistan. The themes vary from unwanted chaos and freedom advocacy to love and patriotism.

Different voices were heard in the 20th century in Central Asia, those who supported traditions and those who preferred modernization and globalization. Remarkably, the same trend can be found in the music of the 21st century. Non-governmental, governmental, and intergovernmental organizations operate on different educational and artistic levels. "New Images of Azerbaijani *Mugham* in the 20th Century" (chapter 20) discusses the East-West fusion in Azerbaijani cultural and musical performances. *Mugham* opera narrates one of the most popular love stories of the Silk Road, *Leyli and Majnun*, with the integration of Eastern and Western musical practices from Europe to Persia, China and Japan. In Azerbaijan, symphonic and Jazz *mugham* and *bastakor* in

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan combine classical lyrics with new melodies or old melodies with newly written lyrics. Five chapters are dedicated to "Central Asian Music in the Age of Globalization", as the last part of the book. The flow of immigration after the dissolution of the Soviet Union gave new meaning to the musical life of Central Asia. Furthermore, diasporic music introduced the richness and complexity of Central Asian music to the globe (i.e. Mongolian Kazakhs [chapter 17] and Bukharan Jews). "The Cultural Renewal of Kyrgyzstan" (chapter 32), elaborates on examples of neo-traditionalism and post-neo-traditionalism in different artistic domains, from musical performance to instruments, theater and fashion. This trend tries to keep a balance between the old and the new. "The Tradition-Based Popular Music in Contemporary Tajikistan" (chapter 35) discusses the importance of wedding and family gathering festivities (*toy*) in the amalgamation of traditional and popular musical consciousness. While popular music was initiated in Soviet Tajikistan, it gradually emerged in unofficial settings like wedding parties. Benefitting from Iranian, Turkish and Arabic musical trends, the poetry and music of the Tajiks propagates ethical, social and religious values.

The Music of Central Asia is embellished by lavish photos of setting, the natives, rulers, musicians, musical instruments, dancers, fashions, customs and traditions, although it deprives its readers of the date and sometimes the place of the photographs. Each chapter provides readers with colored "Examples" and "Study Questions" for pedagogical use. The supplementary 50 pages narrate the story of its editors and contributors to give the impression that they lived this book to the full. Furthermore, it introduces other interesting information that will intrigue lovers of music. It gives a complete illustration of instruments in "Musical Instrument Glossary". The "Glossary of Terms" summarizes different traditions, musical genres, performances and metrical feet. "Inventory of Audio and Video Examples" includes a rich archive of records and films.

The high level of imports of North American, European, Russian and South Asian music to Central Asia and the low level of export of Central Asian music challenge the integrity and maintenance of this music. The small bulk of this book dedicated to Central Asian music in the age of globalization can bear witness. Hopefully, canonical performances and musical heritage will be preserved with the support of UNESCO. Programs like the Agha Khan Music Initiative attempt to introduce this different musical trend to the world. Returning to the first question, this article recounts how *The Music of Central Asia* tries its best to bring a marginalized trend into focus. That is why we cannot answer if the music of Central Asia is *central* or not. In

our globalized world of multinational consciousness, the melody of Central Asian music is heard not in terms of yes-no questions but in a spectrum of different voices perceived on the Modern Silk Road.

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