

## The Musical repertoire of the Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi – A Form of Preservation and Perpetuation of Ethnic Identity

Mirela KOZLOVSKY<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The present study aims to highlight aspects related to the preservation and perpetuation of the musical repertoire of the Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi commune. This ethnic group which constitutes a majority in the above-mentioned geographic area has conducted its existence according to immutable norms capable of ensuring the endurance of its identity in an alien environment. During my field research in Sarichioi commune, I noticed that the collective memory of the community retained a substantial musical repertoire, one that comprises both pieces from the native regions of the Lipovan Russians and pieces from their foster-land. The relatively closed nature of the Lipovan Russian community in Sarichioi commune has protected its musical repertoire from the danger of contamination or exposure to influences specific to the oral cultures of the Dobrogea region. I have, however, noted a disturbance which threatens to push this repertoire into the passive memory of this ethnic group or can bring about the disappearance of certain traditional musical categories in the future. The disturbance I am referring to is the decrease in the number of folklore singers in the community. To prevent such situations, it is our duty to collect the pieces that make up the musical heritage of Lipovan Russians and give them their due scientific attention, thus providing a chance to those interested in the future to discover and appreciate it at its true value.*

Key-words: *Lipovan Russians, Starovers (Old Believers), musical repertoire, folklore, songs*

### 1. Introduction

In the present study we will refer to the Lipovan Russians in Sarichioi commune, which is part of Tulcea county and is considered to be the first settlement of the

---

<sup>1</sup> “Ovidius” University of Constanţa, Faculty of Arts, [mirelakoz@gmail.com](mailto:mirelakoz@gmail.com)

Nekrasov Starovers (Tudose 2015, 25) (Jora 2014, 50). It is located on the Babadag Plateau, on the shores of Lake Razelm<sup>2</sup> (or Razim), 43 kilometres away from Tulcea city. The villages that make up the commune are: Sarichioi, Enisala, Sabangia, Zebil, and Visterna. The name of Sarichioi commune is of Turkish origin and means “yellow village” (spelled Sarıköy in Turkish). Lipovan Russians have named it Seriovoco (Ibram 2017, 88). The majority of the population is of Russian ethnicity, the commune having the most ethnic Russians of all the towns and villages in Romania.

We would like to mention that organised groups of Nekrasov Cossacks settled in Dobrogea, in Dunavăț and Sarichioi, alongside Lipovans, Tartars, and Turks. In 1651, Turkish traveller Evlia Celebi mentioned Sarichioi as a big and beautiful Tartar village. The Starovers cohabited with the Muslim population for a while, but, once the Nekrasov Cossacks arrived, the Slavic population became the majority and caused the Turks and Tartars to leave the villages (Tiuliumeanu 2015, 124, 128).

The Nekrasov Starovers, the ancestors of the Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi, are the Cossacks that were part of the armies of atamans S. Razin, K. Bulavin, and I. Nekrasov. After the year 1660, many of S. Razin’s Cossacks, excited about the good fishing spots around lake Razelm, as well as by the proximity of the large Black Sea ports where they could sell their fish, remained in the region, even though they did not create permanent settlements there (Tiuliumeanu, 2015, 62).

In the past, the Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi commune were fishermen, carpenters famous for their skill in building and repairing boats, farmers, and beekeepers, they reared and sold cattle and practiced crafts (Tiuliumeanu 2015, 131-132). Nowadays, aside from their old occupations, they have embraced tourism-related activities (waiters, cooks, hotel agents, travel agents, etc.) or qualifications obtained through high-school or higher education (engineers, physicians, nurses, teachers, navigators, etc.)

The Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi proudly informed me that their desire to pass on their cultural and identity-related values to the younger generations materialised in 2010, when, thanks to the funds provided by the Community of Lipovan Russians in Romania, the commune’s Multi-ethnic Cultural Centre was inaugurated. It has been almost ten years since vocal and choreographic ensembles, instrumental bands, and folklore singers started participating in local and national celebrations and festivals organised by locals or by the Community of Lipovan Russians in Romania.

---

<sup>2</sup> According to M Tiuliumeanu, op. cit. pp 62-63 Razelm is the name given to the lake by the Turks, while Razim is the name used by the Lipovans

## 2. Morphological analysis of the song “Polno nam gore gorevati” / “Many pains we must endure”

The musical repertoire of Lipovan Russians in Sarichioi commune comprises songs of various ages which speak of one’s longing for one’s native lands or express feelings of love, sadness and so on, but also cheerful songs which ironise everyday situations or the faults and shortcomings of the members of the community. In this paper I will present and analyse the song “Полно нам горе горевати” (“Polno nam gore gorevati”), which was performed for me vocally with garmon accompaniment.

### Polno nam gore gorevati / Many pains we must endure

Source: Alex-Iulian Onofrei

**Allegro** ♩ = 126

Together with the balalaika, the garmon is one of the traditional instruments used for accompaniment in this musical repertoire. As a wind instrument with bellows and a keyboard, the garmon is related to the accordion. The keyboard on the right hand side is made up of keys, while on the left hand side it consists of buttons called basses (Bărbuceanu 1999, 9).



Пол - но нам го - ре го - ре - ва - ти Пол - но нам



го - ре го - ре - ва - ти Вый - ду на у - ли - цу гу -



ля - ти Вый - ду на у - ли - цу гу - ля - ти



На у - ли - це до - бры - е лю - ди На у - ли - це



до - бры - е лю - ди До - бры - е лю - ди со -



се - ди До - бры - е лю - ди со - се - ди

А я Ма - ру - сень - ка сер - день - ка А я Ма - ру -  
 сень - ка сер - день - ка Се - ю о - гур - чик и ка -  
 пус - ку Се - ю о - гур - чик и ка - пус - ку

Полно нам горе горевати  
 Полно нам горе горевати  
 Выйду на улицу гуляти  
 Выйду на улицу гуляти  
 На улице добрые люди  
 На улице добрые люди  
 Добрые люди соседи  
 Добрые люди соседи  
 А я Марусенька серденька  
 А я Марусенька серденька  
 Сею огурчик и капустку  
 Сею огурчик и капустку

Many pains we must endure  
 Many pains we must endure  
 But we go out and revel in the street  
 But we go out and revel in the street  
 In the street there are good people  
 In the street there are good people  
 Good people and good neighbours  
 Good people and good neighbours  
 I am Marusia and I'm upset  
 I am Marusia and I'm upset  
 I plant cucumbers and cabbage  
 I plant cucumbers and cabbage

Сею огурчик и капустку  
 Сею огурчик и капустку  
 Сладкую редьку на закуску  
 Сладкую редьку на закуску  
 Не откыль взялась курочка рябушка  
 Общипала огурчик и капустку  
 Нашы ребята вараваты  
 Нашы ребята вараваты  
 Спаймали курочку рябушку  
 Спаймали курочку рябушку

I plant cucumbers and cabbage  
 I plant cucumbers and cabbage  
 Sweet radishes for appetisers  
 Sweet radishes for appetisers  
 A little hen came out of nowhere  
 She pecked my cucumbers and cabbage  
 Our handy boys  
 Our handy boys  
 Caught the thieving chick  
 Caught the thieving chick

Как споймали курочку рябушку	They caught the thieving chick
Как споймали курочку рябушку	They caught the thieving chick
Общипали пери на подушку	Made a pillow out of her feathers
Насалили мяса кадушку	And cured the meat in salt
Вот тебе милая кадонца	Look! Our lovely <i>cadontza</i> *
Вот тебе милая кадонца	Look! Our lovely <i>cadontza</i> *
Спи моя милая да сонца!	Sleep till sunrise!
Спи моя милая да сонца!	Sleep till sunrise!

*\*vessel for curing meat in salt*

“Polno nam gore gorevati” is a song per se of a cheerful nature which talks about the misfortune of a young Lipovan Russian woman who planted vegetables in her garden, but a small hen came out of nowhere and ruined her seedlings. After the young men catch the hen, the beautiful Marusia sets it in brine.

Having a lively tempo (Allegro, at 126 M.M. the fourth), the song can also be danced to. The three ample melodic stanzas are delimited by the intervention of the accompanying instrument, which highlights their fixed binary-type architectonic form: ABABAvB. Each period consists of only two phrases. I have noticed that this limited number of phrases is encountered both in the songs per se and in the dancing songs of the Lipovan Russian repertoire.

The two-by-two repetition of the phrases aids the listener to effortlessly memorise the melody and lyrics. This apparent “lack” of inspiration on the part of the folklore creator has contributed to such creations becoming deeply etched into the collective memory, thus ensuring that the musical repertoire would stand the test of time. The configuration of the phrases is predominantly motif-oriented, which makes for a perfect balance between the inner cadenzas and the place of the caesuras. The lines are grouped in distichs (2+2+2).

The versification is syllabic, with the lines containing varying numbers of syllables which, through isometric adaptation, fit into a hexasyllabic pattern. Each of the six beats aggregates the syllables (five, six, eight, nine, and ten) of each sung line. Because the metric accents of the singing overwrites the accent of the words as they would be spoken, the lines of the pseudostanza fit into the hexasyllabic pattern emphasised by the melodic line. The rhyme is realised on the final foot of each line. In this song, the folk author has employed line repetition and explicative parallelism as means of expression.

The giusto-syllabic rhythm forces the vocal performance to omit the melodic notes found in the garmon accompaniment (superior and inferior mordents).

The musical scale is a major mode on C and the melody has an ambitus of a perfect octave. The frequently occurring intervals (fourths, and fifths) are realised through a leap, each of them being subsequently attenuated by a descending melodic movement. The inner cadenzas, as well as the final one, are realised on the note C, the first step of the mode, which confers stability to the melody.

### 3. Conclusions

My research has revealed that the musical repertoire of the Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi represents a way of preserving and perpetuating ethnic identity. This repertoire is viable and performed on various occasions, both within the family and at community celebrations. Young and older adults alike performed for me with pleasure and without hesitation those pieces which they thought representative for their ethnic group. I was pleased to note the existence of very expressive performers with genuine vocal qualities, which at times gave me the chance to listen to different performances of the same pieces of folklore.

The only factor which might threaten the wealth of their musical repertoire would be the decreasing number of folklore creators. At present there still are singers and players in the commune who are visited by young people interested in taking over the musical repertoire and keeping it active in the lives of the Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi commune.

Those from outside the community who wish to become acquainted with its musical repertoire are directed towards Mrs. Uliana Mitri, who is a singer, and Pimon Bejenaru, who plays the garmon. There were two dance ensembles (male and female) in the community, which used to take part in artistic events and folklore festivals. Currently, a group of dancers made up of pupils from the Sarichioi Secondary School guided by music teacher Tamara Șerban participate in commune celebrations.

Sarichioi commune is home to the Landâș (Lily of the Valley) group, a (female) vocal group accompanied by garmon and balalaika. Young men are keeping up as well and have formed a group that promotes traditional music with modern rhythms. The group is called Folk Band Ruskyi Ritm and it is made up of four members: Alex-Iulian Onofrei – Russian garmon and voice, band coordinator; Cosmin-Ștefan Leon – traditional drums and percussion; Ciprian Onoșă – electro-acoustic guitar, and Cătălin Dumitrache – bass guitar. These spirited and talented young people collect pieces of traditional music from the members of the community who are familiar with its repertoire.

It depends on the survival of such traditional musical creations, the preservation and perpetuation of ethnic identity of the Lipovan Russians of Sarichioi.

## References

- Bărbuceanu, Valeriu. 1999. *Dicționar de instrumente muzicale* [Dictionary of Musical Instruments]. Bucharest: Teora publishing house.
- Glodarenco, Olimpiu Manuel. 2008. "Repere geopolitice la Dunărea de Jos la început de Ev Mediu" [Geopolitical Landmarks of the Lower Danube of the Early Middle Ages]. In *Dobrogea - model de conviețuire multiethnică și multiculturală* [Dobrogea - a Good Example of Multi-ethnic and Multicultural Cohabitation], coordinator V. Coman, 18-49. Constanța: Muntenia publishing house.
- Ipatiov, Filip. 2001. *Rușii lipoveni din România. Studiu de geografie umană* [The Lipovan Russians of Romania. A Study in Human Geography]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană publishing house.
- Jora, Roman. 2014. *Folclor muzical-coregrafic al rușilor lipoveni din Județul Tulcea* [Musical and Choreographic Folklore of the Lipovan Russians of Tulcea County]. Constanța: Ex Ponto publishing house.
- Marian, Andrei Hieromonk. 2008. "Situația demografică și religioasă din Dobrogea în secolul XIII." [The Demographic and Religious Situation in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Dobrogea]. In *Dobrogea - model de conviețuire multiethnică și multiculturală* [Dobrogea – a Good Example of Multi-ethnic and Multicultural Cohabitation], coordinator V. Coman, 50-57. Constanța: Muntenia publishing house.
- Râșnoveanu, Ion. 2008. "Aspecte privind minoritățile etnice și religioase din Dobrogea interbelică" [Aspects regarding the Ethnic and Religious Minorities of Interwar Dobrogea]. In *Dobrogea - model de conviețuire multiethnică și multiculturală* [Dobrogea – a Good Example of Multi-ethnic and Multicultural Cohabitation], coordinator V. Coman, 251-263. Constanța: Muntenia publishing house.
- Tiuliumeanu, Mihai. 2015. *Cazacii din Dobrogea: o istorie uitată* [The Cossacks of Dobrogea: a Forgotten Piece of History]. Bucharest: Editura Militară.
- Tudose, Pavel. 2015. *Rușii lipoveni din România - istorie și actualitate* [The Lipovan Russians of Romania – History and Current Situation]. Bucharest: Published by Comunitatea Rușilor Lipoveni din România.