

Gîdulka and Țigulka in instrumental dance music of Meglenoromanians and Timok Romanians

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Abstract: *During research within various ethnic groups (Aromanians, Meglenoromanians, Lipovan Russians, Tartars, Turks) in the Dobruja region and among Romanians in the Bulgarian Timok (Albotina) region, I noted that proximity led to mutual borrowings. These exchanges, irrespective of their nature, entailed adaptations and transformations in accordance with the specificity of the ethnic group they had permeated. I shall focus on an instrument which made its way into the repertoire of Romanians south of the Danube – Meglenoromanians and the Romanians of the Bulgarian Timok. The țigulkă/gîdulka, a bowed string instrument, can be found throughout the Balkans all the way to Dalmatia.*

Key-words: *ergology, ethnomusicology, traditions, folklore, Meglenoromanians, Timok Romanians*

1. Introduction

Dobruja is one of those regions which host a large number of ethnic communities. Depending on the historical period and the geopolitical circumstances referred to, some ethnic groups gradually changed status from majority to minority – Turks and Tartars, others rose or fell in numbers – Germans; others registered a substantial demographic decline – Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, Italians etc.

Along the centuries, several peoples settled in this land, which spreads between the Danube and the Black Sea. Through their culture and civilisation, they contributed, to various degrees, to the forging of their own identity, as well as of the specificity of the region.

Exchanges were carried out in various areas of the social, cultural and spiritual life of society without disturbing its way of life or ethnic identity.

During research within various ethnic groups (Aromanians, Meglenoromanians, Lipovan Russians, Tartats, Turks) in the Dobruja region and among Romanians in the Bulgarian Timok (Albotina), I noted that proximity led to mutual borrowings. These exchanges, irrespective of their nature, entailed adaptations and transformations in accordance with the specificity of the ethnic group they had permeated.

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This study was conceived as a result of an observation made during field research on the traditional musical creation of the ethnic communities of Dobruja.

I shall focus on an instrument which made its way into the repertoire of Romanians south of the Danube – Meglenoromanians and the Romanians of the Bulgarian Timok.

2. Organology

The *ṭigulkā/gīdulka*, a bowed string instrument, can be found throughout the Balkans all the way to Dalmatia. From an ergological point of view, it is a member of the lute family, an old bowed string instrument of Arabic-Persian origin. (Bărbuceanu 1999, 153) It is made of mulberry or apricot tree wood.

The neck of the instrument is fairly thick and short and has a wider end, to which the strings are attached. As for the playing technique, the bow and actual instrument must be taken into consideration. The player holds the bow in the same way as a double bass bow.

The fingers are placed sidewise on the instrument's strings, according to the *flagiolet* technique, the sounds thus produced having a distinct, slightly dampened sonority.

The instrument is played while held in a vertical position on the knees and, when moving from one string to another, the player moves the instrument as well, thus easing the fairly cumbersome act of playing.

Depending on the folkloric area where it is used, it bears several names. In Turkish folklore it is known as *kemence* and it is part of the traditional musical ensemble. It is made of apricot tree or mulberry wood, pear-shaped, with three strings tuned as follows: A3-A2-E3 (Bărbuceanu 1999, 153).

The bow is short. This instrument goes back a long way in the history of Turkish music, being included in the traditional music of the *taraf*, as well as in the instrumental bands which provided musical entertainment at sultans' palaces (*saray*). Two parallel categories of repertoires for this instrument were perpetuated: one played by the people and a cultivated one, found at the palace and dedicated to the sultan and the Ottoman Court. There have been many players who were considered *kemence* virtuosos.

One of them was Evlia Celebi, who lived in the 17th century. He travelled to Dobruja and Moldavia, which at the time were Romanian territories under Ottoman rule, making notes about his journey in his diary.

In Greek folklore it is known as the *Cretan lyre*, as this instrument is widespread among the inhabitants of the Isle of Crete. It is made of mulberry wood, pear-shaped and has three strings attached to a bridge. The strings are tuned as follows: A1-D1-G1. Players attach bells to the bow, which ring as they move their right hand.

This instrument is found in Bulgarian folklore as well, under the name of *gîdulka*, *gunilka*, *lirika*. Unlike the *kemence* and the *Cretan lyre*, which only have three strings, the *gîdulka*, which shares their shape, playing position and technique, can have between 3-5 and up to 8-10 strings.

The player still uses only 3 strings when playing, as the others are not touched during the performance. However, they do vibrate in sympathy, accompanying the melodic line (Bărbuceanu 1999, 153).

From Bulgarian folklore, the *gîdulka* made its way into Meglenoromanian folklore as well. These Romanians south of the Danube have lived close to Bulgarians for centuries, as they established their villages on the sides of the Rhodope Mountains only to move down into the Karadjova Plain (Meglen), more exactly in the lands between the Macedonian, Bulgarian and Greek borders, which they inhabit to this day. In spite of living in the proximity of Bulgarians, they did not mix with them, nor did they conduct any organological exchanges.

The Meglenoromanians who introduced this instrument into traditional instrumental music were those who had been part of two immigration waves – first from Greece to South Dobruja (the Quadrilateral) and then from the Quadrilateral to Cerna commune in Tulcea county fourteen years later. During their time living in the Quadrilateral (Coman 2004, 81), they borrowed instruments specific to neighbouring ethnic groups – the *țigulcă* from the Bulgarians and the *tămbură* from the Turks.

The Meglenoromanian *țigulcă* has three strings and a bow and is made of mulberry wood. The strings are arranged from the lowest to the highest-pitched, the first one being the thickest. The tuning is as follows: A-A1-E1.

Another category of Romanian ethnics who borrowed the *gîdulka* is that of Timok Romanians, who inhabit the region between the Timok and the Morava all the way to the city of Vidin and beyond.

Virgil Nestorescu speaks about the large number of Romanians who came under Bulgarian influence in his paper “Românii Timoceni din Bulgaria” (“Timok Romanians in Bulgaria”) and mentions that: “In north-western Bulgaria, between Vidin and the Timok river on the one side and the Danube on the other, there are about 30 towns and villages populated by Romanians who make up a distinct dialect group within Dacoromania” (Nestorescu 1996, 5).

Uninterrupted contact and a similar way of life shared by Romanians on both sides of the Danube resulted in the emergence of nearly identical folk creations within their cultures. Those who made written notes about the life of Vlachs in the Timok region could not help but notice the resemblance between their creations and those of the Romanians north of the Danube.

The *gîdulka*, borrowed by Timok Romanians from Bulgarian ethnics, has the same characteristics as the *țigulcă* of the Meglenoromanians of Cerna.

3. The Meglenoromanian *Paiduška*

Once the instrument made its way into the musical folklore of Meglenoromanians and Timok Romanians in Bulgaria, it brought with it the Bulgarian dance called *Paiduška*.

Bulgarian ethnics used to live in Cerna and other nearby villages, which explains why the dance was included in the choreographic repertoire of the ethnic groups they cohabited with. The Dacoromanian, Aromanian, Meglenoromanian, Bulgarian *Paiduška* has been and is still danced at community celebrations in the villages of Dobruja. The similarities and differences have to do with rhythm, tempo and choreography.

Following my research, I will describe the *Paiduška* of the Meglenoromanians of Cerna (see example 1).

Paiduška

The musical score for the Meglenoromanian *Paiduška* is presented in five staves of music, all in treble clef and 3/8 time. The first staff contains the melody, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5, then a quarter note B4, and a dotted quarter note A4. The second staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, followed by a dotted quarter note B4. The third staff continues the accompaniment, featuring a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and a dotted quarter note B4. The fourth staff shows a sequence of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4) and a dotted quarter note B4. The fifth staff concludes the piece with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and a dotted quarter note B4.

The musical score is presented in ten staves, all in treble clef. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, with several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above the notes). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music is a single melodic line, characteristic of the Gîdulka and Țigulka genres.



Example 1

The dance is performed at a very fast tempo (184 M.M. eighth). The aksak (bichronic) divisive rhythm (5/8) emphasises the binary structure of the formulas and of the identical choreographic and melodic cells.

The total value of the formulas is eight and it is the result of grouping together melodic-rhythmic motifs around the stressed sound at the beginning of each incise.

The Meglenoromanian *Paiduška* dance melody has a fixed, quaternary form (ABA_vCB_vAvD), consisting of seven musical phrases in which the motifs are repeated in an identical or varied form.

It is noteworthy that an introductory melodic formula which appears in the incipit of the dance melody is also found at the end of the melody, bringing it to a conclusion.

The melodic mode is noted to be the Acoustic 2 (melodic major) resulting from a pentatony with two moveable piens (F# and C#). The ambitus is a perfect octave.

Aside from the melodic motion consisting of successions of seconds, ascending and descending leaps of thirds, fourths and fifths also appear, lending the melody a zigzag profile.

The predominant sounds are placed on the second (A), fourth (D) and fifth step (E), which evince a prepentatonic structure, a tritonic mode which initially evolved into a pentatony and by emancipation of the piens broadened into a major heptatony.

The inner cadenzas are realised on the second and fifth step, by leaps of perfect descending fourth, thus allowing the main tones to stand out. The final cadenza is realised on the first step, brought by a leap by perfect descending fourth.

4. The Timok Romanians *Paidușka*

The second dance melody belongs to the repertoire of Timok Romanians (see example 2).

Paidușka

The musical score for *Paidușka* is presented in six staves. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody consists of eighth-note patterns. Trills (tr) are indicated above the final notes of the first, fourth, and sixth staves.

Example 2

The *Paiduška* dance is performed at a moderate tempo, of a 104 (M.M.) fourth. The rhythm is bichronic and divisive, but symmetrical this time. The binary structure of formulas and cells is kept unaltered in both the choreography and the melody.

The total value of the formulas is eight and results from grouping together melodic-rhythmic motifs around the stressed sound at the beginning of each incise. There is a remarkable amount of rhythmic structures, as a consequence of cell variation, due to the improvisational quality of the performance.

The dance melody has a fixed, primary-type form, with a single musical phrase occurring four times, while rhythmico-melodic motifs are repeated in identical or varied form (AAvAAv). There is a four-bar melodic augmentation at the end of each phrase, which gives it a free musical structure.

Although the melody is structured based on identical and varied rhythmico-melodic cells, the orchestric rhythm maintains the total value for the series of eight eighths. It is remarkable that there is a strong correspondence between the rhythm of the melody and that of the dance steps.

The most recurrent note durations are the eighth and the sixteenth. The first sound of each incise carries a stress, so that the values of the melodico-rhythmic motifs are grouped around this stressed sound.

The melody is noted to be in Ionic mode, which is born from a G-A-B-D-E pentatony, which turns into a heptatony by the introduction of two sounds which have the appearance of moveable piens: F# and C#.

The ambitus is a perfect octave. Aside from the melodic motion consisting of successions of seconds, ascending and descending leaps of thirds, fourths and fifths also appear, as well as an ascending minor seventh, lending the melody a zigzag profile.

The predominant sounds are placed on the second (E), fourth (G) and fifth step (A), which evince a prepentatonic structure, a tritonic mode (E-G-A) which initially evolved into a pentatony and by emancipation of the piens broadened into a major heptatony.

The ornament employed is the trill, which appears only on the fifth step. Double anterior appoggiaturas appear on the eighths.

The climax, the B1 sound, is only reached during the trill, occurring ten times during the melody.

The inner cadenzas, as well as the final one, are realised on the fifth step, by leaps of perfect descending fourths for odd phrases and on the second step for even phrases, through an ascending major second, thus allowing the main tones to stand out (E and A).

5. Conclusions

There are instruments in the folklore of Dobruja which have been borrowed from various ethnic groups along history. Moreover, organological borrowings led to the adoption of the songs and dances specific to the ethnic group that the instrument originated from. Naturally, the borrowed dance musical repertoire was reshaped and adapted to national sensibilities and specificity.

Although, Meglenoromanians from Cerna were exposed to Bulgarian influences coming only from their living period in Cadrilater, they keep in traditional practice both the dance and also the instrument, borrowed in that time.

For the Timok Romanians the influence exerted by Bulgarians, deliberately or unintentionally, occurs even today, representing a powerful denationalization factor.

In conclusion we can say that the analysis of the two dance melodies has highlighted the following features:

- A melodic profile predominantly descending;
- Internal cadences based on interval of a perfect ascending fourth;
- The final cadence based on an interval of a perfect descending fourth (example 1) and a perfect ascending fourth (example 2);
- The architectonic structure of the melodies is fixed, quaternary form (example 1) and primary-type form (example 2);
- The rhythm system is aksak (bichronic) divisive rhythm (example 1) and symmetrical (bichronic) divisive (example 2).

The own and borrowed cultural elements, ensure to the Meglenoromaniens from Cerna and to Timok Romanians their uniqueness in the Balkans and offers them the so necessary ethnic identity.

6. References

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