

The coexistence of separation and integration rites in the Nuptial repertoire of the Cipan Aromanians in Dobruja

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Abstract: Dobruja hosts the most numerous Aromanian community in Romania. In her book *Dodecalog al aromânilor (Dodecalogue of the Aromanians)*, philologist Matilda Caragiu Marioţeanu defines Aromanians as having always been South-Danubian and being the descendants of the populations of South-Eastern Europe either Romanised or colonised by the Romans (Macedonians, Greeks, Thracians, Illyrians). Aromanian culture is supported by tradition and orality, as all cultural assets are created, preserved and conveyed by word of mouth. For the Cipan Aromanian community, the wedding is the most important event in a person's journey of development. Folklorist Gheorghe Oprea, in his vast work called *Folclorul muzical românesc (Romanian Musical Folklore)*, points out that all those involved in this event take special care to observe the customs, traditions and sequence of rituals, which hold specific purposes.

In this study I will present the ritual song "Tora ishii, mălim la cor" (I have now gone out to the hora², mother), which is performed vocally when the bride, accompanied by the bridegroom, leaves her parent's home and joins the hora, together with the guests.

Keywords: *ethnomusicology, folklore, wedding songs, traditions, threnody.*

1. Introduction

In the multi-ethnic environment characteristic of the Dobruja region, the traditional oral culture of Cipan Aromanians could well have been characterised as impenetrable and conservative in relation to the other traditional oral cultures. This was the case for the generations preceding the installation of the communist regime and the transformations it brought about.

In their native villages and subsequently in their Dobruja villages, Cipan Aromanian communities carried out their existence according to ancestral

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² T.n.: The *hora* is a folk dance performed in a linked circle.

traditions and rituals, which bestowed significance and meaning on any stage of life. Gradually, the patriarchal way of life and interhuman relations were irreparably affected by the evolution of Romanian society and the disappearance of traditional villages. Emancipation brought about the discarding of the customs, ceremonies and rites which no longer had a connection to the social and cultural, historical, religious or economic context in which Cipan Aromanians lived together with neighbouring ethnic groups.

School instruction, military service, migration towards fast-developing urban centres capable of providing a better life, marriages to persons outside the community and independence from parents are just a few of the factors which contributed to the significant changes in Cipan Aromanian mentality and way of life.

This study focuses on the wedding, which is a paramount event in the lives of Cipan Aromanians. Whereas, in the past, weddings followed a rigorous pattern, observing a series of customs and practices, today the only elements they preserve are the “archaic episodes”, which have kept their place within the enduring pattern of the nuptial spectacle (OPREA, 2002, 299).

The dynamic of the customs, ceremonies and rites generates a reconfiguration of the folkloric manifestations characteristic of the nuptial repertoire, so that some of the episodes, considered anachronic, no longer have a “purpose” and are therefore eliminated or replaced with new, “modern” ones.

2. A diachronic evaluation of the “nuptial spectacle” of Cipan Aromanians in Dobruja

As we know, the wedding represents an act of passage, “a threshold” along a person’s life cycle. In light of Arnold Van Gennep’s theory, the marriage ceremony marks a series of passages (Gennep 1998, 107) which are part of a perpetual formative process that people consciously participate in. Rites and rituals are considered to be components of a shaping system which places the environment and the individual in a relationship of mutual dependency. This system is built based on a model of the world which will be updated repeatedly (Suiogan 2006, 20).

I learned from those I have interviewed that the Cipan Aromanian wedding still preserves the three main stages considered to be thresholds leading from one state to another, which are consciously crossed by the main actors involved – the bride and groom. Each of these stages comprises three types of rites: preliminary, liminary and postliminary. Among the preliminary rites there are: asking for the girl’s hand in marriage, setting the wedding date, inviting the members of the community (which are seen as an extended family) to the wedding, preparing the ceremonial wedding garments, designating the people who will play specific parts

in the nuptial ceremony – godparents, maids of honour and best men, choosing and preparing the wedding venue, the photographer, and the band to play at the wedding, preparing the kalachs³ etc. Some of the liminary rites are: dressing up the bridal pair, giving gifts, ritual exchanges, the religious ceremony, the small feast (at the bride's home), giving out gifts, the hora, showing off the dowry, the bride's departure from her parent's home, the bridal pair's journey to the groom's home and their reception there, the great feast, etc. The most important postliminary moments have to do with the new family visiting the bride's and the groom's parents, the godparents taking the young married couple to church and the young couple's participation in other community events.

Today, the bride and groom are actively involved in the unfurling of the wedding rites of passage (the engagement, the wedding per se and the new family's integration into society).

They are the ones who decide on mutual agreement to move from the state of dependency on their own families to independency by forming their own family, while consulting the parents is a mere formality. Out of respect for their parents, young Aromanians who have become separated from their family home for various reasons (they are studying or working in various cities either at home or abroad) do not let their families know that they are living together with a partner, even if it may be a person from the same ethnic group. To this day, it is difficult for a family to accept that their son or daughter should have a relationship with a person of a religion other than the Christian orthodox one.

In the past few years, Cipan Aromanian weddings have been turned into veritable shows as well, which has led to certain ritual episodes being discarded and to others being introduced.

New elements have emerged, borrowed from the Dacoromanian majority population or from cultures outside of Europe (the wedding dance, the wedding cake, the luxury limousine taking the bridal pair and godparents to the church and the restaurant, the alcohol bar, the instrumental quartet playing classical or international music in the opening of the restaurant party, the fireworks etc.). Nothing shocks the community any more, although until recently it was considered closed, impenetrable and stable; everything is allowed, especially in the case of mixed marriages (an Aromanian and a Dacoromanian, an Aromanian and a European).

This study focuses on the final stage of the ritual regarding the bride's separation from her family, more exactly on the moment when she goes out to join the hora.

“Tora ishii, mălim la cor” - “I have now gone out to the hora, mother” is a sad

³ T.n.: A kalach is a type of wheel-shaped braided bread.

song which was sung by musicians (called *lăutari*) in the name of the bride at the moment when she stepped out of her parent's yard, accompanied by the groom and his party, and joined the hora.

It was the last song performed at the bride's home and it expressed the young girl's pain and fear of the unknown. Her participation in the dance consecrated her act of joining her new family and breaking away from her own family and home. The rites regarding the bride's separation from the old (social and family) context finished with the bridal party going to church, where, through the marriage ceremony, the uncertain status of the young bride was regulated.

The present study is based on an interview I conducted two months ago with the Agora and Constantin Beca family in Constanța, as well as with their daughter, Ana Maria Anagnosti. Mr. Constantin Beca used to be the vocalist of the band "Pindul". He informed me that the band, in its initial 1970s formula, was made up of 4 players (two guitarists, a drummer and a keyboardist) and a vocalist.

For almost two decades (from 1970 until 1989), they performed at Aromanian weddings and he confessed that they would rigorously follow the stages of the rituals and the customs passed down to them from generation to generation. As his wife, Mrs. Agora Beca, said, this should be no surprise, as some of the members of the wedding party had come to Dobruja from their native lands in Greece or the Cadrilater (Southern Dobruja, north-eastern Bulgaria), and the rules governing the way in which young people could form a family were still dictated by the parents.

Mr. Constantin Beca also confessed his regret that traditional music has of late been "embellished" or arranged to match the current tastes of the community. While some songs have been discarded, others have moved from the sphere of ritual songs "meant to be listened to" to the sphere of "dance songs". I noticed that, for the Cipan Aromanians I interviewed, now in their latter years, such a change constitutes a danger, yet they accept any modifications with resignation, saying that "it is better for it to be sung this way rather than to be discarded from our repertoire".

3. Stylistic analysis of the ritual song "Tora ishii, mălim la cor" - "I have now gone out to the hora, mother"

In this study, I will analyse the song "Tora ishii, mălim la cor" - "I have now gone out to the hora, mother", as it is one of the ritual songs which followed the very course described above and thus was removed from the category of songs to be listened to and included in the category of dance songs.

This song is proof of the coexistence of separation and integration rites in the nuptial repertoire of Cipan Aromanians in Dobruja, as it bears the dual significance of the young bride's separation from her old condition, on the one hand, and her adherence to her new condition, namely that of an accepted member of the groom's extended family and an acknowledged main factor in the perpetuation of the new family, on the other.

Mr. Constantin Beca, together with his wife and daughter, performed this song for me such as it was sung at Cipan Aromanian weddings over 35 years ago. The performance was skilful, as all three demonstrated veritable vocal qualities and accuracy as to the solemnity demanded by the song.

The song has five stanzas and is performed at a *largo tempo*, at 54 M.M. the eighth. The configuration of the song gives solemnity to its performance, even though it is sung by a group. The following aspects point to the fact that this song was "meant to be listened to" and not "danced to", as it is happening today: the stepwise melodic movement, the predilection for intervals of a minor third (Re1-Fa1) and major third (Do1-Mi1), the use of simple anterior and posterior appoggiaturas and of the glissando. All of these contribute to creating a lyrical atmosphere characteristic for this ritual song. The performance needs to convey the young bride's pain and fear of the unknown, as she is directly affected by the separation from her family universe, from the safety and comfort it entails. The syllabic melodic line reveals a *parlando-rubato* rhythm. This shows that the melody belongs in the category of ritual songs performed by a group (OPREA, 2002, 233), as it was performed by my informants.

Each stanza consists of four lines grouped in pairs. The poetic-musical stanza, which uses metaphors as its means of expression, is created by repeating the last two lines. The line - musical row relationship determines the coincidence between the size of the melodic row and that of the poetic line. The pattern of the lines is heptasyllabic, but, through an isometric transformation, it fits into an octosyllabic pattern. This is made possible by adapting the text with the aid of the bisyllabic chorus "*le le*" featured in the second line in stanzas I, III and IV. We may deduce that the melody imposed its own manner of organisation, since its pattern precedes the creation process of ritual songs. The analysis of the song will reveal that it bears certain similarities to the *doină* or to wailing songs.

Largo ♩=54

To - ra i - shii, To - ra i - shii, mă - lim la cor, le le.
 To - ra i - shii, To - ra i - shii mă - lim la cor.
 Va - nji dzâcu sh'un câ... Va'nji dzâc sh'un cân-tic nji - lă...,
 of le le. Va - nji dzâcu sh'un câ... Va'nji dzâc sh'un
 cân-tic nji - lă - osu. Mul - tu'i pă - ră - pu - si - tu,
 Lea fea-tă lea mu - sha - tă, lea. Mul - tu'i pă - ră - pu - si - tu,
 Lea fea-tă cu'o-cliu lai. Va - nji fac mun - tsăi... Va'nji fac
 mun - tsă - i tas plân - gă, le le. Va'nji fac mun - tsăi... Va'nji
 fac mun-tsă - i tas plân-gă. Sh - câm-pur-li s'la - cră-mea-dză,

Lea, fea - tă, lea mu - sha - tă, lea.

Sh'câm - pur - li s'la - cră - mea-dză, Lea, fea-tă cu'o-cliu lai.

Tora ishii, mălim la cor / I have now gone out to the hora, mother

Source: Constantin Beca

Tora ishii,
Tora ishii, mălim la cor, le le.

I have now gone,
I have now gone out to the hora,
mother, *le le*.

Tora ishii,
Tora ishii mălim la cor.

I have now gone,
I have now gone out to the hora,
mother.

Va-nji dzâcu sh'un câ...
Va-nji dzâc sh'un cântic njilă...of le le.
Va-nji dzâcu sh'un câ...
Va-nji dzâc sh'un cântic njilăosu.

I will sing a so...
I will sing a touching song, *le le*.
I will sing a so...
I will sing a touching song.

Multu'i părăpusitu,
Lea feată lea mushată.
Multu'i părăpusitu,
Lea feată cu ocliu lai.

It is very sad,
Lo, beautiful girl.
It is very sad,
Lo, black-eyed girl.

Va-nji fac muntsăi...
Va-nji fac muntsăi tas plângă, le le.
Va-nji fac muntsăi...
Va-nji fac muntsăi tas plângă.

I will make the mountains...
I will make the mountains cry, *le le*.
I will make the mountains...
I will make the mountains cry.

Sh-câmpurli s'lacrameadză,
Lea feată, lea mushată.
Sh-câmpurli s'lacrameadză,
Lea feată cu ocliu lai.

And the plains shed tears,
Lo, beautiful girl.
And the plains shed tears,
Lo, black-eyed girl.

The melody is structured based on identical and varying melodic-rhythmic cells and has a sinuous outline, generated by the weight of the intervals of a second. The melodic stanza has a fixed, primary-type form: AAvAvAv.

The mode consists of a hemitonic diatonic tetrachord of a major mode: Do1-Re1-Mi1-Fa1. The repetition of the sounds Do1 and Re1 impart stability to the melody, each being assigned the role of recitation chord.

If we start from the premise that the melody imposed its own manner of organisation, since its pattern precedes the creation process of ritual songs (OPREA, 2002, 129), then we may construe the sounds Do1 and Re1 as having once made up the recto-tono recitative of a doină song or as having played the role of recitation chord in a wailing song.

The wealth of ornamental notes, the simple anterior and posterior appoggiaturas and the glissando reveal the fact that this ritual song is part of the old stratum of Aromanian folklore.

The ambitus is a perfect fourth, Do1-Fa1, and defines the structure of the melody. The melodic formulae which make up the phrases follow the pattern of intervals of a minor third (Re1-Fa1) and of a major third (Do1-Mi1). The profile of all the melodic rows is sinuous.

The inner cadenzas and the final cadenza are realised on the first step of the mode, by repetition of the finale.

4. Conclusions

The scientific enterprise I have presented here highlights an uncultivated stylistic potential in the nuptial repertoire of Cipan Aromanians in Dobruja. The main purpose of the research was to contribute to the cultivation of this traditional repertoire, which is threatened by extinction or “embellishment”.

Following the interview, I discovered in the nuptial repertoire the ritual song “Tora ishii, mălim la cor” - “I have now gone out to the hora, mother”, the performance of which proves the coexistence of the moments of separation and integration of the young bride. The performance of this song is meant to facilitate her definitive passage from one condition to another, making it much easier for her to withstand the break in her relationship with her family and childhood environment, and to confidently step into her new family.

From a musical perspective, the analysis has revealed that the song belongs to the old stratum and that it bears a resemblance to the *doină* and to wailing songs, due to the *doină*-like manner of singing, which is characteristic of improvisatory genres, due to the recto-tono recitatives on the sounds Do1 and Re1, which were turned into recitation chords by the placement of the sound Do1 in the grave register, which plays the role of the finale.

I believe that it is only through a thorough initiative of collecting and promoting the repertoires threatened by extinction that we can ensure the full capitalization of the Aromanian cultural identity in the allogeneous region of Dobruja and avoid the assimilation of identity-defining folklore into the culture of the Dacoromanian majority.

List of Aromanian sources:

Beca Agora, 63 years old, retired, born in Ceamurlia de Sus village, Tulcea county
Beca Constantin, 66 years old, retired, born in Beidaud village, Tulcea county
Anagnosti Ana Maria, 40 years old, canto teacher, born in Babadag, Tulcea county

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