

Structural Features Present in Laments from Bacău County

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Abstract: *Ancient thinking does not consider death as an end of the soul and body, but as a passage followed by another stage of existence. The pathway to heaven begins on earth with the first preparations that are made by the living for the deceased. The funeral repertoire comprises three musical species that have distinctive features both on the functional plane and regarding the themes and style. These are: the lament (funeral song), the ritual-ceremonial song, and the verș (funeral peasant song). Along the multitude of customs present in the funeral ritual, in the Bacău area there is a melodic type of lament, which differs greatly from the other parts of the country given its free form containing lyrics with supernumerary syllables, resulting in metric prose, or even prose proper.*

Key-words: *lament, free form, supernumerary syllables, metric prose, melodic type*

1. Introduction

In the ethnology of all peoples there were delimited three rites that accompany the main “thresholds” of the important stages in human life: birth, marriage, and death (Stoian-Irimie, 2009, 22). Given the mystery and the unknown it is surrounded with, death has always been regarded as one of the most important events in the history of mankind. The ancient man does not perceive death as a complete end of the soul, but as a mere passage into another world, equally real, passing into a new stage of existence.

To ease this passage, and the reintegration beyond be as complete as possible, mankind has created innumerable rituals that accompany the funeral, customs that are strictly observed, especially in rural areas. It is believed that there are some natural ties between the deceased and the living, which extend beyond death, so that they will have to be mentioned by ritual anamnesis (Stoian-Irimie, 2009, 22). Among other scholars, Gennep delineated in his study (Gennep, 1996, 22) three phases of the passage rites: of separation (preliminary), a marginal (liminal) phase, and of incorporation, aggregation (postliminal). The burial ritual combines these categories, and the relatives of the deceased provide by symbol objects and texts the separation of the deceased from the living world and the passage to the after world and his integration within.

2. Musical repertoire

In the musical practice, the funerary repertoire comprises three literary-musical species that can be distinguished both on a functional and on a thematic-stylistic level. These are: bocetele (laments), ritual-ceremonial songs and verșurile. The laments are distinguished from the ritual songs by a multitude of features: they are performed at any moment, unlike the ritual songs that are performed only at certain moments of the ceremony; the laments are sung individually, and the ritual songs are performed only in groups by women; from the thematic point of view, even if the accent falls on the personal feelings of the woman who sings the lament, elements that reflect the general concept of the continuation of life after death can be encountered, unlike the ritual songs that arise from the nature of the funeral act.

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In Bacău County, the funerary repertoire that predominates in funerals is the lament. It is a lyrical species with a cathartic function and is interpreted individually by the mourner women. The main function of the laments is to express the feeling of pain that occurs due to the loss of a loved one. In the Bacău area, there are laments sung when one dies: for three days, while the body is kept in the house (the laments are sung at the bedside of the deceased), when he is taken out of the house, on the way to the cemetery, when he is buried in the grave and for a further 40 days following the funeral. In some villages in Bacău, laments are sung also one year after the death or on the occasion of the memorial service held on different dates after the funeral.

3. The literary content of the lament

Due to the emphasis placed on the act of lamenting, in the entire Bacău County there were identified a number of literary texts, particularly nuanced in meaning and complexity, which are related to the most important moments in the life of the deceased, but at the same time are related to the sorrow experienced by those left behind.

In the researched area, laments do not have a fixed form, being composed on the moment or beforehand. They have a multitude of fixed elements, to which are added improvised items, on the spot, depending on the situation.

The laments encountered have a precise recipient: for the mother, father, brother, or sister of the deceased, each containing an improvisation of thematic motifs, both general and particular, as can be seen in the lament presented below, which was chosen for analysis:

Bocet la mamă

inf. Maria Haicu, 83 ani

loc. Berzunți, Bacău
cules în ianuarie, 2019

$\text{♩} = 176$

i, Ma-mî, ma-mî și iar ma- ma - mî, Cî ta - ri m-ai lă - sat di ni - cî, ma - mî,

Și m-ai lă-sat di triș-pi ani, ma-mî, N-am mai a-vut ni-lî di la ma - mî, Ma - mî, ma - mî, i,

Și m-ai lă - sat stră - i - nî, Ma - mî, ma - mî, Și-a - mă - ră - tî, ma - mî, _

Și nia nu ni-o zâs ni-mi-nia, ma-mî, Hai la ma-ma dra - gu ma - mi, Ma - mî, ma - mî,

C-am tră - it a - mă - ră - tî, Ma mî, și-a mă - ră - tă, in-tru-n pă - mânt, ma - mă, ăi,

Cî ta - ri ni dor, ma-mî di ba-za ta sî ț-o văd, ma - mî, Da, n-am di-un-di, ma-mî,
 Ma- măi, ma-măi, C-ai strâns tăți fră-ța - uo - rii nei cu ti-ni-a-co - lo, ma - mî, -
 Și pi mi-ni m-ai la-sat a-mă-râ - tî, ma-mî, Și sân-gu - ri - cî, Ma - mî, ma- mî, da,
 Vi - nî ma - mă ba - răm noap - tea pin ghis la mi - ni, ma - mî,
 Și mai stăi di vor - bî cu mi - ni, ma-mî, Cî ta -ri-s stră - i - nî, ma - mî,
 Și n-am frați, și n-am su-rori, ma-mî, ăi, Vi-nî ma-mî sî mai stăm, Cî ta-ri ni-i dor, ma-mî,
 Di fă - țâ - șoa - ra ta, Și di mâ - nu - țâ - li tă - li-a - ce - lea, ma - mî,
 Ca - ri m-au cres - cut, Ma - mî, ma - mî și iar ma - mî.

Fig.1 Lamentation song (for mother) – Bacău Region

4. Versification of laments in Bacău County

In most areas of the country the lyrics of the laments have 7-8 syllables, metrically organized in in pyrrhic tetrapodic verses with catalectic and catalectic forms, only scarcely being encountered laments with verses of 5-6 syllables, metrically organized in the tripodic verses with catalectic and catalectic forms. In the researched area, things are quite different from the ones mentioned.

Here one encounters verses with supernumerary syllables or even octosyllabic and heptasyllabic lines that do not fit metrically:

Da, n-am di-un-di, ma-mî (7)

In the same context, we notice verses that fit metrically, forming two-syllable pyrrhic feet, the first being stressed, and the second unstressed:

Hai, la ma-ma, dra-gu ma-mi (8)

Verses with supernumerary syllables confer the specific features of these laments, which take a prose aspect:

Vi-nî, ma-mă ba-răm noap-tea pin ghis la mi-ni, ma-mî (15)

The additional anacrusis is encountered in the analysed material, but on an optional basis. Anacruses are sung on:

- the vocal i
- the monosyllables da, ăi.

They may be placed on the first degree or on different scale degrees:



The invocations are present in large numbers in the analysed lament. Usually they do not have a fixed place within the literary texts, so they may appear at the beginning or at the end of a melodic line. In most cases, invocations are bestowed with a refrain character:

Cî tari m-ai lăsat di nicî, mamî,

.....
Și sânguricî, mamî, mamî,

.....
*Cari m-au crescut,
Mamî, mamî și iar mamî.*

We also encounter some language peculiarities in the lyrics of the funeral repertoire:

- ă at the end of the word or verse is turned into î: mamî, străinî, sânguricî;
- e at the end of the word turns into i: undi, tari.

5. The relationship between the text and the melodic line from a structural point of view

The lament analysed, as well as all the laments in Bacău area, have a free form, and two literary entities can be applied under one melodic breath.

If the laments with a fixed form encountered in other parts of Moldova preserve the tetrapodic organization of 7-8 syllables, with a pyrrhic structure, the ones in Bacău County contain texts in prose or a metric prose that denotes a varied number of syllables (in the case of the lament under analysis, there are 4 to 16 syllables):

*Ma-măi, ma-măi. (4)**Cî ta-ri ni dor ma-mî di ba-za ta sî ț-o văd, ma-mî. (16)*

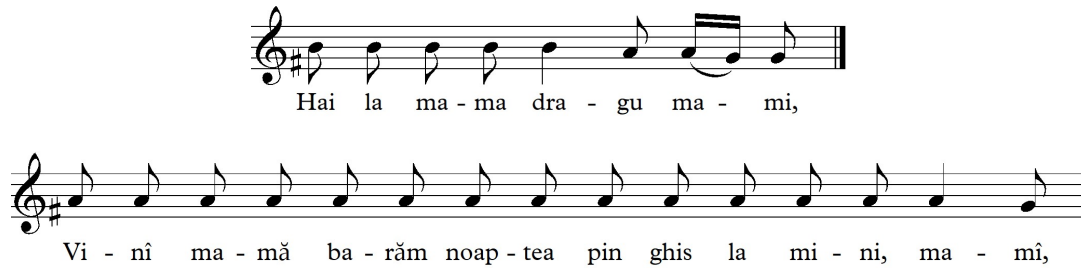
What we encounter in the analysed material are improvisations adapted on the moment by the mourner woman, depending on the given situation.

In free laments the accents do not appear in an organized manner, and the stressed syllables can be noticed especially due to the higher intonation of the woman or by the lengthy additions at the end of the melodic line.

In some cases, after a stress on the first sound that is sung in the high register, a recto tono recitative appears, bringing a relaxation:



During the performance of a recto tono recitative, we notice a higher value sound on which is placed the melodic accent:



Hai la ma - ma dra - gu ma - mi,
Vi - ni ma - mă ba - răm noap - tea pin ghis la mi - ni, ma - mi,

After starting an upward motion, the melodic accent is set on the first sound in the high register, which marks the beginning of the recto tono recitative:



Cî ta - ri ni dor, ma - mi di ba - za ta sî ț-o văd, ma - mi,

In this analysis, we come across verses overloaded from the point of view of the syllables and a musically free form. Thus, articulation can be met in a few verses without interruption, producing a recitative. In such cases, it is not mandatory for a melodic accent to be present on each line, but it can also be placed in the following line, or even at the end, on a longer note value.

As a conclusion, we note that in laments where the recto tono recitative predominates, the melodic accents are rarely encountered or may even not be present.

6. Rhythmic structure

The rhythm of the laments is free (*parlando* or in some cases alternating with *rubato*). The basic pulses are the eighths, and sometimes additions of indeterminate duration are inserted. The place of the additions varies, they can be placed both within the melodic line, but mostly at the end of the line. Expansions encountered within the melodic lines appear on different syllables, but do not have very high values, compared to the additions at the end of a line.

The rhythm of free-form laments bears values of eighths, where predominate long recitatives (sometimes along a few melodic lines), uninterrupted by cadences.



Nonetheless we also note some inner expansions on various sounds. These additions do not have a fixed position on a particular syllable, but may appear on any syllable, depending on the poetic text and the woman's desire to accentuate a specific word.



7. Sound structures

From a modal point of view, the sound material is rather limited. There are usually employed oligochord scales, where the sound material revolves around the G-A-B pyknon. An example in this sense is also the lament under analysis, where a tetratony with sonorous substrate and the final cadence on E is encountered. Here we meet the F# pien note which occurs only during the cadence on E, and the C pien, that is encountered in a single melodic line.



Due to the fact that the sound systems contain only a few sounds, materializing in the vast majority of cases in oligochord modes, we may say that this category belongs to an archaic layer.

8. Form

In Bacău County, the laments encountered have a free form, where improvisation is predominant in terms of both the melodic line and the text. In the present case, we find a closed free form, which appears rather sporadically in other areas of Moldova. This is characterized by the occurrence during the discourse of at least one melodic line with final cadence role, which is placed at the end of each elastic stanza. Along with the final melodic line, the other melodic lines develop in a completely free manner.

9. Conclusions

The laments in the ethno-folkloric area of Bacău County are quite special from the other areas, due to the fact that most of the morphological features are different. As a result of the analysis, the following conclusions were reached:

- regarding the literary texts of the laments, in the present case there are verses with supernumerary syllables, resulting in a prose, compared to the laments in the other areas, where lines with 7-8 syllables are present, resulting in pyrrhic tetrapodies with acatalectic and catalectic forms;

- referring to the relationship between text and melody, from a structural point of view, we found that there is a free form that contains unversified lines, compared to the other areas where a fixed form is present, with versified texts;

- the rhythm under analysis is free, the basic pulses being the eighths, with the installation of some final additions or within the melodic lines, the final ones marking the conclusion of a line or a stanza;

- the sound material is a very unified one in general, oligochords or pentatonies being present;

- the form is a closed free one, where improvisation is predominant both in terms of text and melody, unlike the other areas where there is a strophic form with 2-4 melodic lines;

In conclusion, this type of laments differs from other parts of Moldova, the reason being still unknown, a presumption being related to the influence of the Csango minority in Bacău County, a phenomenon that played an important role in their implementation.

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