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*Олдфилд А.С./АКШ/
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Oldfield A.C./USA/***АЛАН ЛОМАКС: КАНСЫЗ СОГУШ МААЛЫНДАГЫ
МАДАНИЙ ТЫНЧТЫКТЫ ЖАЙЫЛТУУЧУ****АЛАН ЛОМАКС: КУЛЬТУРНЫЙ МИРОТВОРЕЦ ВО ВРЕМЯ ХОЛОДНОЙ ВОЙНЫ****ALAN LOMAX: A CULTURAL PEACEMAKER DURING THE COLD WAR**

Abstract. This paper examines ways in which American ethnomusicologist and folklorist Alan Lomax (1915–2002), engaged with the Soviet Union during the Cold War through fieldwork, scholarly exchange, and international conferences. A passionate advocate for peacebuilding through culture and music, Lomax believed that shared artistic traditions could foster mutual understanding between nations. Best known for his recordings of folk music and his role in the American Blues and Folk revival movements, Lomax developed the Cantometrics system to analyze musical styles across cultures. His work emphasized “cultural equity”—the recognition and preservation of diverse musical traditions. Lomax visited the USSR for the first time in 1964 for the International Anthropological and Ethnological Congress in Moscow, and again between 1987 and 1989. He collaborated with Soviet ethnomusicologists such as Anna Rudneva and Emina Eldarova, and collected recordings from Tatar, Uzbek, Kazakh, Georgian, Azerbaijani and other ethnicities. His recordings and publications introduced American audiences to the rich musical traditions of non-Russian peoples of the USSR, encouraging appreciation of their diverse and beautiful cultures. Lomax’s work in the Soviet Union formed a key part of his broader vision of using music as a bridge across cultural and political divides. Using both the Alan Lomax and Emina Eldarova Archives, this paper gives an overview of his activities in the Soviet Union with an emphasis on his 1964 visit.

Keywords: Alan Lomax, Emina Eldarova [Amina Eldarova, Эмина Эльдарова], Cold War Musical Diplomacy, Azerbaijani Ashiq [Ashiq], Ashiq Akbar Jaffarov, Association for Cultural Equity

Аннотация. Бул макалада америкалык этномузиколог жана фольклорист Алан Ломакстын (1915–2002) талаа иштери, илимий алмашуу жана эл аралык конференциялар аркылуу кансыз согуш учурунда Советтер Союзу менен байланышы каралат. Маданият жана музыка аркылуу тынчтыкты орнотуунун жалындуу жактоочусу болгон Ломакс маданий салттар улуттардын өз ара түшүнүшүүсүнө өбөлгө болот деп эсептеген. Элдик музыканы жаздыруу жана америкалык блюз менен фолкту жандандыруу кыймылдарындагы ролу менен белгилүү болгон Ломакс, маданият айдыңындагы музыкалык стилдерди талдоо үчүн Cantometrics (Кантометрика) системасын иштеп чыккан. Анын чыгармачылыгы «маданий теңчиликке» — түрдүү музыкалык салттарды таанууга жана сактоого басым жасаган. Ломакс СССРге биринчи жолу 1964-жылы Москвада өткөн Эл аралык антропологиялык жана этнологиялык конгресске барып, иштерин 1987-1989-жылдары да улаган. Ал Анна Руднева жана Эмина Эльдарова сыяктуу советтик этномузикологдор менен кызматташып, татар, өзбек, казак, грузин, азербайжан жана башка элдердин музыкасын чогулткан. Анын жазгандары жана басылмалары америкалык аудиторияны СССРдеги орустан башка элдердин музыкалык бай салттары менен тааныштырып, алардын ар түрдүү жана кооз маданияттарын баалоого үндөдү. Ломакстын Советтер Союзундагы иши музыканы маданий жана саясий ажырымдардын көпүрөсү катары пайдалануу боюнча анын көз карашынын натыйжасы болгон. Алан Ломакс менен Эмина Алдарованын архивдерин колдонуу менен, бул эмгекте анын 1964-жылдагы иш сапарына басым жасоо менен анын Советтер Союзунда жасаган ишмердүүлүгүнө сереп берилет.

Негизги сөздөр: Алан Ломакс, Эмина Эльдарова [Амина Элдарова, Эмина Элдарова], Cold War Musical Diplomacy, азербайжандык Ашык [Ашык], Ашык Акбар Жаффаров, Маданий теңчилик үчүн ассоциация.

Аннотация. В этой статье рассматриваются способы, которыми американский этномузыковед и фольклорист Алан Ломакс (1915–2002) взаимодействовал с Советским Союзом во время Холодной войны посредством исследований, научного обмена и международных конференций. Страстный сторонник построения мира через культуру и музыку, Ломакс считал, что общие художественные традиции могут способствовать взаимопониманию между народами. Наиболее известный своими записями народной музыки и своей ролью в американских движениях возрождения блюза и фолка, Ломакс разработал систему Cantometrics для анализа музыкальных стилей в разных культурах. Его работа подчеркивала «культурное равенство» — признание и сохранение различных музыкальных традиций. Ломакс впервые посетил СССР в 1964 году на Международном антропологическом и этнологическом конгрессе в Москве, а затем снова между 1987 и 1989 годами. Он сотрудничал с советскими этномузыковедами, такими как Анна Руднева и Эмина Эльдарова, и собирал записи татар, узбеков, казахов, грузин, азербайджанцев и других этнических групп. Его записи и публикации познакомили американскую аудиторию с богатыми музыкальными традициями нерусских народов СССР, поощряя признание их разнообразной и прекрасной культуры. Работа Ломакса в Советском Союзе стала ключевой частью его взгляда на использование музыки в качестве моста в культурном и политическом разногласии. Используя архивы Алана Ломакса и Эмины Алдаровой, эта статья дает обзор его деятельности в Советском Союзе с акцентом на его визит 1964 года.

Ключевые слова: Алан Ломакс, Эмина Эльдарова [Амина Эльдарова, Эмина Эльдарова], Музыкальная дипломатия холодной войны, Азербайджанский Ашик [Ашик], Ашик Акбар Джаффаров, Ассоциация за культурное равенство.

Introduction

During the Cold War between the United States and the USSR (1950s–1991), the world often felt like it was on the brink of destruction. The invention of the atomic bomb in 1945 had sparked a nuclear arms race, and for the first time in history, humanity possessed the means to annihilate itself. In the United States, the “Red Scare” fueled fear and suspicion of Soviet people, and widespread ignorance prevailed—many Americans believed all Soviet citizens were Russian, and the “Iron Curtain” ensured that little accurate information about the USSR reached the West.

While political leaders on both sides made cautious efforts to reduce tensions through diplomacy, terrifying events like the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 reminded the world how close we were to nuclear war. Amid this fraught atmosphere, American folklorist Alan Lomax emerged as a courageous cultural peacemaker. Through his visits to the USSR, Lomax helped foster international understanding by highlighting a shared love of music. Through his recordings published by Smithsonian Folkways records, he used music to introduce Americans to the rich diversity of Soviet peoples and their traditional musical cultures. And through his visits to the Soviet Union, his honest, open nature and friendly curiosity made a positive impression on everyone he met there.

Alan Lomax (1915–2002) was an American ethnomusicologist, folklorist, and archivist renowned for his extensive field recordings of folk music across the U.S. and around the world. He played a pivotal role in preserving traditional music in America and was instrumental in the Blues and Folk revival movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Lomax began his career at age 18, working with his father, John Lomax (1867–1948), to record folk songs of rural southern America for the Library of Congress. He later presided over the Archives of American Folk Song, producing numerous radio and television programs that helped inspire the 1960s folk revival. Lomax was instrumental in launching the careers of legendary Blues artists such as Jelly Roll Morton, Lead Belly, and Muddy Waters. In 1993, his book *Land Where the Blues Began* won the U.S. National Book Critics Circle Award. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan awarded him the National Medal of the Arts, and in 2002, the National Academy of Recording Arts honored him with a Grammy for Lifetime Achievement. His recordings, collected over 70 years, are now housed in the Library of Congress American Folklife Center, and his fieldwork recordings are available to the public through the Association for Cultural Equity, which he founded (www.culturalequity.org).

Lomax’s deep interest in comparative musicology led him to study global folk

traditions, including those of Turkic and other peoples of the Soviet Union. From his archives, we know that he was especially interested in non-Russian peoples, and hoped to help Americans understand that there was a huge and fascinating cultural diversity in the USSR. He had already developed his ideas of “cultural equity,” by which he meant that no people’s music were better or worse than any others, but all equally valuable. By this he hoped to counter the western chauvanism that held European classical music as superior. By recording music from around the world, he hoped to discover that which all humans held in common. To Lomax, although every people’s music was unique, all humans were equal in their creative music making.

Lomax visited the Soviet Union several times, first in 1964 and later between 1987 and 1989. During these visits, he gathered recordings from various Soviet nationalities and ethnic groups—including Tatar, Uzbek, Kazakh, Georgian, and Azerbaijani artists—for his comparative research on world folk song styles. Lomax’s first visit to the USSR in 1964 was to attend the International Anthropological and Ethnological Congress in Moscow, where he met with ethnomusicologists Anna Rudneva and Amina Eldarova. He listened to Eldarova’s presentation and asked to record an interview with her and the Azerbaijani artists she had brought to perform. With Rudneva’s assistance, he also explored archives in Moscow and Leningrad, collecting recordings from various ethnic groups. His next visits in the late 1980s focused on further research into ethnic folk traditions. His records of these visits, including correspondence, fieldnotes, and diaries, are preserved in the Library of Congress, and many of his recordings are accessible through his archive at archive.culturalequity.org.

While Lomax was not directly involved in U.S. state-sponsored cultural diplomacy—such as the jazz ambassador tours of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington—his work intersected with broader Cold War cultural initiatives. However, unlike official efforts that aimed to promote American culture abroad, Lomax sought to foster intercultural understanding and help Americans appreciate the diverse cultures of the Soviet Union. His work, along with his openness, honesty, and deep respect for others, did as much to build bridges than many formal diplomatic efforts.

Amina Eldarova and the Voice of Ashiq Akbar

Amina Eldarova like Lomax was a pioneer in Azerbaijani ethnomusicology. A former student of composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov (1885–1948), she became Azerbaijan’s first female musicologist and its first ethnomusicologist. Her fieldwork among ashig bards in rural Azerbaijan from the 1930s-1970s echoed Lomax’s own fieldwork in rural America. Eldarova and Lomax shared a similar dedication and a great respect for the traditional artists they worked with. Eldarova’s recordings of older ashig bards such as Ashiq Shamshir are important in the same way that Lomax’s recordings were for Americans, preserving the music of traditional singers that otherwise would be lost to time and modernization. Eldarova compiled her research in her foundational book *The Art of the Azerbaijani Ashiq* (Baku: 1984), but only now, Professor Kamila Dadash-zadeh and I are beginning to work with her archives to gain more insight into her discoveries. One point that I am researching more closely, is that as unlikely as it seems that she would meet Alan Lomax, that meeting did in fact take place, and is recorded and preserved in Lomax’s archives.

The meeting was also preserved in Eldarova’s memory; in an interview that I conducted in Baku in 2005, Eldarova recalled August 1964: «I was attending the Seventh International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographic Sciences in Moscow, where I presented a paper. I took Akbar Jaffarov and Museyib Abbasov with me. Akbar was an Ashiq performer, and Museyib accompanied him on the balaban—a double-reed wooden wind instrument—while Akbar sang and played a long-necked lute called the saz. They performed together at the conference. Ashiq Akbar had a voice as sweet as honey. No one had a voice like his.»

Eldarova explained that Alan Lomax was deeply impressed by Amina’s presentation and wanted to record Ashiq Akbar. However, Cold War tensions made interactions with Americans difficult. «We were on very bad terms with America,» Amina explained. «To get the permission Lomax needed, we would have had to go through a lot of bureaucracy and paperwork. Fortunately, Lomax was prepared. When Akbar and Museyib performed for him, he made recordings himself on his own tape recorder.»

On the recordings, A. Rudneva, Eldarova, and the musicians can be heard dialoging with Alan Lomax. Eldarova briefly explains the genre of Ashiq art to him, and the recording includes three songs by the musicians. Lomax can be heard asking for translations and inquiring about the music, but what impressed him most was Akbar Jafarov's voice.

«Tell him that his voice is one of the most beautiful things I've ever heard in my life,» Lomax says on the tape. «He has this very high, sweet voice like I've never heard before. Ask him if that's the way the best singers perform in Azerbaijan.»

«That's the way they sing; that's Ashiq art,» Eldarova replies. «Not everyone can be an Ashiq.» Lomax continues, asking Ashiq Akbar who taught him to sing. «My master was Ashiq Gadir Ismayilov,» Akbar replies. «Ask him how the teacher taught him to sing in that voice.» «I don't know, he just did it somehow!» Akbar laughs. Lomax also asks if Ashiq Akbar had a name for his instrument. «Sometimes performers have pet names for their instruments,» he said. Akbar simply replied, «I just call it 'saz.'» On the recording Lomax listened to a balaban solo and interviewed Museyib Abbasov, intrigued by his technique and curious about the musicians' backgrounds. «He probably didn't get those muscles playing the flute!» Lomax joked. Museyib laughed, and Amina explained that both men had come from the countryside but were now professional musicians. Amazingly, despite collecting tens of thousands of folk songs, the voice of Azerbaijani Ashiq Akbar was so unique that it moved Lomax to say, «Tell him that his voice is one of the most beautiful things I've ever heard in my life.» Though brief, the recording illustrates Lomax's search for connection and commonalities across folk traditions. It is a testament to his courage, his love of music, and his respect for musicians of all cultures. It also stands as a unique piece of Cold War history—a cross-cultural encounter during a time of political isolation. A copy of the recordings was given to the National Azerbaijan State Archive of Sound, and I was asked by the Association for Cultural Equity to return them to the artists themselves. Although Ashiq Akbar had already passed away, with the help of folklorist Sadnik Pashayev I was able to find Balabanist Museyib Abbasov in western Azerbaijan and bring him the recording.

By then in his 70s, Museyib and his family were surprised by the visit, but when I explained, he immediately recalled meeting Alan Lomax in 1964. Hearing Ashiq Akbar's voice on the tape brought tears to his eyes. He spoke of their decades of performing together—neighbors and friends who had never played with anyone else. After Akbar's death, Museyib never performed again. Watching him listen to the 40-year-old recordings and remember confirmed the great cultural value of these recordings. And it felt certain that Alan Lomax, had he known, would have been glad they had returned home. You can hear that recording at www.culturalequity.org.

Follow-Up: Correspondence, Fieldwork, and Challenges

Alan Lomax's engagement with the Soviet Union extended well beyond his initial 1964 visit. He sent Eldarova a collection of his American Folkways records, and maintained extensive correspondence with Rudneva and others, inviting them to contribute to his ambitious "World Library" project. However, these efforts were often met with silence or bureaucratic resistance. Some scholars were hesitant to collaborate due to ideological mistrust or institutional restrictions, while others sent recordings of poor technical quality—highlighting the many complexities of cross-cultural academic exchange during the Cold War (culturalequity.org).

Lomax returned to the Soviet Union in 1987 and 1989, this time traveling to Estonia and Georgia to attend ethnographic conferences and conduct video recordings of traditional music and dance. These trips were also part of his broader initiative to document and preserve global folk traditions. The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress holds a rich collection of manuscripts from these visits, including correspondence, field notes, and financial records, which reflect the logistical and scholarly challenges he faced (Library of Congress).

Throughout his work, Lomax encountered numerous challenges in cross-cultural collaboration. Bureaucratic delays, ideological suspicion, and technical limitations often complicated his efforts. Despite these

obstacles, Lomax remained committed to his vision of “cultural equity”—the belief that all cultures deserve equal recognition and preservation. His perseverance in the face of these difficulties underscores the depth of his dedication to intercultural understanding.

Conclusion

Alan Lomax’s endeavors in the Soviet Union represent a remarkable intersection of cultural exchange and personal conviction against a background of political tension. At a time when the world was divided by ideology and fear, Lomax sought to build bridges through music. His recordings of Azerbaijani Ashiqs, his correspondence with Soviet scholars, and his fieldwork across the USSR all reflect a deep respect for the richness of human expression.

While he was not a diplomat, Lomax’s work, along with that of his Soviet counterparts such as Eldarova and Rudneva, arguably did more to foster genuine intercultural understanding than many official initiatives. His belief in the power of music to transcend borders and ideologies remains a powerful legacy.

As our world again faces many ideological and other conflicts that can make political diplomacy seem very difficult, his experiences can continue to inspire all of us to continue to build peace through respect for the unique contributions of all cultures, and through our shared humanity, which shines so brightly in our love for music. In the end, Lomax’s journey was not just about collecting songs. It was about listening—to people, to cultures, and to the stories that connect us all.

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