

The Turkish Apaches (1)

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Walking the streets of Istanbul, you can not miss this cheap techno tune. Most probably you will hear it coming from a car passing by, or from your neighbour's awfully loud ringtone in the bus. For the past year or so, there is one tune that has spread all over Turkey and beyond : the Apaçi (Apache) song with its various remixes.

Popularized through internet, Turkish video websites and Facebook, this tune is also inseparable from the Apaçi dance. These became so hype in only a few months that TV series and advertisements started to refer to this phenomena in all possible ways. Soon, there was a growing Apaçi sub-culture. Thousands of people, mostly young ones but there is not really an age limit, started to upload their own Apaçi dance videos on the internet.

What is striking about the Apaçi movement is the apparent lack of a communications plan, something that regular summer hits like Lambada, Macarena or Tarkan-style ones have. This one, on the other hand, has no star, no media public figure.

Another aspect is the name : why *Apaçi* ? How did it start, who labelled it this way ? The term *Apaçi* refers directly to the Apache Native American groups, famous for their bravery and leader Geronimo (who recently made a come back in the news as the codename of the U.S. military operation to eliminate Osama Bin Laden). Some might see in the Turkish hype the premonitory signs of the coming plot... However, there most probably is no link between the term Apaçi and the Native American tribe.

Apaçi dance and French Tecktonik

The Apaçi dance itself is strongly influenced by the French Tecktonik movement, a specific techno dance and a fashion trend as well, which is rooted in the Belgian and Dutch electro music cultures. The Tecktonik peaked in 2007-2008 when over über-fashionable youngsters invaded dance floors and public squares moving their hands in the air like windmills.

The French Tecktonik, soon started to open new ventures around the globe, from Casablanca to Russia and Japan.

Turkey was largely untouched by this phenomena until the Apaçi music arrived in 2010. This importing of Tecktonik-like dance to Turkey could be a result of the strong connections that young Turks living in Western Europe keep up with their relatives in Turkey, through social networks and frequent visits.

The Turkish Apaçi dance also slightly differs from the French one and its local representatives. The success of the Turkish dance mirrors that of the *kolbastı dance* (see above) from a few years back, when the traditional Black Sea folk dance got boosted with techno tunes and became very popular with young people. The current Apaçi movement is the latest example of this mixing of Turkish folk heritage and global techno culture, and in the end not new at all.

But, this still does not answer the "Apaçi" equation. The Native American lead is not the only etymological

explanation. There is also one related to Paris at the beginning of the 20th century. “Les apaches” was coined by the popular press referring to the “aggressive” crowd of working class young men who lived in the outskirts of Paris and were “terrorizing” the city center. In the collective imagery, the term “apache” remained associated with uncivilized behavior.

The Parisian Apaches had fell into the urban legends abysses until a French extreme-leftist group in 2008 was accused of sabotaging high-speed trains. According to the police, the alleged leader of the group, Julien Coupat, had wrote a cryptic anti-capitalist pamphlet called *The Coming Insurrection* which quickly became best seller after the affair. This text mentions the story of the Parisian Apaches and portrays them as rebels : “When we hear a leftist intellectual blabbering about the barbarism of groups of kids harassing passersby in the street, shoplifting, burning cars, and playing cat and mouse with riot police, we remember what they said about the greasers in the 50s, or better, the apaches in the ‘Belle Époque’ : ‘The generic name apaches,’ writes a judge at the Seine tribunal in 1907, ‘has for the past few years been a way of designating all dangerous individuals, enemies of society, without nation or family, deserters of all duties, ready for the most audacious confrontations, and for any sort of attack on persons and properties’.”

And, these bad guys also had their own “apache” dance. Confusing, isn’t it !

Story to be continued, this article is part of a 4 episodes series.

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