

## Structural and Stylistic Analogies in the Dance Repertoire of Tartars and Dacoromanians in Dobruja

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**Abstract:** *Dacoromanians and Tartars have been living side by side in the Dobruja region for centuries, which is why I decided to research the traditional dance creations of the two ethnic groups. My intention, having analysed a selected repertoire, was to point out characteristic elements and find that mutual contaminations, whether favourable or unfavourable, occurred. I chose dance music because it is the most representative category of folklore for any ethnic group seeking to assert its national identity in a multicultural space such as Dobruja.*

**Key-words:** *Dacoromaniens; Tartars; Dobruja; folklore; ethnomusicology; traditions; dance*

### 1. Introduction

Dobruja, “the land of syntheses”, as Nicolae Iorga called it, is an absorptive, permeable cultural space, characteristic of an open cultural system, with maximum availability for interethnic, interactional dialogue, which is just as much a synonym of innovation, progressionist tendencies and elements of modernity.<sup>2</sup>

The ethnic communities of Dobruja settled in groups, showing respect for their neighbours of a different religion and culture and thus acknowledging the right to ethnic unity of all cohabitants.<sup>3</sup>

The eminently rural lifestyle of ethnic communities in Dobruja was preserved until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which favoured the conservation of identity values. Ethnic diversity fostered essential or secondary mutual exchanges on a cultural level and, as a result, there is a whole array of similarities between the ethnic groups of Dobruja in terms of garments, dances, songs and interpersonal relations.

Due to living in an environment with a mixed ethnic structure<sup>4</sup>, Dacoromanians and Tartars came into contact with the other ethnic groups which they cohabit with in harmony: Aromanians, Meglenoromanians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Germans, Armenians, Lipovan Russians, Turks etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Gibescu, Daniela, Roxana, *Contribuții la promovarea și valorificarea științifică a folclorului dobrogean*, Revista Muzica, Nr. 2, 20014, p. 87

<sup>3</sup> Ibram, Nuredin, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, Constanța, Ed. Ex Ponto, 2011, p. 107

<sup>4</sup> Vergatti, Radu, Ștefan, *Dobrogea, mojar al popoarelor și al religiilor în secolul al XIV-lea*, în *Dobrogea-model de conviețuire multiethnică și multiculturală*, coordonator Virgil Coman, Constanța, Ed. Muntenia, 2008, p. 70

Given the circumstances, it was natural for mutual borrowings to occur over time and for the elements which were appropriated to be processed and adapted according to the tradition and culture of each people. I set out to research this aspect, starting from the hypothesis that proximity gave rise to mutual borrowings in the dance music of Dacoromanians and Tartars in Dobruja and that these borrowings are manifest even today in popular practice.

## **2. The instrumental dance music of Dacoromanians and Tartars in Dobruja – general remarks**

For the traditional folklore of Dacoromanians and Tartars, dance music is an important section of the syncretic whole. Unlike other categories, which are permanently subject to either conservation or degradation, dance music is going through a phase of genre revival for both ethnic groups, due to the mobility of its repertoire and to its capacity to borrow not only archaic structural particularities, but also more recent elements, which are sometimes still being assimilated.<sup>5</sup>

For Dacoromanians, the dance music of the old stratum was born out of the cohesion of shepherds playing the flute and the bagpipes. This music has its own, easily recognisable distinctive features, as they are shaped by the technical possibilities of the instruments.

The evolution of rural society will bring about changes in the structure of instrumental ensembles, as the peasant player is replaced by the professional player. Aside from traditional instruments such as the flute, the kaval and the cimbalom, new instruments will be introduced, which will gradually affect the configuration of instrumental ensembles. The new structure of instrumental bands will include keyboard instruments, percussion instruments, the violin, the double bass, the accordion, the saxophone, the guitar etc.

Tartars in Dobruja used to play dance music on instruments which are considered traditional: the flute, the bagpipes and the bass drum. These were brought to Dobruja by colonists from their home territories, as Dobruja was part of the Ottoman Empire up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Once the patriarchal way of life and rural society became extinct, it turned out that these instruments were replaced as well, as Tartar music players were forced to borrow instruments specific to the traditional Turkish music of Dobruja: the davul, the tambur, the saz, the cobza and the zurna, which they call “borazan”.

Lately, the traditional Tartar musical repertoire has been adapted to modern instruments, with developed technical possibilities, so that we encounter the clarinet, the accordion, the diverse percussion instruments making up the drum set, keyboard instruments, the guitar and the saxophone. Bands of traditional players which perform a diverse and cosmopolitan repertoire at Tartar weddings and events gradually made their way into this community as well.

For both ethnic groups, folk dances take place in a traditional cultural context, which entails specific occasions: fairs, weddings, rustic celebrations or folklore festivals. At family or community events, dancing can be initiated spontaneously by participants, without previous planning. When it comes to events such as folklore festivals or genre competitions, dancing is performed on stage, according to a director’s vision and with the aid of a choreographer.

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<sup>5</sup> Oprea, Gheorghe, *Folclorul muzical românesc*, București, Ed. Muzicală, 2002, p. 563

The authenticity of the folkloric act is often sacrificed in favour of the artistic act. In the case of dances performed on stage, all moves carry a semantic charge, so that stylised moves contain a message.

Aside from dances, whose music is exclusively instrumental, both ethnic groups have dance songs which they sing and dance to at the same time.

The music of Dacoromanian and Tartar folk dances constitutes a substantial portion of community folklore. For both peoples, dancing, a complex (syncretic) manifestation, is always accompanied by music and occasionally by shouts.<sup>6</sup>

Within the Dacoromanian tradition of Dobruja, folk dancing has had an uninterrupted existence, as it is a genuine and valuable creation of our spirituality. The richness and variety of the genre are due to the dances brought by colonists from Muntenia (Vlașca, Mehedinți, Dolj), Moldavia (Tutova, Putna, Vrancea), Basarabia, Transylvania and Banat<sup>7</sup>. The beauty and specificity of Dobruja dances come from the multitude of dance figures and choreographic improvisations. Dancers hold hands or hold each other by the shoulders or waist, depending on the dance they are performing: Horă, Brău, Sârbă, Geampara, Cadâneasca, Paidușca etc.

Dobruja dances have a well defined choreographic specificity, which consists in a strong, loose and accentuated rhythmicity. They maintain simple, circular forms and excel at stamping horas (circle dances). Even couple dances have a dynamic, colourful appearance and the moves are saltant and vivid. The rhythm is exceptionally rich: 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 5/4, 5/8, 7/8, 9/8. The choreographic folklore of Dobruja is characterised by an impressive territorial homogeneity. The northern part is in no way different from the southern one. Almost the very same repertoire is found throughout the land between the Danube and the Sea. (GIBESCU, 2014, 91)

I will mention a few of the dances which were borrowed by Dacoromanians from cohabiting ethnic groups over time. The foreign origin of these dances is attested by the names they bear.

The choreographic repertoire of Dacoromanians in central and southern Dobruja includes the *Geampara*, a folk dance which is proof of contamination from oriental dance music. Tartars call this dance Kaytarma. The aksak rhythm constitutes the bridge between the Tartar and the Dacoromanian dance music in Dobruja. Dacoromanians dance in a circle or in pairs, employing small steps and arm movements.

The *Paidușca* of Dobruja is a dance which has been taken over from Bulgarian ethnics in the region. It is danced similarly to an open hora (circle dance), with leaping steps and arm movements. In the Dobruja region, it is encountered in the dance music of Dacoromanians, Aromanians and Bulgarians.

The *Cadâneasca* is another Dacoromanian dance which originates from the music of Tartar ethnics in Dobruja. It is danced in an open circle, with leaping steps and arm movements.

I noticed that Dacoromanians have developed a dance style of their own, capable of a showing homogeneity in its way of expression.

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<sup>6</sup> Oprea, Gheorghe, *Folclorul muzical românesc*, București, Ed. Muzicală, 2002, p. 568

<sup>7</sup> Popoiu, Paula, *Antropologia habitatului în Dobrogea: om-natură-cultură*, București, Ed. Oscar Print, 2001, p. 96

Tartar dances are also varied, as they have a different manner of expression from Dacoromanian ones, depending on the gender and age of the participants. Similarly to Dacoromanians, dances can be performed exclusively by men or by women, or in a mixed formula. Participants do not touch each other at all, not even in mixed dances, as respect and decency are always observed. Here are a few of the dances included in the current repertoire of Tartars in Dobruja: *Aqay awasî*, *Cengil awa* (*Oyun awasî*), *Kaytarma*, *Tîm-Tîm*, *Toqîz*.

*Aqay awasî* or *Awr awa* means “difficult dance” or “steady dance”, lacking a vivacious rhythm. This dance is also known as *Beş parmaq* (Five fingers) and it is performed at weddings, only upon request from the participants. It used to be performed exclusively by older men, who knew the steps and the required posture. Nowadays women participate in the dance as well and imitate the men’s dance steps and arm movements.

The dancers’ moves are fragmented, inelastic, slightly theatrical, as they maintain a pose with their arms raised and palms open, exposing their fingers ostentatiously to the other dancers. Keeping their torso still and chests ahead, in an attempt to convey a martial attitude, the dancers switch from one foot to the other, holding their knees slightly bent and their torso moderately leaning forward. With wide, heavy steps to the rhythm of the music, the dancers switch places among themselves from time to time.

Another dance performed at weddings is *Cengil awa* (light melody) or *Oyun awasî* (dance melody). It is a dance which puts dancers and their audience in a good mood. It is the kind of dance the community prefers, as everyone, irrespective of age, can partake. It has a lively rhythm and smooth moves, which underscore the grace of Tartar women. It is danced with one’s hands held up, while turning one’s palms from the wrists and taking small steps to the rhythm of the music. There are moments during the dance when the women give out yells.

*Kaytarma* is a dance which belongs to the old stratum of Tartar folklore and is currently performed only at shows. It is danced by men and women and resembles the Geampara of Dobruja. The women make smooth, graceful arm movements and move across the stage with small steps, as if they were gliding. The men’s choreography includes elements which require much dexterity, as they execute jumps interrupted by squats. As I have mentioned before, partners do not touch each other during the dance.

*Tîm-Tîm* (the Lark Dance) is a kind of solo stage dance. It can be performed by one girl, by two or more girls, or by two or more pairs. The dancers make delicate hand and arm movements which suggest the flight of a lark. With their arms open wide, like birds in the wind, they move in a circle or line, with small steps and flowing torso and head movements.

*Toqîz* (the number nine in the Tartar language) is the dance performed by the young people who accompany the groom to the bride’s home. The young dancers take turns to *dance* for the nine objects they receive as a gift from the bride.

While the dance steps and the body and arm movements of Dacoromanian dancers are synchronised, they are not coordinated for Tartars, as each dancer has an individual way of expression.

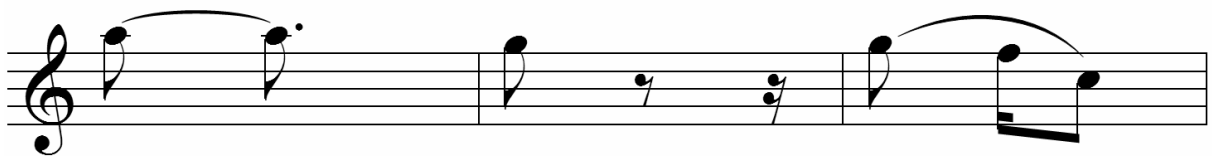
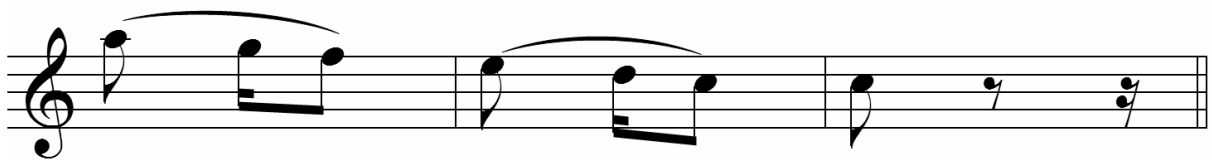
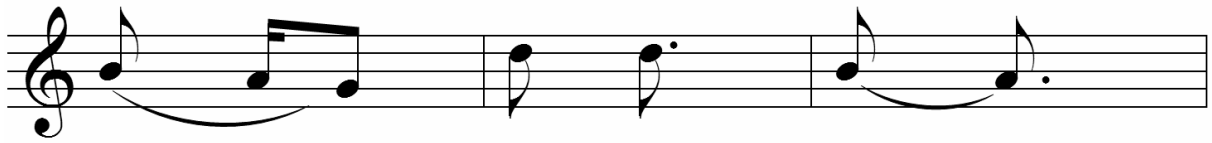
### 3. Formal and structural analysis

I have chosen to analyse the following dances from the Dobruja region: the Dacoromanian instrumental dances *Ariciul* and *Cadâneasca* and the Tartar instrumental dances *Aqay awasî* and *Cengil awa*.

ARICIUL

**Allegro** ♩ = 150

The musical score for 'ARICIUL' is written in treble clef with a 5/16 time signature. It is marked 'Allegro' with a tempo of 150. The score consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a 5/16 time signature, and the tempo marking 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 150. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some notes having accents or slurs. The second staff continues the melodic line with similar rhythmic patterns. The third staff shows a more rhythmic passage with eighth notes and rests. The fourth staff returns to a more melodic style with eighth notes. The fifth staff concludes the piece with a final accented note.



*Ariciul* is a couple dance brought to Dobruja by colonists from Oltenia, who settled in the region after the War of Independence. It is written in the odd metre 5/8 time signature and performed at a quick tempo – Allegro – of 150 MM the eighth. The aksak, bichronic rhythm results from the periodic stresses attached to the basic note durations.

The most frequent note durations are the eighth, the dotted eighth, the sixteenth, the sixteenth rest and the dotted eighth rest. The first note of the elementary rhythmic groups (pyrrhic, trochaic and iambic) bears the stress, so that the orchestric rhythm results from the pulsations of the stress-bearing values or groups of rhythmic values. The total value of these pulsations is eight. The value of the series which also result from the periodic stresses attached to the basic note durations in the incise is eight as well.

From an architectural point of view, the dance melody features four distinct musical phrases, delimited by rests. The final phrase is repeated, so that the quaternary melody (ABCD) reaches five phrases, while the rhythmic series maintain the value of eight. Each musical phrase is made up of identical or varied melodico-rhythmic motifs.

The mode of the melody is the Eolic mode. The succession E2-D2-B-A-G forms the pentachordic substratum from which the mode evolved towards the Eolic.

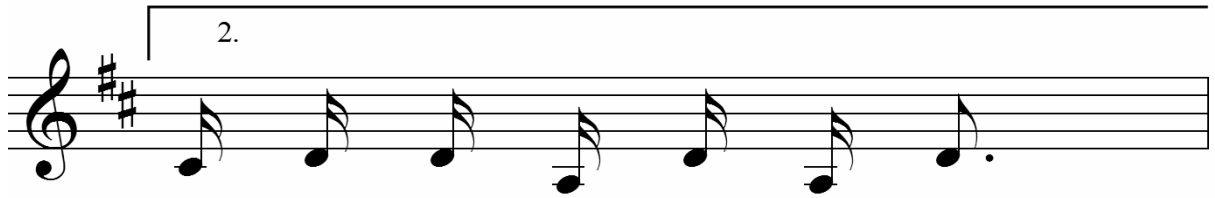
The ambitus is a major ninth, which is often encountered in dance melodies.

The melodic line is simple, as only two mordents (upper and lower) come up along the way. The presence of these ornaments contributes to enriching the melody.

The inner cadenzas are realised on the first step, by recto-tono repetition for the first two melodic rows, while for the third and fourth melodic rows, as well as the final cadenza, they are realised on the third step, also by recto-tono repetition.

### CADÂNEASCA

**Andante** ♩ = 76







*Cadâneasca* is a dance performed in a mixed circle, with dancers holding hands. It is in the double compound time signature 9/16 (2+2+2+3) and its tempo is Vivace, of 140 MM the eighth. The rhythm is aksak, divisive and the recurrent note durations are the eighth, the dotted eighth and the sixteenth. Three bisyllabic rhythmic patterns, made up of three pyrrhic series, can be identified, and a trisyllabic rhythmic pattern, made up of a tribrach series. The first note of the elementary rhythmic groups bears a stress, so that the orchestric rhythm results from the pulsations of the stress-bearing values or groups of rhythmic values, while their total value is eight.

From an architectural point of view, the melody follows a fixed pattern, with five distinct musical phrases ABCDE, three of which are delimited by means of note durations of a dotted eighth. The musical phrases are made up of identical or varied melodico-rhythmic motifs.

The mode of the melody is Ionian on D. Initially, due to the double tonality of the sounds  $C^{\natural}/C^{\sharp}$ ,  $E^{\natural}/E^{\flat}$  and  $B^{\natural}/B^{\flat}$ , the chromatic 2 stands out as the mode of the melody. In the fourth phrase, due to the absence of the leading tone ( $C^{\natural}$  replaces  $C^{\sharp}$ ), the Mixolydian stands out as the mode of the melody.

The ambitus is a perfect tenth, which is often the case with dance melodies.

The inner cadenzas and the final cadenza are realised on the first step of the mode. They are realised as follows: by a descending minor second for the first phrase, by a leap of an ascending perfect fourth for the second phrase, by a descending minor second for the third phrase, by a leap of a descending perfect octave for the fourth phrase and by recto-tono repetition for the final phrase.

### AQAY AWASÎ

The first Tartar dance that I will analyse is *Aqay awasî*, or *Awr awa* or *Beş parmak*. It is danced at weddings, only upon request. It is performed by older men and women, who express themselves through moderate hand gestures, stopping successively to stand on both feet and keeping their torso still. The tempo of the dance is rare and solemn – Grave, of 40 MM the quarter. The melody has the double compound time signature 9/4 (2+3+2+2).

The rhythm is aksak and the recurrent note durations are the quarter, the quarter rest, the eighth and the sixteenth. Two zones with different rhythmic patterns can be identified within each measure: the first zone is made up by the juxtaposition of a bisyllabic rhythmic pattern and a trisyllabic rhythmic pattern, while the second one is made up of two bisyllabic rhythmic patterns. These zones with differing rhythmic patterns coincide with the motifs which form the musical phrases. The orchestric rhythm results from the pulsations of the

stress-bearing groups of rhythmic values. By attaching fermatas to the highest values – quarter and half notes – it allows the dancers to stop in a pose, which gives the dance its typical solemn character.

From an architectural point of view, the melody follows a fixed, binary pattern made up of four distinct musical phrases - AAvBBv. The phrases are completed by a final *codetta*, which consists of the final zone of the initial measure. In the first two phrases – AAv – there are eight fermatas (after each motif), while in the last two phrases - BBv – there are four fermatas (on the first and fourth motif). There is also a fermata at the end of the codetta.

The mode of the melody is Harmonic E minor. The double tonality of the sounds D $\square$ /D $\sharp$  and F $\sharp$ /F $\square$  generates the tonal attraction to the first tonal step, while the double tonality of the sound on the sixth step – C $\square$ /C $\sharp$  – serves to strengthen the role of the B, which is the dominant of the F minor tonality.

The ambitus is a minor tenth, which is characteristic of dance melodies. The presence of simple anterior appoggiaturas enriches the melodic line.

The inner cadenzas and the final cadenza are realised on the first step of the tonality. They are realised as follows: for the first and third musical phrase by minor ascending second, for the second and fourth phrase by recto-tono repetition. The candeza of the codetta is realised by minor ascending second.

#### CENGIL AWA



The second Tartar dance I will present is *Cengil awa* or *Oyun awasî*. It is danced at most community celebrations, as well as weddings. The dancers, irrespective of age, express themselves by means of moderate hand gestures, while taking small steps and moving their bodies to the rhythm of the melody. It is a rhythmic dance with a moderate tempo – Andante – of 70 MM the quarter. The melody has the binary compound time signature 4/4.

The rhythm is divisive and the recurrent note durations are the eighth, the dotted eighth, the eighth rest and the sixteenth rest. The first note of the elementary rhythmic groups bears the stress, so that the orchestric rhythm results from the pulsations of the stress-bearing values or groups of rhythmic values, while their total value is eight. The orchestric rhythm also results from the pulsations of the stress-bearing groups of rhythmic values.

From an architectural point of view, the melody follows a fixed, binary pattern made up of three distinct musical phrases - AAvB. Each musical phrase is made up of identical or varied melodic-rhythmic motifs.

The mode of the melody is Aeolian on D. In the first two musical phrases a diatonic pentatony is identified: D-E-F-G-A. The C plays the role of a subtone. The D takes the role of recitation string by recto-tono repetition. The first two measures of the third phrase feature a diatonic pentatony: C2-B-A-G-F.

The ambitus is a perfect octave, which is fairly common in dance melodies. The melodic line is simple, with a single simple posterior appoggiatura.

The inner cadenzas are realised on the first step of the tonality. They are realised as follows: for the first musical phrase by major descending second, for the second phrase by recto-tono repetition. The final cadenza is realised by major descending second.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The research I have carried out has revealed some distinct elements which are manifest in the music of the Dacoromanian dances *Ariciul* and *Cadâneasca* and in that of the Tartar dances *Aqay awasî* and *Cengil awa*, as well as the following structural and stylistic analogies:

##### **Melody**

It appears that the profile of the dance melodies under analysis is predominantly a zigzag one;

##### **Modes**

A preference for evolved modes;  
The presence of mobile steps;  
Modes which bear a recognisable trace of the pentatonic or augmented intervals substratum;

##### **Rhythm**

A predilection for the aksak (bichronic) and the divisive rhythm;

##### **Architectural form**

The presence of a varied number of melodic rows: from 3 to 10, resulting from repetition;

The period is configured by the varying repetition of musical phrases and motifs;

##### **Norms governing the construction of musical phrases**

The asymmetrical grouping of cells and melodico-rhythmic motifs in the musical phrase (2 measures);

The formation of each second phrase by: borrowing a motif or cell from the first phrase; resuming a phrase which was exhibited previously;

The existence of a low number of means of expression: alternating ornamented and non-ornamented sounds; Inner and final cadenzas are realised mainly on the first step of the mode.

The typical elements of the dance music of Dacoromanian and Tartar ethnics demonstrate the continuity of the conservation process of their original cultural heritage, which is at work in both communities. The borrowing and integration through reciprocity of external elements into the Dacoromanian and Tartar music of Dobruja followed a process of adaptation to one's own spirituality and were carried out in accordance with the specific aesthetic vision of each of the two ethnic communities.

The distinctiveness of their identity lies in this very symbiosis between autochthonous elements and foreign elements intertwining into vigorous creations which have stood the test of time. For the Dacoromanians and Tartars of Dobruja, the interferences, accumulations and transformations which occurred in their folk culture are a contribution to their asserting their identity at a European and global level.

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