

The Functionalism of Morphological Elements in the Cipan Aromanian Lullaby “Dornji scumpul a`li mani”

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Abstract: *Aromanians, originating in the southern Balkans, constitute a distinct category among the Eastern Latin populations. They are currently found in Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Croatia. They immigrated into Romania at the end of the First Balkan War (1913) and settled mainly in Dobrogea. Their creative sensitivity has engendered original pieces of art regarded as genuine national treasures. Among Aromanian artistic accomplishments there is the lullaby, a unique folkloric subgenre with particular features and a precise function. My undertaking is based on the following hypothesis: if the creative process observes the functionalism of morphological elements, the pattern and the characteristic features of the lullaby, then the result will be valuable and praiseworthy.*

Key words: *octosyllabic; Aromanian dialect; musical morphology; lullaby; folklore; functionalism; traditions*

1. Introduction

Aromanians, Meglenoromanians and Istro-Romanians are Romance language-speaking ethnic groups in the Balkans who, up until the 17th century, were a predominantly oral society, whose main occupation was shepherding (BREZEANU, ZBUCHEA, 1997, 7).

Aromanians are known to have permanently cohabited with various ethnic groups and to be bilinguals. Throughout history, they have preserved their language and customs, as well as an awareness of their own identity, even under circumstances hostile to their affirming themselves as a distinct group (BREZEANU, ZBUCHEA, 1997, 48).

In the Aromanian mentality, as well as in the Romanian one, family is the only form of social organisation capable of ensuring the preservation and conveyance of all norms of life (CARAIANI, SARAMANDU, 1982, 402).

Within the frame of the community, which is regarded as an extended family, the creative sensitivity of Aromanians has produced valuable works of art, which describe the most important moments in their existence. The doină, the ballad, the dirge, the song per se, the carol, the lullaby and dance music are the folk music genres that exude a distinct charm, which stands in complete harmony with Aromanian national specificity.

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2. Historical coordinates and ethno-spiritual features of Aromanians

The origin and language of the Aromanians, as well as various aspects of their socio-economic and spiritual life, have been a subject of study for Romanian historians and linguists ever since the time of the chroniclers, starting with Miron Costin and on to Dimitrie Cantemir, Petru Maior, Bogdan Petriceicu Haşdeu. Based on available documents, Romanian historians and linguists have formulated two main theories as to the origins of Aromanians: the first one recognises them as indigenous, namely as the descendants of the ancient Romanised population, while the second posits that Aromanians came from somewhere in the north, from a region bordering Dacoromanian territories (ZBUCHEA, 1999, 8).

Romanians were known to neighbouring peoples by the ethnonym of ‘Vlachs’, irrespective of which side of the Danube they inhabited. The invasion and settling of the Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula and the creation of the first Bulgarian state in particular marked the beginning of a gradual split between Romanians on the two sides of the Danube. The homogeneous influence of the Slavic language across all Romanian dialects is explained by the prolonged symbiosis between Romanians north and south of the Danube on one side and their Slavic neighbours on the other, which proves the linguistic unity of Romanian groups in South-East Europe (BREZEANU, ZBUCHEA, 1997, 9).

Some foreign documents refer to Aromanians as a nomadic people in the Balkans, whose main occupation was raising animals. Romanian historian and philologist P. P. Panaitescu shows that Vlach shepherds in the Balkans and the Carpathians (Aromanians, Meglenoromanians, Istro-Romanians and Dacoromanians) are not nomads, as their transhumance involves connections with fixed human settlements – hamlets, villages, communes and towns (CUŞA, 1990, 19). The activities of Aromanians were much more diversified. Aside from shepherding, they traded in dairy products and handmade fabrics, and later on took up commerce and various trades.

To this day, the main ethnographic element representative for Aromanians is their traditional costume. In their native territories, clothing distinguished Aromanians from Greeks, Albanians, Turks and Slavs. In Dobrogea as well, it was dress which ensured the ethnic identity of this group in the midst of the Dacoromanians, Turks and Tartars in neighbouring villages. According to my informants, nowadays, Aromanians wear their national costumes only for special occasions, such as community events, television shows, festivals and folklore competitions.

The interviewees mentioned that men’s costumes can be viewed as simple, yet elegant, as they feature no embroideries and are a combination of black and white (CAPIDAN, 2000, 39). They consist of a wool flannel shirt worn directly on the skin, a round-necked shirt with a chenille cord around the neck, on the sleeves and breasts. A sleeveless, waist-length broadcloth waistcoat open at the front is worn on top of the shirt.

The costume is embroidered with colourful wool, decorated with galloons, laces and various trimmings. The trousers are made of wool and tight-fitting from mid-thigh down to the ankle. Colours differ according to the wearer’s age. Children’s trousers come in various colours, while elderly men wear black or navy blue. On their feet men wear knitted wool socks. A wool sash is worn on top, around the waist, its colour also depending on the person’s age (MAGIRU, 2001, 86).

My research has revealed that, in their domestic environment, Aromanians used to wear clothes made of home-spun and home-woven wool. For public holidays or community celebrations, the women in well-off families would have garments made by renowned tailors out of high-quality materials (velvet and silk). The tailors would travel to their client’s home and make clothes for the entire family.

Women’s traditional costumes must be regarded as a form of artistic expression. The headdress consists of a cap made of home-woven broadcloth, with thread-embroidered edges, decorated with silver or gold coins and beads of different colours. The silver or gold ornaments cover the middle of the forehead. The adornments made out of coloured beads are created using a special Aromanian technique.

After the age of forty, a woman is considered to count herself among the elderly and changes her cap for a head-kerchief made of colourful silk meant to hold her hair. A black headscarf is worn on top. Old women wear a white head-kerchief instead of a colourful one under the black headscarf. Exquisitely knitted, bright-coloured wool socks are worn on the feet. The body is covered by a shirt and a sleeveless wool dress. Another item which is part of the costume is the frock, made of home-woven black-wool cloth. The bottom is made of flared gussets, which make for an elegant figure. The breast, neck area, sleeves and bottom of the costume, as well as the areas around the pockets, are decorated with bright-coloured geometric motifs (MAGIRU, 2001, 90).

Another piece included a woman’s costume is the black, sleeveless waistcoat, decorated with chenille cord and silver or gold-thread embroidery. The final item is the beautifully decorated wool apron, worn on top. The colour of the apron usually matches the one of the dress. Aside from their bright colours, festive aprons also feature a series of lace trimmings, industrial laces applied on three sides, metallic gold or silver-thread insertions and the ever-present lace around the edges. A belt with silver buckles is worn around the waist (MAGIRU, 2001, 94).

Isolated and relatively closed groups, such as shepherd communities, preserved ancient practices which were distilled into customs regarding the cycle of life (birth, marriage, death), shepherding, etc. The first descriptions of these customs date back to the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Although brief and incomplete, they are based on direct information gathered from Aromanians in Macedonia by folklorist and ethnographer T. T. Burada.

All those who have studied the customs of family life and the rituals of Romanians north and south of the Danube noticed that there are very significant similarities between them, as they unfold according to an almost identical pattern.

In the second half of the 20th century, the evolution of society as a whole brought about a shift from the rural to the urban look and lifestyle. This transformation contributed to the decline of the traditional way of life and marked the beginning of a modern lifestyle, which generated profound, sometimes irreversible, changes within the communities in Dobrogea. My interviewees reported that there has been a loosening of the rigorous norms of life observed and perpetuated along the centuries.

Renouncing the archaic lifestyle facilitated the mixing of traditions and notions from patriarchal times with recent ones, which are centred on modernism, opulence, the spectacular and the exotic.

The emancipation of the young generations, which began in the last decades of the previous century, has contributed to the decline and even desertion of the customs imposed by age, gender, origins, mentalities, traditions, culture and religion, of everything deemed obsolete and anachronous. What has been preserved to this day is only those ethnographic and artistic manifestations which have been crystallised into enduring patterns (OPREA, 2002, 298), allowing Aromanians to define and maintain their identity in the typically multiethnic space of Dobrogea.

During my scientific undertaking, I encountered difficulties in retrieving and collecting lullabies, due to the diminished number of people still singing them. I noticed that the number of individuals able to provide information about any of the genres and subgenres of Aromanian folklore has dropped. First-hand witnesses of bygone times are ever fewer, as lately the young generations have lost contact with life in their native villages and shown no more interest in receiving, preserving and passing on cultural assets and the patriarchal way of life.

Another negative aspect that I ascertained during my field research in Aromanian communities is the disappearance from their midst of creators and performers of the traditional repertoire. There are two coexisting types of songs which I observed in their musical repertoire:

- the first type consists of the initial repertoire brought to Dobrogea four or five generations ago from the Aromanians' places of origin. This requires advanced knowledge and singing skills (more exactly, polyphonic singing and the nasal vocal emission specific to Aromanians). This typical manner of singing was also in harmony with the accompanying sound of the bagpipe, the traditional instrument of Aromanian shepherds. The limited technical capabilities of that instrument did not constitute a hindrance, as they were surpassed by the vocal skill and virtuosity of the vocalist or vocalists. Inventiveness, creativity and vocal virtuosity are qualities which only the older vocalists still possess;

- the second type is recent and modern, features prominent Balkan influences and is much easier to execute vocally. Such music can be sung without having to resort to special emission and execution techniques. The instruments found in current ensembles are modern as well and possess superior technical features (electrical keyboard instruments, accordions, percussion instruments, violins).

The choreography of Aromanian dances has suffered the same regressive transformation. At the same time as the old singing style was abandoned, changes occurred in the dance style as well. The traditional dance steps and figures underwent a process of gradual modernisation, which consisted of discarding everything that had to do with skill and dexterity in the execution of a choreography stressing virtuosity and creativity. Nowadays, the dance steps and figures preserve certain traditional choreographic elements, but feature a lower degree of difficulty.

As for contamination by influences external to the community, it was not impeded by the unitary and dynamic character of the Aromanian musical and choreographic repertoire.

Currently, some of the songs and dances, customs or sets of rituals have been forgotten, while others were kept latent in Aromanian collective memory, only to be revived in the first years after the events of 1989. It is beneficial to all Aromanian ethnics to resume all the identity practices which can be retrieved from the memory of the community, even if some of them can no longer be presented in their initial form, but must be adapted to present realities.

3. The functionality of the lullaby

Created for children by adults, lullabies constitute a unique folkloric subgenre with specific features and a precise function (OPREA, 2002, 287). Vocal performance is accompanied by a smooth rocking movement either from side to side or up and down, in the arms or in a cradle, with the purpose of aiding the baby to fall asleep. Performing a lullaby involves adopting a special behaviour and emotional state, thus creating an atmosphere conducive to falling asleep. This subgenre of folklore has been perpetuated by observing certain archaic structural characteristics, which have contributed to confining lullabies into fixed patterns. The poetic texts are abundant in onomatopoeia, sleep-inducing and invoking formulae, as well as regular text. The most recurrent exclamation is ‘*nani-nani*’, which is also found in the songs of the Greeks and of Latin peoples (OPREA, 2002, 288).

However, within the symbiosis between text and tune, the importance of the tune is obvious. In order for a traditional piece of music to be included in the category of lullabies, it must exhibit the following characteristics:

- the musical motifs must be quantitatively limited and generated by cells sequenced in an identical or varied way;

- the elements which make up the melody – the musical motifs and the intervals, combined with the interpretative particularities – the agogics and dynamics, must serve the function of the song, namely the passage from a waking to a sleeping state;

- there must be an established concordance between the elements of the melody and those of the giusto-syllabic rhythm;

- the rhythmic formulae must result either from the ostinato repetition of the iambic or pyrrhic foot or from the alternation of the two.

4. Structural and formal analysis of the lullaby “Dornji scumpul a`li mani”

The research strategies I opted for in order to attain my established goal were the individual interview, the crossed interview and the conversation. I learned from my informants that the text of the lullaby ‘Dornji scumpul a`li mani’ was inspired by the poem ‘*Nani, nani*’ by Aromanian poet Nuși Tului (1872-1941), born in Avdela, Greece. The music was written by traditional music composer and performer Hrista Lupci, an Aromanian born in Hagilar village (now called Lăstunii), in Tulcea county, in 1949. He currently lives in the city of Constanța and, through his work as a creator and performer of Aromanian folk music, is contributing to strengthening the identity of the Aromanian community in Dobrogea, as well as in the rest of the country. Hrista Lupci confessed to me that he had been attracted by Aromanian folk music ever since he was a child and that he approached all of its genres and subgenres with dedication. As one intimately familiar with the structural characteristics of the lullaby, he managed to maintain the consecrated pattern of the melodic line characteristic of this musical subgenre: a mode scarce in sounds, the giusto-syllabic rhythm resulting from the alternation between pyrrhic and iambic feet and the typical tempo.

Dorņji scumpul a'li mani

Music: Hrista Lupci

Lyrics: Nuși Tului

Andante ♩=80 M.M.



Dor-ņji scum-pul a'-li ma-ni, Dor-ņji al-ba mea fi-da-ni.

Pâ-nâ zi-nâ di-mi-neat-sa, Făni tu lea-găn na-ni, na-ni.

Va's cresht-sâ ca-lesh ca ta-ta, 'nalt la trup, mu-shat la fat-sâ,

Ca tran-da-fi-lâ mu-sha-tâ, Ca lu-tsea-fir di dim-neat-sa.

Dor-ņji l'al-bul a'-li ma-ni, Dor-ņji scum-pa mea fi-da-ni.

Pâ-nâ zi-nâ di-mi-neat-sa, Fă-ni tu lea-găn na-ni, na-ni.

Dorņji scumpul a'li mani,
Dorņji alba mea fidani.
Pânâ zinâ dimineatsa,
Făni tu leagăn nani, nani.

Sleep, my darling,
Sleep, my white lad.
Sleep till morning,
Go nani-nani in the cradle.

Va's creshtsâ calesh ca tata,	You will grow to be fair-haired as your father,
'nalt la trup, mushat la fatsâ,	Tall of stature and fair of face,
Ca trandafilâ mushatâ,	Like a beautiful rose,
Ca lutseafir di dimneatsa.	Like the morning star.

Dornji l'albul a'li mani,	Sleep my white,
Dornji scumpa mea fidani.	Sleep, my precious lad.
Pânâ zinâ dimineatsa,	Sleep till morning,
Făni tu leagăn nani, nani.	Go nani-nani in the cradle.

The tempo at which the lullaby ‘Dornji scumpul a’li mani’ is performed is the Andante, at 80 M.M. the quarter.

The following literary devices and means of expression were used in the poetic text: explanatory parallelism, the repetition of lines in the melodic stanza, metaphors. All these add to the beauty of the lyrics, which portray the family as the child’s universe.

The pattern of the lyrics is octosyllabic and acatalectic. The coincidence between the dimension of the melodic row and that of the octosyllabic poetic line is determined by the relationship between lines and musical rows.

The melodic stanza consists of five lines, as a result of the repetition of the fourth line, which generates the chorus of the lullaby. The disyllabic exclamation ‘*nani-nani*’ appears in the first and third stanzas, each time at the end of the final line.

The rhythm is giusto-syllabic and the melodic stanza has a ternary form, of the type ABCAA.

The mode of the lullaby’s melody consists of the diatonic pentachord La-Si-Do₁-Re₁-Mi₁. There are three musical motifs which make up the four phrases of the lullaby. The first motif is repeated at the end, thus forming the fourth musical phrase. It appears that the motifs are made up of two cells with discrete profiles. The cells which form the motifs are sequenced in an identical or varied manner, while the sounds which make up the cells are enhanced by means of precise functions within the mode of the lullaby.

The three motifs are featured as follows:

- motif 1, heard at the beginning of the three stanzas of the lullaby, represents phrase A; it is identical in the first two stanzas and varies in the third;
- motif 2, which represents phrase B, varies in the second and third stanza;
- motif 3, which coincides with phrase C, is featured in a varied form in the second and third stanza.

The melodic stanza is rounded off by the repetition of phrase A, which only varies in the third stanza.

The melodic line of the lullaby is a sinuous one, mainly characterised by a descending melodic profile of the musical cells in first two phrases. At first, the leap of a descending major third Mi₁-Do₁ is followed by a descending melodic profile. The second phrase has an ascending profile, while the leap of a minor third towards the end is heard successively by the repeated realisation of the sound Fa₁. The third musical phrase, C, features no leap of a third, as it is realised by means of a descending musical profile.

The sounds Mi₁ and Re₁ take on the function of recitation string, due to their persistent recurrence. Another recognisable function featured in the melody is that of *pien*. This is

assigned to the sound Fa₁, which is only heard in the second phrase of the lullaby. The melodic formulae are structured by intervals of a third, fourth and fifth. The caesurae are placed at the end of each phrase, where the duration of a dotted fourth appears. The ambitus is a minor sixth.

The inner cadenzas of the first three musical phrases are realised as follows: on the first step, through a descending major second (Si-La); on the fifth step, through a descending minor second (Fa₁-Mi₁); on the second step, through a descending minor second (Do₁-Si).

The final cadenza is realised on the first step of the mode, though a descending minor third (Do₁-La). The end of the song is marked by a distinctive melodic passage which can be regarded as an upper gruppetto, Re₁-Do₁-si-Do₁, preceding the final sound.

5. Conclusions

I have selected the lullaby 'Dornji scumpul a`li mani' from the repertoire of the Aromanians in Dobrogea in order to identify and analyse the morphological elements characteristic for this folkloric subgenre. The fact that the authors of the lyrics and melody of the lullaby are known has determined me to consider it as belonging to the community's relatively recent repertoire.

My undertaking is based on the following hypothesis: if the creative process observes the functionalism of morphological elements, the pattern and characteristic features of the lullaby, then the result will be valuable and praiseworthy.

The analysis of the text and the melody has underscored the following criteria to be observed upon creating a lullaby in accordance with the folkloric subgenre:

- the tempo: Andante, of 80 M.M. the quarter;
- employing the following literary devices and means of expression in the text: explanatory parallelism, the repetition of lines in the melodic stanza, metaphors;
- the pattern of the lyrics – octosyllabic, acatalectic;
- using the disyllabic exclamation '*nani-nani*';
- the giusto-syllabic rhythm;
- a melodic stanza with a fixed form, of the ternary type ABCAA;
- a descending melodic profile of the musical cells;
- using major and minor thirds in a descending melodic profile;
- melodic formulae structured according to intervals of a third, fourth and fifth;
- placing the caesurae at the end of each phrase;
- a reduced ambitus (of a minor sixth);
- inner cadenzas and final cadenza realised by means of a descending melodic profile.

The existence of Romanian musical dialects which developed outside the space in which the Dacoromanian people was formed is for our traditional culture a source of genuine records of Romanian spirituality. The endurance of Aromanian traditional creations until present times is proof of their cultural unity and of their tenacity in defending their cultural heritage throughout the centuries. The fact that creators of folklore still exist shows that the existing generations of Aromanians feel at home in Dobrogea and enjoy the peace required to produce authentic cultural assets.

List of informants

Ana Maria Anagnosti, born in Babadag, Tulcea county, in 1979, folk-singing teacher

Hrista Lupci, born in Hagilar village (currently Lăstunii), Tulcea county, in 1949, retired

Mirela Goga, born in Constanța in 1982, coordinator of the Aromanian dance ensemble ‘Iholu’

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