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THE FLAVOR OF TIFLIS IN HMayak HAKOBIAN'S ART

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Introduction

Armenians have created valuable works of art in the cultural city of Tiflis. The poet Gabriel Patkanian states that Armenians and Georgians lived in the atmosphere of mutual love and solidarity in Tiflis: "The divine precept "love thy neighbor" is sacredly respected in Tiflis. Armenians regularly go to churches and sanctuaries followed by Georgians who also head for Armenian cathedrals. Disagreement, discord, prompting animosity and strife do not exist which is approved by God"¹.

Many Armenian artists, poets, writers saw their destiny and life be inextricably connected with Old Tiflis. The eminent dynasty of the Hovnatanians, G. Bashinjaghian, Ye. Tadevosian, V. Khojabekian, A. Bazhbeuk-Melikian, Ye. Kochar along with other artists created their works in this city, thus becoming part and parcel in the cultural history shaped by Armenians of Tiflis. These artists perceived the world through the prism of the city's multicolored everyday life. It was this multihued reality that partly shaped the traditions of the Tiflis school.

The residents of Tiflis, cheerful kintos², the picturesque corners of the city, its pubs, noisy markets and yards with wonderful, unique ambiance are portrayed in the paintings by the Armenians of Tiflis.

The representatives of Armenian culture masterfully depicted the Armenian community's everyday life in Tiflis. Armenian painter H. Karalyan stated: "Kintos,

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¹ Մխիթարյան 1991, 64:

² A collective character of a peddler, who is a vivacious partygoer, likes wine, is ingenious and has a witty humor.

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parties, faetons (carriages), the Kura river, narrow streets and unique vivacious ambiance are the hallmarks of Tiflis, making it such an extraordinary city that once tasting its charm and sweetness you will fall in love with the city forever”³.

With their cheerfulness and traditions the residents conveyed a special flavor to Tiflis. Tiflis was a city of bliss and vivacity. It was a city of witticisms, and stalls”⁴.

The ethnography of the city penetrated the painters’ hearts being thematically reflected in their paintings.

In his book dedicated to Tiflis Khutsishvili mentioned: “The nature of Tiflis seems to be interwoven with human creations leaving its trace on streets and squares, houses and cathedrals which strike us with the intertwinement of their centuries-old shapes and forms. This feature enriches the city with a special, romantic charm and unique exceptional color”⁵.

In 1915–1916 Armenian artists founded Armenian Artists Union in Tiflis. The arrival of such talented artists as V. Sureniants, M. Sarian, Ye. Kochar, S. Gabanian, S. Khachaturian and P. Terlemezian and others contributed to the formation of “The Union of Armenian Artists”⁶.

Hm. Hakobian (1871–1939) was one of the eminent figures of Armenian culture of Tiflis. His art had a direct influence on the development of the Armenian School of Realism in Transcaucasia.

Hm. Hakobian’s art is multi-faceted, covering various genres i.e. portraits, landscapes, still life, paintings about everyday life. In this mosaic of genres it is difficult to single out a specific one that the artist prioritized⁷. Hm. Hakobian’s artistic world, expressed by different genres is yet united by the painter’s harmonious inner world. The painter was gifted with delicate emotionality; he perceived and every event of it.

Hm. Hakobian’s paintings reflect the bliss and sorrow of life experienced, through the cognizance of the world, which being engine and trigger of art shapes the spirituality of his paintings.

³ **Կարալյան (Կարալով)** 1967, 10:

⁴ **Александр Бажбеук-Меликян** 2002, 105.

⁵ **Хуцишвили** 1981, 3.

⁶ **Մինասյան** 2010, 419–423:

⁷ **Մարտիրոսյան** 1983, 85:

Art was Hm. Hakobian's life. The artist could not help becoming infatuated with flaming sunset, summer heat and reflecting them in his paintings. He could not but paint people whom he would meet on different occasions of his life, making them the protagonists of his canvases. Trying to characterize the painter's art, we need to note that the presence of silence is an integral part of his canvases (irrespective of the genre peculiarities). The silence wraps what is even beyond the painting, thus covering the sensory world in which the art lover is absorbed.

The painter's watchful glance is "doomed" to perceive and portray the **beautiful** in all its expressions of life, in particular in the "urban landscape" which occupies a unique place in his art. Those paintings belonging to the genre of "urban landscape", are characterized by the poetization of the cherished city, which in its turn creates a certain mood in the paintings.

Tiflis inspired the painter. Hm. Hakobian's infatuation with the city are evidenced by a great number of singular works (including both oil paintings and drawings) dedicated to the city.

Hm. Hakobian's paintings have been influenced (1856–1914) to a certain degree by his teacher Harutjun Shamshinian's art. H. Shamshinian's impact is visible in the composition of Hakobian's canvases, though the color preferences of the latter differ. The main storyline in Shamshinian's works depicts some general scenes in crowded squares and markets, the celebrations in streets or squares. Whereas, Hm. Hakobian authored thematic and genre creations devoted to the lifestyle of Tiflis multi-national population as well as landscapes and portraits distinguished by their national and individual characteristics.

As a skilled painter who depicts everyday life Hm. Hakobian loved that city impulsively and unconditionally. Painting his home town, the artist appreciated every corner of it and the hidden world of the streets that shaped Armenian Tiflis. Tiflis was in his heart and on his mind and art in fact is the fruit born out of heart and mind.

The painter dedicated more than a dozen of paintings and drawings to Old Tiflis ["Old Tiflis", 1888, oil painting, "A Yard in Old Tiflis", oil painting, "A Street Scene (Old Tiflis shops)", oil painting, "A Street with a Carriage in Old Tiflis", oil painting, "A Corner of Tiflis (Yard)", 1909, oil painting, "Old Tiflis

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(Sirachkhana)", oil painting, "Trek⁸-makers", graphics, "Old Tiflis-Havlabar", 1895, graphics etc.].

Hm. Hakobian's Tiflis Motives

Hm. Hakobian spent many years in Tiflis. The painter's sketches and etudes were born in Tiflis caravanserais and sirachkhanas. They immortalized the vanishing buildings, the invisible part of the city that would inevitably fall victim to all-devouring time.

In Henrik Igitian's words: "Old Tiflis has already become an ethnographic concept, that is why of special value are the works by those artists who have preserved deep in their memory the uniqueness and charm of the last century, thus enriching our understanding of it"⁹.

Hm. Hakobian's Paintings Dedicated to Tiflis

The painting "Old Tiflis" (see picture 1) created in 1888 occupies a special place in these series, which undoubtedly is one of the best works of the artist. The harmoniously blended ochre, yellow, brown and orange hues in the picture create a unique style which can be traced in his other works as well. In painter Ye. Martikian's words the colors of the canvas are rich non-transparent: "Along with the transparency of colors the slightly shady parts are less bright and somewhat dimmed, whereas the bright ones are transparent and authentic in terms of the color interrelations and rich to an extent to create an illusion of sunlight"¹⁰.

It can be stated that the densification of colors deeply enhances the perception of expression. Moreover, the depiction of human figures with their daily worries, walking through narrow streets makes the work even more fascinating.

The creation of the canvas "A Yard in Old Tiflis" is based on the best traditions of realism (see picture 2). The painting is identified by grayish, brown colors. In the foreground of the scene a horse standing in the yard is portrayed, and that is the core part of the work. The tranquility transmitted from the balconies of rural houses typical of Tiflis architecture enchants the viewers, immersing them into the daily life of the past.

⁸ Bast shoe.

⁹ **Էլիբեկյան** 1979, 8–9:

¹⁰ **Մարտիկյան** 1983, 86:

An episode in Tiflis is depicted in Hm. Hakobian's painting "On the Native Kura" (see picture 3) which, according to Ye. Martikian, was probably created in 1914 though in K. Avetisian's catalogue it dated back to 1907. In the foreground of the picture a shepherd with his herd is depicted. This idyllic atmosphere in the work unites the scenic landscape in the background with the movement of the clouds visible at the given moment of the day. It should be noted that the first work ("A Feast on the Kura River"), belonging to everyday genre was created by Stepanos Nersisian (1815–1884). According to the painter R. Shishmanian, St. Nersisian's works introduced some elements of romanticism into Armenian painting not only due to the application of principles of color creation but also thanks to the interpretations of characters¹¹. Hm. Hakboian's realistic art is also characterized by some principles of romanticism.

In the canvas "A Scene on the Street (Old Tiflis Shops)" created in 1900–1910 the artist paid a special attention to the portrayal of architectural elements, while the woman dressed in black is the protagonist of the plot. In this canvas the general tint consists of yellowish-brown, terracotta, olive green, reddish, orange hues which are not very typical of Hm. Hakobian's palette. Nevertheless, the painter really succeeded in creating a compelling synthesis.

Hm. Hakobian was also fascinated by the theme of wine-sellers from Sirachkhana. In the canvas "Old Tiflis (Sirachkhana)" (see picture 5) one of the dugout pubs is depicted. In the pub music is playing, the daily worries are left behind and the customers enjoy the day while smoking nargileh. The characters portrayed in the preferable colors of the painter represent an ethnic type.

Hm. Hakobian's Graphic Works

Graphic works are special "notebooks"¹² that resemble the notes of world-famous classics, which having converted into the "notebook" subgenre become part of their literary legacy.

Like the notes of writers and poets the painters' graphic works (sketches, etudes and drawings) reflect the artist's zeal of mind and observance. Such works record a second, a moment, a hand gesture, mood, preserving them in the memory for future creations.

¹¹ Շիշմանյան 1959, 89:

¹² Александр Бажбеук-Меликян 2002, 109 (Генрих Игитян, Большая живопись в маленьких полотнах).

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Any painter's art reflects the aesthetic direction of his time. In terms of its plot choice and worldview, the series with Tiflis motives represents the aesthetics, prevailing in the given historic era. Hm. Hakobian's works also include the everyday life led by the residents of Tiflis ("Old Tiflis. Havlabar", 1895), "Old Tiflis, "Trekhs-makers", etc.). These works lay the aesthetic foundations of creations, belonging to this genre.

The painter would spend hours and hours in caravanserais and sirachkhanas, creating various sketches and etudes thanks to which future generations had an opportunity to have insight into the everyday life of Tiflis, characteristic of the time. Noteworthy are the portraits and canvases, dwelling on the working days of such contemporary characters as the so called representatives of bourgeoisie from Sololaki¹³. Along with them handicraftsmen, workmen, loaders, silversmiths and shoemakers are depicted.

The graphic work "A Corner of Tiflis (Yard)" (see picture 6) created in 1909 reflects a typical Tiflis street with beautiful balconies. In the opposite balcony a blanket is getting dry while in another balcony on the left a carpet is hanging. In the central part of the picture a closed door is seen, which endows the watercolor with some mystery. Interesting is the light-shade interconnection observed in the graphic picture, which prompts a specific accentuation, stressing out the particular moment of the day and tranquility that had come down onto the yard. This instigates the mind of the viewers to open the door and enjoy the silence of the house.

In the watercolor "A Street with a Carriage in Tiflis" (see picture 7) again balconies are portrayed on the left and right sides of the street, while the slowly moving carriage creates the illusion of a long stretching road.

The graphic work "Trekhs-makers" (see picture 8) represents a scene taken from everyday life. The work is created with Italian crayon, India ink and watercolor. In the foreground of the graphic work men wearing national clothes are depicted. Three of them are sitting, while the other man is standing. In the background a man is standing, that is closely following the latter and the events of the street. An agreeable scene taken from the daily routine of Tiflis in the old days sums up the graphic work.

¹³ An affluent district in Tiflis.

Conclusions

Hm. Hakobian lived in art and for art, he didn't have a family, and all his feelings and thoughts were directed to art which was the fruit of his thoughts and his heart. Lyricism, structural simplicity and emotionality characterized the painter's art. Tiflis was a unique world for Hm. Hakobian. This city shaped both the plot and the palette of emotions reflected in each canvas, sketch and drawing.

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ՊԵՏՐՈՍՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բառեր՝ Հմայակ Հակոբյան, հին Թիֆլիս, գրաֆիկա, գեղանկար, մշակույթ, կենցաղ, թիֆլիսյան կերպարներ:

Հին Թիֆլիսի հետ են կապված հայ մշակույթի բազում ներկայացուցիչների կյանքի ու ճակատագրի էջեր: Թիֆլիսահայ նկարիչների կտավների սյուժեն էին դարձել Թիֆլիսի բնակիչները, կենսուրախ կինտոները, քաղաքի գողտրիկ անկյունները, զինետները, աղմկոտ շուկաները, սքանչելի ու անկրկնելի մթնոլորտ ունեցող բակերը:

Թիֆլիսահայ մշակույթի կարկառուն ներկայացուցիչ էր նաև Հմ. Հակոբյանը (1871–1939), որի արվեստը անմիջականորեն նպաստել է հայ ռեալիստական արվեստի դպրոցի զարգացմանը: Հմ. Հակոբյանի կտավները արտացոլում են աշխարհը ճանաչելու բերկրանքն ու թախիծը, որը, լինելով արվեստի շարժիչ ուժն ու խթանը, ձևավորում է գեղանկարչության հոգևոր շերտը:

Տասնյակից ավել յուղաներկ և գրաֆիկական գործեր է նկարիչը նվիրել հին Թիֆլիսին («Հին Թիֆլիս», 1888, գեղանկար, «Բակ Հին Թիֆլիսում կտավը», գեղանկար, «Տրեխ կարողներ», գրաֆիկա, «Հին Թիֆլիս. Հավաքար», 1895, գրաֆիկա և այլն):

КОЛОРИТ ТИФЛИСА В ИСКУССТВЕ АМАЯКА АКОПЯНА

ПЕТРОСЯН А.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: Амаяк Акопян, старый Тифлис, графика, живопись, культура, быт, тифлисские персонажи.

Со старым Тифлисом связаны страницы жизни и судьбы многих представителей нашей культуры. Сюжетом картин тифлисских армянских художников стали жители города, его уютные уголки, пивные, шумные рынки, дворики с их неповторимой атмосферой.

Амаяк Акопян (1871–1939) был одним из ярких представителей тифлисской армянской культуры. Творчество художника внесло достойный вклад в развитие армянской школы реалистического искусства. Картины Ам. Акопяна отражают радость и печаль бытия.

Художник посвятил старому Тифлису более десятка картин маслом, а также огромное множество графических рисунков («Старый Тифлис», 1888, живопись, «В старом Тифлисе», живопись, «Чувячники», графика, «Старый Тифлис. Авлабар», 1895, графика и др.).

Тифлис являл собой тот уникальный мир, который рождал сюжет его картин и палитру чувств, нашедших отражение в каждом полотне, эскизе, этюде, наброске.



Picture 1. Old Tiflis 1888,
oil on canvas 17,7x13,3 cm



Picture 2. A yard in Old Tiflis, oil on canvas 26,5x38 cm



Picture 3. On the Native Kura, 1907, oil on canvas 80x142 cm



Picture 4. A Street Scene (Old Tiflis. Shops) 1900–1910, oil on canvas 16x24,5 cm



Picture 5. Old Tiflis (Sirachkhana), oil on canvas 36x44 cm



Picture 6. "A Corner of Tiflis"
(Yard) 1909, watercolor on
cardboard 33,9x25,8 cm



Picture 7. "A Street with a Carriage in
Tiflis", watercolor on cardboard
35x24,8 cm