

The goal of this dissertation is to approach the phenomenon of Armenian troubadour lyric poetry as such through a monograph on the poet Sayat' Nova and to introduce him in a European context, i.e. mainly in the light of the traditions of southern France. I have tried to show that the Caucasus region is far from being a region deserving only the marginal interest of researchers. To the contrary, its relative isolation on the one hand and the constant blending of cultures and the emergence of syncretic traditions on the other hand make the Caucasus a fountainhead of topics not only for ethnologists and folklorists, but also for linguists and political scientists.

Caucasian troubadour lyric poetry developed in a somewhat different spirit and in a different form from its West European counterparts, but there are far more features in common than it might seem at first glance. In the opinion of many researchers, the troubadours of Provence (minstrels of love) were influenced by Arabian love poetry that they encountered in Spain and during the Crusades to the Orient. Armenian ashugh lyric poetry (ashugh is a synonym for troubadour) can also be shown to have developed under the strong influence of Persian as well as Arabian poetry. Armenian folk art tended to take its inspiration more from local traditions, and through the quasi authorship of hayrens it then became the inspiration for the higher art form of troubadour lyric poetry.

The heyday of sung lyric love poetry in western Europe was in the 11th and 13th centuries, the climax of the era of chivalric culture. It was an art form for the elite social classes. The singers wandered either alone or with their attendant entourage from castle to castle singing odes to extol the beauty of the unapproachable lady of the house. Their verses tell of the poet's unrequited love, his suffering and the apathy and indifference of the lady of his heart.

...