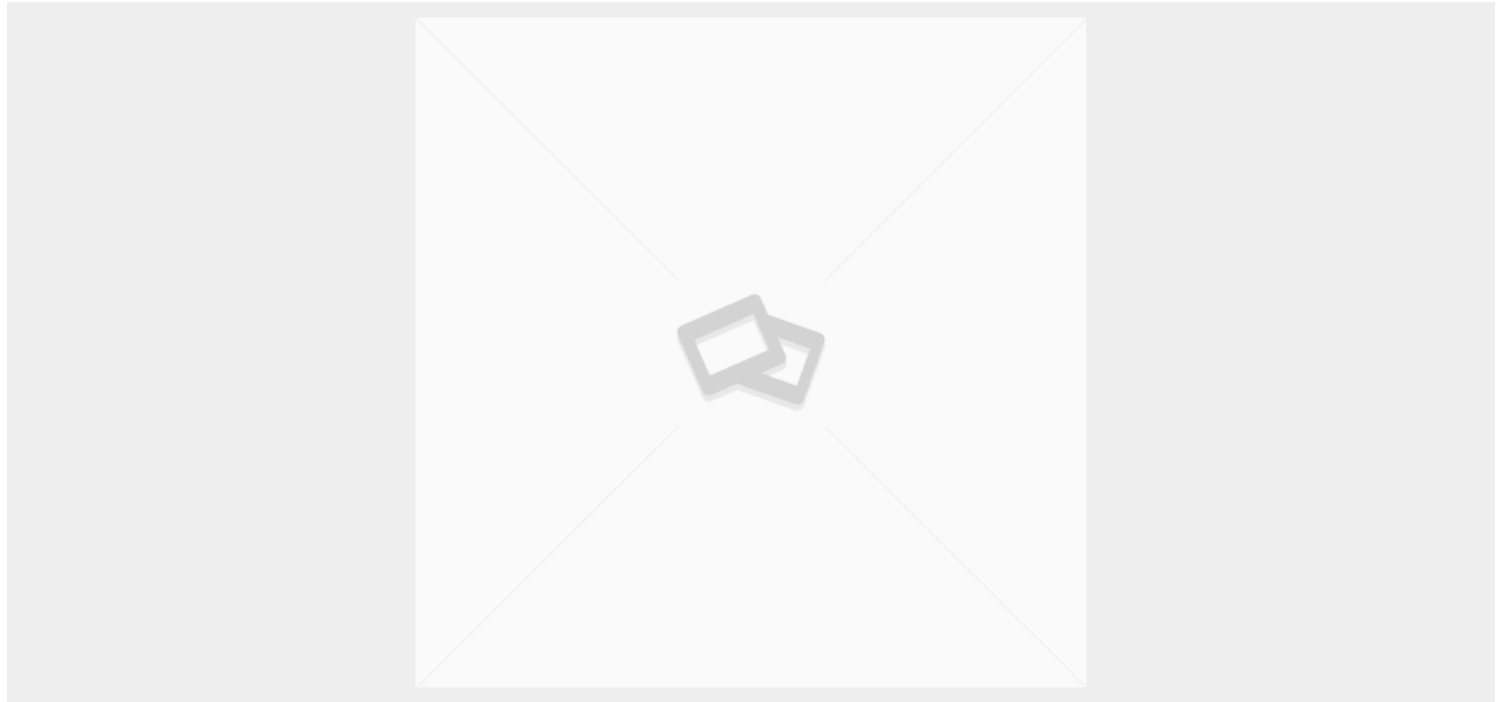


THE CENTURIES OLD ARMENIAN EPIC SONG - MOGKATS MIRZA

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By Prof. Khatchatur I. Pilikian, London UK, 13 October 2010

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The song is a lament and praise for the Armenian freedom fighter who genuinely believed in peace, hence accepted the offer for peace from the invading Persian usurper Kholod Pasha. Enticing the Armenian Prince of Mogk with the promise of a peace deal, the Pasha poisoned the valiant freedom fighter -- who had come, on his Bedouin Horse to Jezireh-- during a sumptuous banquet hosted by the Pasha himself. The rage of the folk poetry and music is directed not towards the neighbouring people --in this case the Persians--but against their usurping ruler. Just like in the Epic of David of Sassoon.

In the Epic of Sassoun, when the orphan child David (having lost mother and father) refuses to suckle from the breast of any Armenian woman, his wise uncle Dzenov Ohan (Ohan the Vociferous) puts him on the back of his father's horse Koorkik Jalal (Splendid Young Horse) and it takes him to the land of Mosul-Nineveh ruled by the Arabs, the rulers of Armenia of the day! There his father's Mher's Arab sweetheart breast feeds the infant David... This is the wisdom of genuine folk imagery. Mind you, the same David, when grown up, fights against the Arab Melik, his stepbrother but an invader of his ancestral homeland.

Alas, some translators of the Epic have omitted that part in their editions, betraying the original text. The Armenian original luxuriates in the notion that peoples are essentially brothers and sisters. They are abused by their oppressors to eventually force them fight each other, hence serve, in modern parlance, as cannon fodder, to safeguard the oppressors' wealth, plundered from the oppressed peoples.

Komitas had just transcribed the Mokats Mirza song, when the venerable poet Avedik Issahakian meets him in Etchmiadzin. Komitas enthusiastically sings the song to Issahakian, enchanting the poet with his trove. Issahiakian records down what Komitas told him about the song:

"This ancient song has come down to us from the heathen times. Observe how the lyrics and the tune are in compact unison. It has its birth in the high mountains, waterfall cascades and petulant rocks. It has burst out of the soul of our valiant forefathers. It is a song that Dzenov Ohan might have sung to David of Sassoun ..."

Below is my English translation of the poem of the Epic Song, Moghats Mirza:

LAMENT FOR THE PRINCE OF MOGK

Transcribed by Komitas Vardapet(1869-1035)
(English translation by Khatchatur Pilikian)

The epic poem/song covers fourteen verses in total. I have translated the first three and the last, the 14th verse.

*It was Friday, becoming Saturday
In Malakiava it was a festive day,
When a letter arrived
From the town of Jezireh
It was handed over to the Prince of Mogk.
Alās A thousand lament for the Prince of Mogk.
He read with his sweet voice
But soon wrinkles besieged his eyes
And the Furies pulled down his chin
A red harvest coloured his face.
Alās A thousand lament for the prince of Mogk*

*He called upon the farmer of his lands:
"Bring me fast my Bedouin horse
Place on her the saddle made of oyster shells
I am going on a journey
To the land of Jezireh",
Alās A thousand lament for the prince of Mogk.*

...

(Eventually the Prince succumbs to Pasha's poison)

*There came the Mogkites and assembled
They gathered around the Prince of Mogk
They carried him to the mountain cave
And left open the west-wind gate.
Do rest in Peace
For a thousand years.*

