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Preface

The music and dance traditions of the Balkans constitute complex cultural systems in which sound, movement, and social practice are inextricably intertwined. Deeply embedded in everyday life, ritual, and public performance, these traditions have been shaped by multilayered historical trajectories and by long-standing processes of cultural interaction characteristic of Southeastern Europe. From an ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological perspective, Balkan expressive cultures provide a particularly fertile field for examining the production, transmission, and negotiation of musical and dance knowledge within dynamic social, political, and ideological frameworks.

Over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, accelerated historical processes—including state formation, socialist and post-socialist restructurings, forced migrations, and armed conflict—have profoundly reshaped the conditions under which music and dance are practiced, represented, and interpreted. These transitions and transformations have generated critical scholarly engagement with issues of ethnicity, nationhood, identity construction, and heritage-making, revealing music and dance not merely as aesthetic phenomena but as socially situated practices implicated in power relations, memory politics, and cultural mediation. In regions affected by the Yugoslav wars of the late twentieth century, in particular, musical and dance practices have played significant roles in post-conflict processes, functioning as sites of remembrance, negotiation, and, at times, reconciliation, thereby offering important analytical material for interdisciplinary research.

In preparing this special issue of *Musicologist: An International Journal of Music Studies*, entitled **Music and Dance in the Balkans: Intersections of Tradition, Identity, and Innovation**, we were guided by the conceptual understanding of the Balkans as a historically layered, regionally interconnected, and symbolically distinctive cultural space. Within this framework, *Balkan culture* is approached not as a bounded or homogeneous entity, but as a field of cultural hybridity shaped by sustained interactions among Byzantine, Ottoman, Slavic, Latin, and Austro-Hungarian legacies, as well as local pre-modern traditions. Ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological inquiry into this region thus foregrounds processes of syncretism, adaptation, and mediation, producing expressive forms that resist binary categorizations of “East” and “West” and instead reflect historically entangled and context-dependent cultural logics.

Motivated by these considerations, the initiative to advance music and dance scholarship through the analytical lens of Balkan culture was introduced to the academic community under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Abdullah Akat, Editor-in-Chief of *Musicologist*. For this special issue, the call for papers was structured around a set of interrelated thematic fields that reflect current debates and methodological orientations in ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, and related disciplines. These included: the role of music and dance in national and regional identity formation, addressing music and dance as determinants of national, ethnic, and regional belonging in the Balkans, as well as their relationship to folk traditions and modern nationalist movements; transnational influences and intercultural interactions, with particular attention to Ottoman, Byzantine,

and other imperial legacies, as well as diasporic and transnational modes of musical and dance expression; music and dance in social and ritual contexts, focusing on performative functions in social, religious, and ritual settings, including contemporary protest and political expression; gender, performance, and representation, examining the negotiation of gender roles and the articulation of gender and sexual identities in music and dance practices; new forms and hybrid practices, including innovations in folk music and dance, genre fusions, and their broader sociopolitical implications; music and dance as heritage and commodity, addressing issues of tourism, commercialization, authenticity, preservation, and heritage politics; music and dance in the diaspora, exploring processes of continuity, transformation, and recontextualization in migrant communities; and soundscapes of the Balkans, emphasizing ethnographic, fieldwork-based, and sensory approaches to sound, space, memory, and history.

The call elicited a strong and diverse response from scholars, whose contributions engage critically with ongoing theoretical and methodological debates across these thematic areas. The present special issue comprises thirteen peer-reviewed articles representing interdisciplinary approaches drawn from musicology, ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, history, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, performance studies, and new IT technologies. The majority of contributions are grounded in empirically rich case studies, employing interdisciplinary perspectives to address one or more of the issue's core themes. Together, they present carefully documented and theoretically informed analyses ranging from ritual and traditional practices to globally intertwined processes of intercultural exchange and the digital transformation of music and dance in the Balkans.

Geographically, the articles encompass case studies from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Türkiye, illuminating the role of music and dance traditions in articulating diverse identities across varying social, political, and historical contexts. At the same time, several contributions advance innovative methodological and theoretical approaches within contemporary musicological research, including archival studies, analyses of tune families, harmonic structures, and computational or bioinformatic methodologies. Collectively, the articles offer a substantial and up-to-date bibliographic foundation relevant to both the Balkan region and broader disciplinary discourses. The authors represent a wide range of scholarly backgrounds and career stages, bringing together perspectives of both early-career and senior researchers, thereby enriching the intellectual scope of the journal.

Contributions in the field of ethnochoreology include: Sonja Zdravkova Djeparoska, *"Reflections on Dance Identity"*; İdris Ersan Küçük, *"Rethinking Folk Dances of Samsun in Greece through Ethnochoreohistory"*; and Nikola Petrović, *"Between Ottoman Legacy and Hybrid Dance Identity"*.

Articles addressing both music and dance are authored by Gonca Girgin, *"A Creative Neighborhood Economy and Human Capital: Music, Dance and the Sulukule Entertainment Houses"*, and Hande Tokgöz, *"The Transformation of Balkan Music and*

Dance in the Context of Globalization, Modernization, and Digitalization: An Analysis of Aesthetic, Social, and Economic Dimensions”.

The field of ethnomusicology is represented by contributions from Marija Dumnić Vilotijević and Katarina Nikolić, “*Serbian Newly Composed Folk Music of the 1960s–1980s in the Post-Yugoslav Diaspora: A Dissonant Heritage between Unwanted ‘Soft Power’ and Nostalgia*”; Mehtap Demir Güven, “*The Strategy of Cultural Elements: Symbols of Identity in the Novi Pazar Henna Night Entertainment*”; Kristina Perkola, “*Two Song Festivals in Kosovo: Akordet e Kosovës and the RTK Song Festival—Historical Narrative, Continuity, and Transformation (1960s–2020s)*”; Ognjen Spiroski, “*Bioinformatic Analyses of Evolution in the Tune Families of Similar Folk Songs from Macedonia*”; Belma Oğul, “*A New Materialist Approach to the East–West Divide: Music of Southeastern Europe*”; Velika Stojkova Serafimovska et al., “*Echoes of Identity: The Role of Patriotic Songs in the Soundscape of Resistance during the Macedonian Identity Protests (2017–2023)*”; Selin Sağıroğlu and Abdullah Akat, “*Methodological Issues in Transnational Music Archive Research: The Case of Bulgarian Music Archives*”, and Mehmet Hacısalihoglu, whose article “*Harmony in Diversity: Historical Foundations of a Shared Culture of Music and Ethno-Religious Interaction in the Ottoman Balkans*” provides an integrative historical perspective on shared musical cultures in the region.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all contributing authors for sharing their rigorous and insightful research. The peer-review process for this special issue involved twenty-four reviewers from fourteen countries, whose careful evaluations were essential in maintaining the highest academic standards. We would like to express our appreciation to all the reviewers for their invaluable contributions to the review process.

Musicologist is recognized as one of Turkey’s leading international journals in the fields of musicology and choreology, a distinction made possible through the sustained efforts of its editorial team. We gratefully acknowledge the journal secretaries, Merve Eken Küçükaksoy, Emrah Ergene, and Gökhan Altınbaş for layout and design, and the whole publishing team for their professionalism and meticulous work.

As co-editors of this special issue and as co-chairs of the ICTMD Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe for the past two decades, we would like to express sincere personal gratitude to all contributors, and to share our deep conviction that this issue of *Musicologist* reflects both the continuity of long-term collaborative scholarship and a meaningful contribution to the evolving and ever-expanding field of Balkan music and dance research.

Finally, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to Prof. Dr. Abdullah Akat, Editor-in-Chief of *Musicologist*, whose visionary leadership, scholarly expertise, and intellectual generosity were instrumental in the realization of this special issue.

Velika Stojkova Serafimovska and Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin

Co-Editors

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New Materialist Approach to East–West Distinction: South-Eastern Europe Musics

ABSTRACT

This article critiques traditional Southeastern European¹ music history for its reliance on Eurocentric, binary, and human-centered paradigms. Proposing a framework rooted in posthumanism and New Materialism, the study reconceptualizes music as a dynamic assemblage of distributed agency between human and non-human actors. Central to this approach are Karen Barad's concept of intra-action—where musical entities are co-created through their entanglement—and the notion of entangled memories, which privileges embodied and oral traditions over static archives. By applying these concepts, the article challenges rigid national narratives and highlights the region's music history as a continuous process of hybridity and cross-border exchange. Methodologically, the author advocates for multi-sited ethnography and collaborative performance to capture these complex musical ecologies. This approach offers a more inclusive, noncentric lens for understanding the interconnected cultural landscape of Southeastern Europe.

KEYWORDS

Intra-action
Entangled memories
Southeastern European music
Posthumanism
New materialism

¹ In addressing the East–West distinction, this article focuses exclusively on Southeastern Europe, because it is one of the regions where the limitations of traditional dichotomous thinking are evident. The region is crucial for this study as it is characterized by complex and overlapping histories, cultural hybridities, and multi-directional exchanges, illuminating its role as a cultural crossroads. Therefore, applying the proposed posthumanist and New Materialist approach—which seeks to move beyond traditional duality and centric paradigms—is particularly vital here to illuminate the hybrid, networked, and relational nature of Southeastern European music history.

Introduction

The East–West dichotomy has long served as a foundational framework for interpreting global cultural, political, and economic interactions. Traditionally delineated along geographical, historical, and ideological lines—from the division of the Roman Empire and the schism between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Christianity to the Cold War’s ideological blocs—this binary has structured dominant narratives of global and regional dynamics. Theoretical frameworks such as Samuel P. Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations,’ Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory, and Max Weber’s comparative sociology have variously emphasized cultural, economic, and rational-structural distinctions between ‘East’ and ‘West’. However, these paradigms have been widely critiqued for their simplification, Eurocentrism, and essentialism. Critical interventions by scholars such as Edward Said, with his concept of Orientalism, and Benedict Anderson, through the notion of imagined communities, have underscored how such binaries are constructed and sustained by cultural narratives and political interests as well as developed counter-discourses and theoretical concepts related to the subject.

Nowhere are the more evident than in Southeastern Europe—a region marked by complex and overlapping histories, cultural hybridities, and multi-directional exchanges— is one of the regions having the limitations of this dichotomous thinking. Here, the East–West binary often obscures the intricate interplay of religious traditions, colonial legacies, migratory movements, and transnational cultural flows. Recent theoretical developments in new-materialist, post-structuralist, and posthumanist thought call for a reassessment of such foundational binaries, advocating for frameworks that emphasize relationality, entanglement, and intra-action rather than static oppositions.

Any discussion of region and identity in this context inevitably invites the question: Where is West, and where is South? The answer, from a postcolonial perspective, lies less in geography than in the historical production of epistemic hierarchies. As Edward Said (1977) and later Maria Todorova (1997) demonstrated, Europe’s internal and external ‘others’ were not discovered but discursively produced—mapped through oppositions such as civilized/primitive, rational/emotional, and modern/traditional. Within this discursive framework, ‘the West’ operates as a self-legitimizing position rather than a spatial coordinate, while ‘the East’ and ‘the South’ function as symbolic margins through

which the European self is defined.

The position of Southeastern Europe, however, complicates this binary cartography. As Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) observed in her notion of ‘nesting Orientalisms,’ the Balkans occupy a paradoxical role: a space simultaneously included in and excluded from Europe, projecting ‘Eastness’ ever further eastward in a recursive hierarchy of difference. This condition reflects what Larry Wolff (1994) called the “internal colonization” of Europe—a process through which modernity established its moral geography not only beyond but also within its own borders. To ask, “Where is West?” thus becomes a question of positionality and power, not of cartography.

Recent postcolonial and decolonial debates invite us to rethink these inherited spatial metaphors through relational and ecological perspectives. Scholars such as Iain Chambers (2008) and Rosi Braidotti (2019) propose turning away from rigid dichotomies toward a fluid epistemology of becoming, in which knowledge, identity, and culture are understood as outcomes of movement, contact, and transformation. From this standpoint, the region under discussion—whether termed Trans-Balkan, Borderland, or Translocal Europe—can be viewed as a zone of entanglement, where human and nonhuman actors continuously remake the coordinates of ‘West’ and ‘South.’ Music, in this sense, becomes not merely a cultural expression located within a region, but a sonic practice that reconfigures geography itself through resonance, circulation, and relational agency. This non-centric orientation recalls Akat and Nural’s (2022) formulation of the Black Sea region as an interconnected musical ecology, whose cultural vitality depends on constant exchange among human and nonhuman actors rather than on stable territorial centers.

The field of musicology, too, has been historically shaped by centric paradigms, particularly Eurocentrism, which position Western art music as a universal standard while marginalizing non-Western traditions and underrepresenting the contributions of minority and peripheral communities. Even ‘human-centered’ perspectives, which emphasize music as a form of human expression and communication, often fall short in accounting for music’s entanglement with broader ecological, technological, material, and non-human forces. To address these limitations, recent scholarship has proposed non-centric or multicentric frameworks—drawing from posthumanism, New Materialism, and critical ecology—that reconceptualize music as a dynamic ‘music ecology’. In this view, music emerges not from isolated acts of human intention but through complex networks

of interaction among human actors (musicians, educators, institutions, audiences) and non-human agents (instruments, technologies, environments, algorithms, and political-economic systems).

Karen Barad's concept of 'intra-action' (2007), which posits that entities do not precede their relationships but rather emerge through them, offers a particularly powerful framework for reconceptualizing the music history of Southeastern Europe. Paired with the notion of entangled memories—which acknowledges that historical traces are preserved not only in texts but also in embodied practices, oral traditions, technologies, and physical spaces—this approach allows for a deeper, more nuanced engagement with the region's musical past. It challenges linear, nation-bound historiographies and emphasizes the co-creative processes through which music is shaped.

This article proposes a material-discursive approach that brings together intra-action and entanglement as key analytical tools for studying musical practices in Southeastern Europe. By critically engaging with the limitations of East–West binaries and drawing on case studies rooted in the region's diverse musical cultures, the study aims to illuminate the hybrid, networked, and relational nature of Southeastern European music history. In doing so, it contributes to the development of dynamic, non-centric frameworks for both regional analysis and musicological inquiry. On the other hand, considering that this entangled music production may be specific to a group or region, it would not be correct to use it to explain all music, otherwise we may overlook localized power dynamics, political pressures, or incomplete data and risk underestimating the persistence of certain core traditions or identities that resist entanglement and transformation. However, in research in a region such as Southeastern Europe, it is important to apply an approach that goes beyond this duality in order to develop different perspectives.

Various Conceptions on East-West Distinctions

Understanding the East-West divide is fundamental to comprehend the broader dynamics of regional identity, cultural interaction, and geopolitical relations, particularly within Southeastern Europe. This distinction has historically served as a pivotal framework for interpreting global and regional narratives, shaping perceptions of cultural superiority, ideological conflict, and historical legacy. However, as this article explores through a posthumanist and material-discursive lens, the binary conception of East versus West is increasingly challenged for oversimplifying complex realities. Examining the various

approaches to conceptualizing this distinction reveals the limitations of rigid binaries and underscores the necessity of adopting more nuanced, relational frameworks. This discussion is crucial because it not only informs our understanding of regional musical and cultural practices but also highlights the broader implications of binary thinking in shaping political discourses, identities, and histories. By critically engaging with these diverse conceptions, the article advocates for a move beyond essentialist oppositions toward a recognition of the entangled, multifaceted nature of Southeastern Europe's cultural landscape.

The East-West distinction, as a binary opposition, has long served as a framework for understanding global and regional dynamics, yet its simplicity often obscures the complex interplay of cultural, historical, political, economic, and sociological factors. This section explores various approaches to the East-West divide, drawing on the theoretical contributions of Samuel P. Huntington, Edward Said, Benedict Anderson, Immanuel Wallerstein, Arjun Appadurai, and Max Weber. Each perspective offers unique insights into the multifaceted nature of this distinction, while also revealing its limitations and the need for more nuanced, multidimensional frameworks.

Geographically, the East-West distinction is often delineated along longitudinal lines, such as the Prime Meridian (0° longitude) and the 180th meridian, which divide the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. This approach provides a basic spatial framework but fails to capture the cultural and historical complexities of regions like Southeastern Europe, which straddle these boundaries. Historically, the divide traces back to the schism between the Eastern and Western Roman Empires and their respective churches, which fostered enduring cultural differences. These historical divisions laid the groundwork for distinct religious and cultural identities, with the Orthodox East and Catholic/Protestant West shaping regional narratives. However, such categorizations risk oversimplifying the fluid interactions and hybridities that characterize these regions.

Politically, the East-West distinction gained prominence during the Cold War, with the NATO allies representing the 'West' and the Eastern Bloc embodying the 'East'. This ideological divide framed global politics in terms of capitalism versus communism, reinforcing binary oppositions that persist in contemporary discourse. While this perspective highlights geopolitical tensions, it often ignores internal diversity within these blocs and the shifting alliances in a post-Cold War world. The emergence of terms

like 'global North' and 'global South' reflects an attempt to reframe these distinctions, focusing on economic disparities rather than strict ideological or geographical lines. Yet, these newer terms still risk perpetuating binary thinking, underscoring the need for more nuanced frameworks.

Economically, the East-West divide is often characterized by disparities in income, infrastructure, living standards, and access to technology. Western nations, typically categorized as 'core' in global economic systems, dominate trade and innovation, while Eastern nations are frequently positioned as 'peripheral', exploited for resources and labor. This core-periphery dynamic, as articulated by Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, highlights the structural inequalities embedded in global capitalism (Wallerstein, 2011; Agnew 2021). Wallerstein critiques Eurocentric narratives that privilege Western progress, arguing that the capitalist world-system marginalizes non-Western societies. However, his framework is limited by its heavy focus on economic factors, often neglecting cultural and social dimensions that shape East-West interactions (Lee, 2010).

Samuel P. Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis offers a cultural lens, positing that post-Cold War conflicts are driven by cultural differences rather than ideological or economic ones. He identifies eight major civilizations, with the East-West divide serving as a critical fault line between Western (Europe and North America) and non-Western civilizations, such as Islamic, Sinic, and Orthodox (Huntington, 1996). While influential, Huntington's framework is criticized for its Eurocentrism and oversimplification of cultural identities, as noted by Edward Said (2001). Said argues that such rigid classifications reinforce stereotypes and ignore cultural interdependence, calling for a more dynamic understanding of global interactions.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism further complicates the cultural narrative of the East-West distinction. In *Orientalism* (1977), Said critiques the Western construction of the 'Orient' as exotic and inferior, arguing that such representations justify colonial dominance. His work highlights how Western scholars, artists, and politicians have historically shaped perceptions of Eastern societies, particularly in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. However, Said's analysis is not without critique; some argue it oversimplifies East-West relations and underestimates the agency of Eastern societies. Together, Huntington and Said underscore the power of cultural narratives in shaping the

East-West divide, yet their approaches reveal the challenges of moving beyond binary frameworks.

Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' provides a lens for understanding how nationalism shapes East-West distinctions (Anderson, 1991). Anderson argues that nations are socially constructed through shared narratives and symbols, with Western nationalism often tied to colonial expansion and Eastern nationalism linked to anti-colonial struggles. This framework highlights the flexibility of national identities, which can challenge rigid East-West boundaries. However, critics note that Anderson's theory may reflect Eurocentric biases and overlook local contexts, limiting its applicability to diverse regions (Harnita et al., 2019). His work emphasizes the need to reimagine national identities in ways that transcend binary oppositions.

Arjun Appadurai's theory of global cultural flows offers a dynamic perspective on East-West interactions, emphasizing the role of ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ideoscaples (Appadurai, 1990). These 'scapes' illustrate the fluid, multidirectional exchange of cultures, technologies, and ideas, challenging the notion of globalization as mere Westernization. Appadurai's framework highlights the hybridity and negotiation inherent in East-West cultural interactions, particularly in regions like Southeastern Europe, where musical traditions blend diverse influences. However, his approach is critiqued for insufficiently addressing power imbalances and historical inequalities that continue to shape global cultural landscapes.

Max Weber's comparative sociology provides another perspective, focusing on cultural and societal differences between Western and non-Western societies. Through his concept of 'rationalization', Weber (2009) argues that Western societies developed capitalism and bureaucratic structures due to rational, systematic thinking, while non-Western societies, characterized by emotional and traditional values, lagged in these areas (Weber, 1978). His ideal-type methodology contrasts Western and Eastern societies, particularly in terms of religion and cultural values, with implications for understanding musical traditions. For instance, Weber's framework might frame Western music as structured and rational, contrasted with the emotive qualities of Eastern music. However, his approach is critiqued for perpetuating Eurocentric stereotypes and oversimplifying non-Western societies, highlighting the need for more inclusive analyses.

The various approaches to the East-West distinction—geographical, historical, political, economic, cultural, and sociological—demonstrate its complexity and the limitations of binary thinking. While Huntington’s civilizational thesis and Wallerstein’s world-systems theory highlight structural and cultural divides, they risk reinforcing Eurocentric biases. Said and Appadurai offer critical interventions, emphasizing cultural interdependence and the fluidity of global interactions, yet their frameworks may overlook specific local contexts or power dynamics. Anderson’s imagined communities and Weber’s comparative sociology underscore the constructed nature of identities and societal differences, but both face critiques for Eurocentrism and oversimplification. Collectively, these perspectives reveal that the East-West distinction is not a fixed or monolithic binary but a dynamic, multifaceted construct shaped by historical, cultural, and economic forces.

In the context of Southeastern Europe, these approaches illuminate the region’s role as a cultural crossroads (Stojkova Serafimovska, 2008) where musical traditions reflect the entanglement of human and non-human agencies. By moving beyond binary oppositions and embracing non-centric frameworks, such as those informed by intersectionality and agential realism, scholars can better understand the fluid, hybrid nature of these traditions. This analysis sets the stage for a deeper exploration of Southeastern European musical cultures, challenging essentialist categorizations and celebrating the region’s transcultural richness.

In this light, moving beyond binary East-West frameworks necessitates a critical engagement with the centric and non-centric philosophical paradigms that underpin scholarly approaches in musicology, music theory, music history, and ethnomusicology.

Centric and Non-centric Approaches

The distinction between centric and non-centric approaches is central to understanding how scholarly frameworks shape the study of music and cultural history. Centric perspectives often privilege certain traditions, such as Western art music, positioning them as universal or normative, thereby marginalizing diverse musical practices and histories. Conversely, non-centric approaches challenge these hierarchies by emphasizing multiplicity, fluidity, and the interconnectedness of musical expressions across cultural boundaries. Engaging with this dichotomy is vital for the article’s broader aim of critiquing reductive binaries and advocating for more inclusive, relational frameworks. By examining these contrasting paradigms, the discussion underscores the importance of

moving away from dominant, Eurocentric models and toward approaches that recognize the dynamic complexity of Southeastern Europe's musical, cultural, and historical landscapes. This conversation lays the groundwork for developing nuanced methodologies that better reflect the region's hybridity and interconnectedness, enriching our understanding of global cultural processes.

The philosophical approaches may be categorized as geocentric, heliocentric, ethnocentric, Eurocentric, human-centric, ecocentric and non or multi-centric way of thinking. The geocentric approach in musicology uses the metaphor of the Earth-centered universe to describe traditional paradigms where specific musical traditions, theories, or figures are positioned at the center of study, with others orbiting peripherally. Historically, this perspective privileges European art music, theoretical constructs like functional harmony and classical forms, the 12TET system, for instance, originated in early 18th century Europe as polyphony evolved from horizontal to vertical structures, yet has been exported globally and treated as a superior tuning system despite being just one possibility among many (Vali, 2022). The 'great man' narrative of music history—focusing on figures like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and other European male composers—creates a center around which all other musical developments are positioned as peripheral. This approach not only marginalizes non-Western musical traditions but also obscures the contributions of women, people of color, and those working outside dominant traditions even within Western music. It reflects a view that certain musical paradigms are natural or universally applicable, leading to the marginalization of diverse musical expressions and histories.

The heliocentric approach in musicology represents a paradigm shift that decentered traditional Western-centric perspectives, similar to how the Sun-centered model revolutionized astronomy by Copernicus. It emphasizes the multiplicity and diversity of musical traditions worldwide by recognizing non-Western practices, indigenous music, and marginalized voices as valid and central in their own contexts. This approach challenges the notion of a universal musical canon, instead advocating for comparative and intercultural understandings that appreciate the complexity and richness of global musical phenomena. It fosters more inclusive, pluralistic frameworks that move beyond Western dominance, encouraging scholars to explore a broader spectrum of musical expressions without privileging any single tradition as the normative standard.

Ethnocentric methodologies in musicology prioritize the musical values and aesthetics of a specific cultural group, often leading to biased evaluations of other musical traditions. These approaches typically exhibit characteristics such as cultural hierarchy, where certain musical practices are deemed superior, and claims of universality, which disregard the unique contexts of diverse musical expressions. Additionally, they frequently neglect the cultural, social, and historical contexts of music, resulting in inappropriate comparisons and reinforcing cultural biases. Historically, such perspectives were prevalent in early comparative musicology, but the emergence of ethnomusicology in the mid-20th century signaled a significant shift towards culturally relative approaches that emphasize the importance of context in understanding musical practices.

One of the ethnocentric approaches prioritizing specific cultural perspectives, often leading to biased interpretations of music is the Eurocentric approach in musicology centers European musical traditions as the primary and most advanced form of music, often positioning them as universal standards. This perspective has historically produced detailed analytical tools and a canonical repertoire focused on Western art music, particularly from the 17th to 20th centuries. However, it marginalizes non-Western musical practices, imposes Western categories onto diverse traditions, and reinforces colonial narratives of cultural superiority. Critics argue that Eurocentrism tends to undervalue or distort the richness of global musical diversity, perpetuate hierarchical valuations, and limit understanding by treating Western music as the normative model.

Human-centered approaches in musicology emphasize music as a manifestation of human expression and interaction, aligning with the notion that “music is humanly organized sound” (Blacking, 1974: 10). These approaches emphasize individuals’ emotional, cognitive, and cultural experiences, analyzing music through biographical, psychological, and social frameworks. While they provide valuable insights into how music functions in human life—highlighting creativity, identity, and social interaction—they can also limit understanding by marginalizing non-human factors and reinforcing the idea that music’s primary purpose is human communication. This anthropocentric focus tends to overlook the broader ecological, material, and non-human agency involved in musical phenomena.

Ecocentric approaches to music prioritize the relationship between music and the natural environment, emphasizing ecological systems, soundscapes, and environmental contexts.

(Schafer 1977; Feld 1990; Pedelty 2012; Allen 2013). These perspectives challenge the human-centered view by recognizing music's role in expressing and responding to ecological realities, fostering environmental awareness, and promoting sustainability. They often involve studying soundscapes, incorporating environmental sounds into compositions, and developing site-specific works that reflect specific landscapes or ecosystems. While they deepen understanding of music's ecological embeddedness and aim to address environmental concerns, ecocentric approaches must be cautious to avoid romanticizing 'natural' sounds or exoticizing indigenous practices. Overall, they reposition music as a practice interconnected with and responsive to the more-than-human world.

Noncentric, multicentric approaches, including posthumanism and New Materialism, decenter traditional human-centric perspectives in musicology. These frameworks emphasize distributed agency among human, non-human, technological, and environmental actors, transcending "musicking" (Small, 1998) and "Art Worlds" (Becker, 1982). Posthumanist approaches, challenging hierarchical distinctions such as culture versus nature or mind versus matter, explore how music involves complex networks of human and non-human interactions, drawing on thinkers like Donna Haraway (1991) and Bruno Latour (1993), to acknowledge the active role of non-human entities in musical creation, performance, and experience, by criticizing the Cartesian approach. Similarly, New Materialism emphasizes the agency of matter—objects, technologies, and environments—as active participants shaping musical processes. Both approaches advocate for more inclusive, pluralistic understandings of music that recognize multiple centers of agency and meaning, moving beyond traditional, anthropocentric paradigms.

The Human and Non-Human Agencies

The posthumanist and new materialist frameworks articulated herein particularly underscore the notion that these agencies do not function in solitary contexts but rather coalesce into intricate assemblages in which agency is disseminated across networks comprising both human and non-human actors. The phenomenon of music ecology arises from these fluid interactions rather than being dictated by any singular agent or determinant.

Human agencies encompass musicians, composers, performers and audiences who engage in the creation and interpretation of music, drawing upon cultural, historical, and

personal contexts to generate their artistic outputs. Performers, through their interpretative efforts, imbue layers of meaning, emotional depth, and variability, thereby rendering each performance a singular occurrence. They engage in collaboration with audiences and non-human agencies like instruments, technologies, and adapt to specific acoustic environments and cultural anticipations. Folk musicians and community performers who uphold traditional practices, exemplified by Bulgarian choral singers utilizing distinctive vocal methodologies or Romanian *lăutari* (professional Roma musicians). Contemporary fusion artists who amalgamate traditional components with global musical genres (e.g., Goran Bregović, Taraf de Haïdouks).

Music educators and institutions that facilitate the transmission of musical knowledge, skills, and traditions across generations, thereby preserving and evolving cultural practices. 'Formal' educational establishments and conservatories, and so-called 'informal transmission methods' influence the methodologies through which music is acquired and esteemed. They negotiate between tradition and innovation, determining which practices warrant emphasis. Religious institutions, for example Orthodox churches or Tekke-s of Muslim sects, that uphold Byzantine chant traditions and liturgical music can also be considered as education institutions.

Scholars and critics who engage in the analysis, contextualization, and evaluation of music, thereby shaping its historical and cultural importance. They establish frameworks (e.g., genre classifications) that affect the perception and valuation of music. They interact with non-human agencies like musical works, historical archives, and cultural narratives, frequently employing digital platforms to disseminate their scholarly analyses.

Cultural gatekeepers (archives, publishers, record labels, concert programmers) who ascertain the music that reaches audiences, curating the production, promotion, and performance of musical works. They function as filters, amplifying select voices while sidelining others. Their interactions with musicians, audiences, and technologies (e.g., streaming platforms) are noteworthy. Their determinations are influenced by economic structures, cultural trends, and algorithmic suggestions, as exemplified by entities such as *Yugotone*. The audiovisual media are integral to understanding the ongoing processes of identity construction, representation, and political contestation in Southeastern Europe, functioning both as mirrors and active agents of societal change (Pistrick, Nicola, Gretel 2011). The influence of the Ottoman Empire as well the Austria-Hungarian Empire on

musical modalities, rhythmic structures, and instrumental practices is profound. The socio-economic transformations occurring in post-socialist contexts are significantly impacting the transmission of traditional musical forms. Furthermore, the cultural policies and financial support provided by the European Union are critically influencing efforts aimed at preserving musical heritage.

The music instruments along with the music recording and publishing technologies, geography and physical environment are important non-human agencies. Musical instruments are not passive tools awaiting human manipulation but active agents that shape musical practices, aesthetics, and cultural identities. They are enabling auditory and performative transformations, shaping the expression styles, and facilitating the transmission of musical and poetic knowledge, as Çalışkan (2024) argues. From a New Materialist perspective, instruments possess their own forms of agency that intra-act with human performers, audiences, spaces, and other non-human elements to co-produce musical realities.

The physical properties of instruments—their materials, construction, acoustic qualities, and ergonomic constraints—actively shape what is musically possible and desirable. For example, the distinctive timbre of the *kaval* (end-blown flute) found throughout the Balkans creates specific affective responses and sonic possibilities that influence compositional choices and performance practices. The instrument's limited dynamic range and microtonal capabilities have co-produced specific melodic ornamentations and playing techniques that characterize regional styles.

Instruments also carry historical and cultural memories that actively participate in musical meaning-making. The *gusle*, a single-stringed bowed instrument, used to accompany epic poetry in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is not merely a sound-producing device but an active participant in the preservation and transformation of oral epic traditions. Its distinctive resonance and limited melodic range have co-shaped the rhythmic and melodic patterns of epic recitation, creating a symbiotic relationship between instrument, performer, and poetic form.

The *tambura* family of long-necked lutes, found in various forms throughout Southeastern Europe, demonstrates how instruments actively participate in processes of cultural

negotiation and identity formation. Originally derived from Turkish and Persian ancestors (like the *saz* and *tanbur*), these instruments underwent significant transformations as they moved through different cultural contexts (Talam, 2014). In Croatia, for instance, the tambura was deliberately reconfigured in the 19th century to create orchestral ensembles that could perform Western classical music, becoming a symbol of both national distinctiveness and European cultural belonging. The instrument's material evolution—changes in construction, tuning systems, and playing techniques—was not simply imposed by human design but emerged through complex intra-actions between cultural aspirations, available materials, acoustic principles, and existing musical practices.

Cross-cultural instrument adaptations reveal particularly rich sites of intra-action. The accordion, originally developed in Western Europe in the early 19th century (Harrington and Kubik, 2001), was rapidly adopted and transformed throughout Southeastern Europe, becoming integral to numerous regional traditions. Rather than simply being 'adopted', the accordion intra-acted with existing musical practices, transforming them while being transformed itself. In Serbia and Romania, for example, the accordion's technical capabilities facilitated new virtuosic performance styles that would have been impossible on traditional instruments, while simultaneously being modified (through tuning, registration choices, and playing techniques) to accommodate microtonal inflections and rhythmic nuances characteristic of local traditions. Another example would be the use of vocals in *sevdalinkas* which changed dramatically when the accordion started playing this genre.

The agency of instruments is also evident in how they resist certain uses while enabling others. The complex asymmetrical meters (7/8, 9/8, 11/16, etc.) characteristic of much Southeastern European music developed through intra-actions between human dancers, rhythmic patterns, and the specific affordances of regional percussion instruments like the *tapan* (large double-headed drum). The physical properties of these instruments—their size, the tension of their membranes, the techniques required to play them—actively participated in the emergence and stabilization of these distinctive rhythmic structures.

The posthumanist and new materialist frameworks elaborated upon in this discourse particularly highlight that these agencies do not function in isolation; rather, they constitute intricate assemblages wherein agency is diffused throughout networks

comprising both human and non-human actors. The ecology of music arises from these fluid interactions, rather than being dictated by any singular agent or determinant.

Some States of Intra-Actions

The coexistence of different ethnic and religious communities in Southeastern Europe over centuries has played a fundamental role in the development of musical traditions. However, this state of living together is not simply different groups sharing the same space but a complex network of intra-actions embedded in the fabric of daily life. Musicians have been important mediators of these intra-actions. Romani musicians, in particular, have played a unique role in shaping the region's musical culture. Romani musicians should be seen not merely as 'intermediaries' between different musical traditions but as agents actively creating new musical forms and practices. For example, in the Balkan brass band tradition, Romani musicians combined Ottoman military music traditions with European band music to create distinctive musical expressions that are neither entirely Eastern nor Western. The mobility and adaptability of Romani musicians have made them not just 'carriers' between different musical worlds but active 'transformers.' When a Romani musician performs at a Serbian wedding, a Romanian festival, or a Turkish café, it involves intra-actions that create new musical realities in each performance context, beyond simple changes in repertoire.

Another state is major migration movements and mobilities witnessed by Southeastern Europe throughout history. These migrations are not simply the movement of people from one place to another but processes involving complex intra-actions of musical traditions, instruments, and performance practices.

The expansion and contraction of the Ottoman Empire, the policies of the Habsburg Empire, wars and political changes in the 20th century – all these historical processes have affected human mobility and created new musical intra-actions. For example, Turkish communities migrating from the Ottoman Empire to Balkan countries in the 19th century brought their musical traditions, but these traditions transformed through intra-action with local music practices.

Similarly, migrations following the dissolution of Yugoslavia led to the formation of diaspora communities and the reinterpretation of musical practices in new contexts. In this process, music became not just an expression of cultural identity but also a field

where new forms of identity and belonging were actively produced (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023). For example, *Leylim Ley* was composed by Zülfü Livaneli in 1975 (URL 1), being interpreted in different languages (URL 2), and performed by artists such as İbrahim Tatlıses (a Kurdish singer from Türkiye) interpreted in a different musical genre (URL 3) and Muharem Serbezovski (a Roma singer from Skopje) with a new title *Sine Moj* (URL 4), in Serbo-Croatian language. *Mavi Mavi* by İbrahim Tatlıses (1985) (URL 5), was also interpreted by Muharrem Serbezovski as *Plavo, Plavo* (URL 6). Furthermore, both pieces, *Sine Moj* and *Plavo, Plavo*, accompany the kolo dances performed by the Bosniak people living in Türkiye.

In Southeastern Europe, intermarriages have provided one more important state for the intra-action of musical traditions. These marriages are not just the union of two individuals but the encounter and intertwining of different musical worlds, repertoires, and aesthetic understandings. Children born from intermarriages are often exposed to multiple musical traditions and become active interpreters of these traditions. For example, composer Goran Bregović, born in Sarajevo to a Croatian father and Serbian mother, combines Romani brass bands, Bulgarian polyphonic singing, and contemporary rock elements in his music, creating new musical expressions from the intra-action of these different traditions. Intermarriages also create new performance contexts and repertoire combinations by bringing together different musical traditions at significant life events such as weddings. Such events are moments where musical intra-action intensifies and new practices emerge.

The political map of Southeastern Europe, as non-human agent, has undergone dramatic changes over centuries. The rise and fall of empires, the formation of nation-states, the redrawing of borders – all these processes have played active roles in shaping musical culture. Administrative borders are not simply lines that define areas where musical practices take place but agents that actively shape how these practices are categorized, evaluated, and supported. For example, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of Balkan nation-states led to the redefinition of musical practices previously categorized as ‘Ottoman’ or ‘Eastern’ and their association with national identities.

More recent political changes, such as the dissolution of Yugoslavia, have created new intra-actions in the association of musical practices with national identities. Musical forms previously defined as ‘Yugoslav’ have been reinterpreted and claimed in new national

contexts. As Hofman (2016; 2025) argues the partisan songs transformed from state-sanctioned symbols of unity into suppressed artifacts, and have now been radically repurposed as embodied tools of protest and alternative solidarity, critiquing the present by selectively reclaiming and re-signifying elements of the past, in a non-linear temporality. Their power lies in their affective resonance and ability to forge new collective identities outside official narratives.

Public spaces such as squares, markets, coffeehouses, concert halls, and festivals are important sites where musical intra-action intensifies. These spaces are not simply passive stages where musical performances take place but agents that actively influence how these performances are shaped and experienced. For example, coffeehouses during the Ottoman period were important venues where different musical traditions met and entered into intra-action. Similarly, festivals today provide important contexts for the encounter of different musical worlds and the emergence of new intra-actions. The acoustics, architecture, and atmosphere of public spaces affect how musical performances are shaped and experienced. A performance in a village square, a concert hall, or a digital platform creates different musical realities through intra-action with the characteristics of these different spaces.

The musical culture of Southeastern Europe should be understood not in terms of the human and non-human agents discussed above acting separately, but within a complex and constantly changing network of intra-actions. These agents do not exist and act independently of each other; rather, they produce musical realities together and reciprocally.

Tracing Intra-Actions: A Collaborative Methodology

Approaching the musical history of Southeastern Europe through the lens of intra-active production and entangled memory offers a powerful alternative to conventional historiographical models in ethnomusicology. This framework moves beyond linear, human-centered narratives by focusing on the intra-active relationships among people, sounds, technologies, environments, and institutions. It encourages scholars to reconceptualize music not as a static cultural product but as an emergent phenomenon shaped by dynamic, multispecies, and material-discursive entanglements.

For example, *sevdalinka*, a musical tradition rooted in Southeastern Europe, emerges

through a dynamic interplay of human and non-human agencies, shaped by complex socio-historical and material conditions. Human agents such as shared musicianship in multi-ethnic urban centers like Sarajevo, patterns of migration, and interethnic romantic relationships have contributed to the formation of its lyrical and melodic characteristics. These practices reflect broader processes of coexistence and cultural entanglement among Muslims, Christians, and Jews, particularly during the Ottoman and Yugoslav periods (Karača-Beljak and Talam, 2009). The mobility of Ottoman cultural forms throughout the Balkans and the occurrence of intermarriages further facilitated the hybridization and transmission of musical styles across ethnic and linguistic lines.

Non-human agents have also significantly influenced the development of *sevdalinka*. Instruments such as the *saz* and accordion, alongside later Western additions, shaped the sonic palette of the genre, while recording technologies and radio broadcasting under Yugoslav socialism played a crucial role in its dissemination and popularization. Urban geography and the material settings of performance informed both the content and form of *sevdalinka*, as did shifts in administrative borders—from the Ottoman Empire to Austro-Hungarian rule, and eventually to modern nation-states—which altered the cultural significance and circulation of the genre. Viewed through the lens of Karen Barad’s concept of intra-action, *sevdalinka* is not a static tradition² but a becoming—emerging through the entangled relationalities of human histories, political transformations, and material-discursive practices (Petrović, 2024).

Kolo, a traditional circle dance practiced across Southeastern Europe, exemplifies a form of embodied cultural expression shaped by both human and non-human agencies. Human agents such as ethnically diverse communities—including Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, and

² The distinction between ‘static’ and ‘non-static’ traditions is not intended to imply a hierarchy of value but to illuminate differing relationships between continuity and change in musical practice. A ‘static’ tradition may emphasize the preservation of form, repertoire, or ritual context over innovation, while a ‘non-static’ tradition remains constitutively open to transformation through social, technological, and ecological intra-actions (Barad, 2007). The Japanese *Gagaku* court tradition, for instance, exemplifies a relatively static model—its aesthetic and performative parameters have remained highly codified for centuries, preserving continuity across time and institutional structures. By contrast, many folk or urban musical practices in Trans-Balkan contexts operate as non-static ecologies, where musical forms, instruments, and performative meanings are continually reconfigured through migration, mediation, and multispecies entanglement. This framing aligns with Barad’s posthumanist notion that stability itself is an effect of ongoing material-discursive intra-actions, rather than an inherent state.

Roma—have historically shared and sustained this practice, often through collective participation in weddings, festivals, and other communal events (Nikolić, 2023; Ranisavljević, 2023; Özbilgin, 2023; Kurtişoğlu, 2012). The mobility of populations, both within the Balkans and across diasporas, has further contributed to the circulation and adaptation of *kolo*, allowing it to traverse cultural boundaries while retaining its core social function as a communal ritual. Non-human agents have also played a vital role in the evolution of *kolo*. The dance is shaped by the geography of its performance settings, ranging from rural village squares to mountainous terrains and urban public spaces. The transformation of administrative borders, particularly following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, has led to the nationalization and recontextualization of *kolo* within different state narratives (Rakočević and Ranisavljević, 2019). These material and spatial conditions co-constitute the dance's meaning and form. Viewed through the framework of intra-action, *kolo* is not merely choreography but a dynamic, non-hierarchical mode of social organization that materializes through the circular movement of bodies, the resonance of place, and the activation of collective memory—forming a cultural continuity that transcends fixed identities and political borders.

Balkan brass band traditions represent a dynamic synthesis of military legacy and vernacular creativity, shaped by the interwoven actions of diverse human and non-human agents. Roma musicians, in particular, have played a central role in recontextualizing military brass repertoires—originally associated with Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and later European armies—into folk and celebratory domains. Through processes of migration and regional exchange, these traditions have circulated widely across Southeastern Europe and diasporic communities, reflecting complex histories of cultural contact and adaptation. The presence of Roma performers in multiple ethnic and national contexts underscores the role of shared musicianship in sustaining and diversifying brass music practices.

Non-human agents such as the instruments themselves—repurposed trumpets, tubas, and drums—have been transformed from tools of discipline and command into emblems of festivity and communal identity. The proliferation of brass music through recording technologies, especially festival tapes and cassettes, has further extended its reach and embedded it in popular consciousness. Additionally, shifting administrative borders and regimes have influenced the meanings attributed to brass music, allowing it to serve

varying cultural and political purposes over time. Public performances at weddings, street parades, and festivals like Guča offer key sites of intra-action, where sound, space, memory, and movement converge. From this perspective, Balkan brass is not a static cultural form but a hybrid phenomenon, emerging through the entangled material-discursive relations of military history, Romani agency, and embodied celebration.

Klezmer music in the Balkans represents a deeply entangled cultural form shaped by shared human histories, diasporic movement, and material conditions. Jewish communities developed klezmer in close interaction with Slavic and Romani musicians, often within multi-ethnic urban environments (Feldman, 2020). These collaborations, facilitated by patterns of cohabitation and cultural intermarriage, fostered a hybrid musical language that reflects mutual influence across ethnic and religious boundaries. The diasporic trajectories of Jewish populations further contributed to the dispersal and adaptation of klezmer, embedding it within broader transnational currents of migration and memory.

Non-human agents have been equally formative in the emergence and evolution of klezmer. Characteristic instruments such as the clarinet, violin, and *tsimbl* (cimbalom) have defined its sonic texture, while early recording technologies played a crucial role in preserving klezmer traditions amid historical ruptures, including the Holocaust and subsequent displacements. Shifting political borders and the devastation of Jewish life in Southeastern Europe profoundly altered klezmer's presence and meaning in the region. Through the lens of intra-action, klezmer is not simply a musical tradition but a living archive of entangled geographies, historical traumas, and relational aesthetics—emerging from and continually shaped by its material and social environment.

Within this paradigm, historical agency is no longer attributed solely to individual composers or culturally bounded traditions. Instead, it emerges through intra-actions between human and non-human actors. For instance, rather than viewing Ottoman musical influence on Balkan traditions as a unidirectional flow, this perspective enables an exploration of how musical elements evolved across porous cultural boundaries, giving rise to hybrid forms that cannot be neatly categorized as either 'Ottoman' or 'Balkan', but rather as co-produced through their entanglement.

This approach also rethinks the sources of historical knowledge. Traditional music

historiography tends to privilege written documents and archival records, often neglecting the embodied, performative, and affective dimensions of memory that circulate through oral traditions and communal practices. Entangled memory foregrounds these dimensions, emphasizing how musical knowledge and historical consciousness are sustained through lived experience. The *sevđalinka* tradition in Bosnia, for example, encapsulates memories of Ottoman urban aesthetics, Slavic vernacular culture, and interfaith coexistence—layers of meaning that defy separation into discrete historical threads.

Materiality plays a central role in this analysis. Instruments, recording technologies, and performance spaces are not merely passive containers of sound but active agents in shaping musical meaning. The Bulgarian *gaida* (bagpipe), for instance, bears the imprints of pastoral life, nationalist revival, and socialist-era cultural policy—historical forces that have materially reshaped the instrument’s form, function, and sonic identity. An ethnomusicology informed by intra-action considers how such material-discursive entanglements co-produce what we come to recognize as tradition.

This perspective also challenges the foundations of nationalist music historiography. Claims to musical forms as exclusive expressions of national identity obscure the centuries of migration, exchange, and shared experience that have historically shaped Southeastern European soundscapes. Dance forms claimed by Romania, Serbia, and Bulgaria, for instance, gain new meaning when understood as products of regional interconnectivity rather than as culturally bounded artifacts. Intra-active analysis offers a more historically faithful account of these practices by foregrounding the flows, frictions, and fusions that have long characterized the region.

Methodologically, this framework aligns with collaborative ethnographic practices that engage musicians, community members, and researchers as co-producers of knowledge. It encourages the study of recording technologies not merely as archival tools but as active participants in shaping musical history. It also demands attention to the ways political borders, language regimes, and institutional frameworks have attempted—often forcibly—to disentangle complex musical networks into legible, nationalized forms.

Case studies illustrate the versatility of this approach. In post-Ottoman urban centers such as Sarajevo, Thessaloniki, and Belgrade, musical practices evolved through the intra-

action of diverse religious and ethnic communities, producing sonic textures that resist singular identification. During the socialist period, state interventions in folklore and cultural policy generated new musical forms framed as ‘authentic,’ though they were themselves the result of entangled negotiations between ideology and local practice. Contemporary projects like Mostar Sevdah Reunion’s collaboration with Sephardic traditions further highlight how musicians actively draw on entangled histories to create new, resonant forms of cultural expression.

Practically, this approach calls for multi-sited ethnography that traces musical practices across contemporary borders, interpretive strategies that read archives as dynamic spaces of intra-action rather than static repositories, and collaborative performance research that explores how memory and history emerge through sound. Digital tools for mapping musical networks can also help visualize the region’s intricate webs of sonic interrelation, moving us away from discrete, bounded representations of musical heritage.

Ultimately, an ethnomusicology grounded in intra-action and entanglement resists essentialist, binary and any single-centric frameworks. It offers a methodology that honors the complexity of Southeastern Europe’s musical past and present—one shaped not by purity or isolation, but by continual processes of exchange, adaptation, and co-creation.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that traditional binary distinctions—such as the East–West divide—and centric paradigms in musicology, including geocentric, ethnocentric, and human-centered approaches, are insufficient for capturing the complexities of global and regional cultural dynamics, particularly within the musical traditions of Southeastern Europe. These frameworks often reduce multifaceted cultural, historical, political, economic, and sociological interactions to overly simplistic categories and tend to marginalize or exclude non-Western perspectives and underrepresented groups. As such, there is a critical need for more nuanced, multidimensional, and non-anthropocentric frameworks in music studies—frameworks that can accommodate hybridity, relationality, and cultural entanglement.

In response to these limitations, this article has advanced a material-discursive approach

grounded in the concepts of intra-action and entangled memories, drawn from posthumanism and New Materialism. These frameworks reconceptualize music as a dynamic ecology—a networked process emerging through the intra-active relationships of human and non-human actors. In this context, agency is not the exclusive domain of human intention but is instead distributed among diverse elements such as musicians, institutions, audiences, technologies, acoustic environments, and sociopolitical systems. Karen Barad's notion of intra-action challenges the linearity of traditional historiography by proposing that entities do not preexist their relations, while the concept of entangled memories highlights how history is embodied not only in texts but also in oral traditions, physical artifacts, and collective cultural practices.

Applying these theoretical tools to the context of Southeastern Europe allows for a more inclusive and complex understanding of the region's musical history—one that resists essentialist narratives of cultural purity or national ownership. Rather than viewing music history as a linear succession of individual creators or national schools, this approach reveals it as a constantly evolving network of intra-actions between tradition and innovation, human and non-human agencies, and material and digital technologies. The case studies discussed illustrate how regional musical practices are shaped through deeply interwoven relationships that defy binary classifications such as East versus West or traditional versus modern.

Reconceptualizing the East–West distinction through the lens of intra-action and entanglement thus provides a richer and more dynamic framework for understanding regional identities and cultural practices. It emphasizes the fluidity, hybridity, and interconnectedness that define Southeastern Europe's musical landscape and reveals the methodological potential of non-centric, process-oriented perspectives. These insights not only challenge dominant narratives rooted in nationalism, hierarchy, and essentialism but also contribute to broader scholarly conversations about regionality, cultural exchange, and postcolonial critique. In this sense, the notion of a Trans-Balkan, Borderland, or Translocal Europe offers more than a descriptive geography; it provides an epistemological alternative to center–periphery frameworks. Rather than viewing the region as a cultural margin or hybrid extension of an imagined 'West,' this approach emphasizes flows, relational agencies, and intra-actions that continuously remake its musical and cultural landscapes. As regional studies such as Akat and Nural's (2022) work

on the Karadeniz Music Archive demonstrate, non-centric and network-based models reveal how sound, archive, and performance emerge through dynamic interconnections rather than through linear or hierarchical genealogies. Framing Southeastern Europe in this way—as a translocal ecology of becoming—opens new methodological possibilities for rethinking musical agency, heritage, and epistemic geography beyond fixed borders and binary orientations. The musical practices explored in this study reveal the entangled dynamics of human and non-human agencies across Southeastern Europe. For instance, the circulation of Romani brass band repertoires between Serbia and North Macedonia illustrates how melodies and performance techniques travel translocally, reshaping local traditions while maintaining recognizable forms. The *Kočani Orkestar*, a Macedonian Romani brass band, exemplifies this translocality with their fusion of Romani music from various parts of the Balkans rhythms, creating a vibrant, hybrid musical identity. Similarly, cross-border wedding music in the Trans-Balkan region, where clarinet improvisations interact with local dance forms, highlight the fluidity of tradition and the co-constitution of performers, instruments, and audiences. Even popular music exemplifies these dynamics.

Methodologically, this approach calls for multi-sited ethnography, archival research, site-specific performance projects, and interdisciplinary collaboration. These tools allow scholars to engage with the layered and emergent nature of musical phenomena, tracing how sonic, spatial, technological, and sociopolitical elements co-produce cultural meaning. Moreover, attention to marginalized communities, underrepresented genres, and digital environments enhances the inclusivity and responsiveness of ethnomusicological inquiry in a rapidly changing world.

Ultimately, embracing intra-action and entangled memories as foundational concepts in musicological inquiry enables a shift toward more relational, inclusive, and dynamic models of analysis. This framework paves the way for a musicology that better reflects the lived realities of cultural entanglement and transformation—particularly in historically complex and multi-layered regions like Southeastern Europe—while fostering a deeper, more globally attuned understanding of music’s role in shaping identities and histories.

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Theme: *Music and Dance in the Balkans: Intersections of Tradition, Identity, and Innovation*

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Harmony in Diversity: Historical Foundations of a Shared Culture of Music and Ethno-Religious Interaction in the Ottoman Balkans

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the Ottoman context of cultural interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, who belonged to diverse ethnic backgrounds. Such interaction occurred within various social and institutional frameworks established by the Ottoman state. One key arena was the military system, which, during the classical period of Ottoman history, incorporated Christian men into its ranks. In the Tanzimat era, this inclusive approach expanded: provincial assemblies were formed with non-Muslim representation, military service for non-Muslims became mandatory, and Christian men began to occupy positions within the imperial bureaucracy. Markets (bazaars) also functioned as important spaces of everyday interaction between different communities. The culture of the Ottoman court served as a model of elite refinement and high culture, attracting composers and artists of various backgrounds. Similarly, provincial noble courts contributed to regional cultural exchange. Migration further facilitated cultural contact. The settlement of groups such as the Yörüks from Anatolia, Caucasian refugees, and Sephardic Jews in the Balkans, along with the Ottoman practice of deportation and resettlement, created additional layers of cultural blending. Religious interaction-including the activities of dervishes, shared veneration of saints, and participation in pilgrimages-also fostered intercommunal ties. By using Ottoman archival sources, the paper also tries to provide insights into the lives of provincial musicians in the Balkans.

KEYWORDS

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Introduction

Mutual cultural influences among the various ethnic and confessional groups within the Ottoman Empire were a natural and ongoing process. These interactions extended beyond the Empire's borders as well, fostering exchanges with cultures from outside the Ottoman realm. A notable example of such cross-cultural interaction is the case of the 17th century Polish musician Wojciech Bobowski, known in Latin sources as Albertus Bobovius, in Italian as Alberto Bobovio, and in Western literature as Albert Bobowski. Captured and brought to the Ottoman capital around the age of thirty, Bobowski converted to Islam and adopted the name Ali. Around 1650, he was appointed as a musician in the imperial music chamber (*Meşkhane*) of the Topkapı Palace. There, he began transcribing existing Ottoman compositions—including forms such as *peşrev*, *saz semai*, *türkü*, *beste*, and *ilahi*—into Western musical notation. These transcriptions were compiled in his influential work, the *Mecmua-yi Saz u Söz* (Journal of Instrument and Lyrics). At least three of his manuscript collections survive today and serve as invaluable sources for the study of Ottoman music history. Writing under the artistic name Ufki (meaning “far-sighted”), he is commonly referred to as Ali Ufki (Behar, 1990: 7). Another significant contributor to the documentation of Ottoman music is the Moldavian prince Dimitrie Cantemir, who was active in the early 18th century and produced one of the most systematic notations of Ottoman music of his time.

Not only the imperial palaces in the Ottoman centre but also the residences and estates of provincial elites played a significant role in shaping the musical culture of the Empire. As some historians have noted, Ottoman music was not confined to the courtly chambers; it was also deeply embedded in the urban fabric as a form of city music (Behar, 2009: 58; Demirbaş, 2020). Across the Empire, music was performed and taught in various settings, including the homes of ordinary people and public venues. In particular, the dervish lodges (*tekkes*), especially those belonging to the Mevlevi order, cultivated strong musical traditions. The renowned composer Dede Efendi, for instance, was a member of a Mevlevi order, where he developed and refined his musical talent and knowledge. These dervish orders were widely present throughout the Balkans, and the musical traditions of Istanbul were often reflected in provincial cities, smaller towns, and even villages—especially since many *tekkes* operated in rural or peripheral areas. Coffeehouses also served as important cultural spaces where music was performed, learned, and shared (Behar, 2005:

58-61). Religious differences—whether Muslim or Christian—did not necessarily hinder participation in musical education or performance. The Orthodox Church, with its deep-rooted Byzantine musical heritage, was another key contributor to the region’s musical landscape. Notably, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate began supporting the transcription of non-religious music in the first half of the 19th century. As a result, we now have a rich collection of publications documenting Orthodox Karamanli-Turkish music, which represents an important source for the history of Ottoman music (Behar, 2005: 244-268).

A considerable number of ethnomusicological studies have examined the reciprocal musical influences across the Balkans. Particular emphasis can be placed on the joint Serbian-Turkish research project led by Abdullah Akat (Istanbul University State Conservatory) and Marija Dumnić Vilotijević (Institute of Musicology, SASA).¹

In this paper, I try to examine the broader Ottoman framework and the various channels that facilitated cultural interaction among the peoples of the Balkans. At the same time, with the help of Ottoman archival documents, I explore the lives and working conditions of provincial musicians in Balkan cities, with particular attention to urban centres such as

¹ Research Project titled *Exploring the Tracks of Balkan Culture: Serbian–Turkish Connections in Music and Dance from Ottoman Period until Today (TRackeRS)*, implemented by the Institute of Musicology SASA and Istanbul University State Conservatory within the framework of bilateral cooperation supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (2022-2025). For the results of this project see the special issue of the Journal *Konservatoryum / Conservatorium* (Istanbul University), Vol. 10 (Suppl.1) (December, 2023) with following articles: Liz Mellish, Nick Green, *Dance and Festivals in Serbian Villages along the Romanian Danube Gorge: Contextualizing Selena Rakočević’s Research*, pp. 1-13; Katarina Nikolić, *The Vocal-Instrumental Dance Form Gara: Vital Manifestation of Dance Genre Kolo u Tri within the Wedding Ritual in Serbia*, pp. 14-27; Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin, *Traditional Dances of the Serbia Sandžak Region Migrants in Türkiye*, pp. 28-39; Zdravko Ranisavljević, *The Role of Traditional Dances in the Creation of the Bosniak Ethnic Identity in Istanbul*, pp. 40-45; Marija Dumnić Vilotijević, *Urban Folk Music Legacy from Former Yugoslavia in Contemporary Istanbul*, pp. 46-54; Mehtap Demir Güven, *Tradition as a Useful Tool: New Patterns of Culture among the Bosniaks in Novi Pazar*, pp. 55-64; Ivana Medić, *The Cicvarićs as Pioneers of Cultural Entrepreneurship in Serbia*, pp. 65-75; Nathan Bernacki, *Microtiming Analysis of Two Dance-Songs from the Pirin-Macedonia Region of Bulgaria*, pp. 76-86; F. Belma Oğul, *Selena Rakočević’s Contributions to Southeastern Europe Dance and Music Studies*, pp. 87-94. For some other results from this project, see: Abdullah Akat, “The Role and Influence of Roma Musicians on the Turkish-Serbian Musical Interactions in Vranje”, *International Scientific Symposium - Music and Dance on East–West Axis: Correlations and Mobilities, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts*, Belgrade, Serbia, 4 - 06 Eylül 2023, p. 18; Marija Dumnić Vilotijević, “Representations of ‘Turkishness’ in Popular Folk Music in Serbia in the XX Century: Channeling the East in a Western Way”, op.cit. p. 22. For other studies, see: A. Islam, S. Leshkova Zelenkovska, M. Demir, *Music in the Bektashi Order in RN Macedonia: Aspects of Performance, Musicologist*, 7(2), (2023), pp. 238-268. *Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe: Gender, Virtual Communications and Legacies of Empires. Eighth Symposium of the ICTMD Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe*, Eds. A. Akat et al, Istanbul: ICTMD Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe, 2024. Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin, “Cultural policies of the traditional dance heritage of Southeastern Europe after the Ottoman Empire period”, *Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe*, op.cit, pp. 281-287.

Skopje. In this way, I hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical roots of today's ethnomusicological cultural commonalities in the region.

The Ottoman Conquest and Rule in the Balkans as Foundations of Cultural Interaction: Migration, Deportation, and Conversion

The Ottoman conquest and subsequent rule of the Balkans have been perceived and interpreted differently across various historiographical traditions (Schmitt, 2016). National historiographies, particularly those developed in the context of modern nation-states, have often portrayed the Ottoman conquest in highly negative terms—characterizing it as an invasion by ‘barbarian Turks,’ accompanied by mass killings, forced migrations, deportations, and a long-standing resistance to the so-called ‘Turkish yoke.’ This narrative frequently emphasizes themes of de-Europeanization, orientalization, and cultural decline, all of which serve to legitimize the formation of nation-states on former Ottoman territory (Schmitt, 2016: 9). In contrast, Ottomanists—especially Turkish historians—tend to highlight the Empire’s policies of accommodation (*istimalet*) and the notion of Pax Ottomana (Ottoman peace), emphasizing stability and coexistence. Despite these divergent perspectives, one point of consensus remains: there was a significant degree of interaction between the Ottoman Turks and Balkan Christians throughout the period of conquest and during the centuries of Ottoman rule.

One notable occasion when musicians and artists from different provinces of the Ottoman Empire gathered and performed together was during the grand public celebrations organized by the sultans. A prominent example of such an event is the circumcision festival of Prince Mehmed in 1582. A year prior to the festivities, Sultan Murad III issued a directive to provincial governors—including those of Damascus and Salonica—ordering them to send musicians and skilled performers to Istanbul.² The celebrations, held in June and July of 1582, lasted for over a month. Numerous musicians from across the Empire took part, contributing to nearly two months of musical performances in the imperial capital (see Özkan, 2003).

One of the most significant historical processes that fostered cultural interaction in the Ottoman Empire was the various forms of migration and population movement. These

² Sûr-ı hümayun için yazılan ahkâmın suretleridir, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d. 42/164, tarih H.01.05.989 [3.5.1581]

included both voluntary migrations and state-organized deportations (İnalçik, 1969/1970; Kiel, 2009; Rizaj, 1969; Beldiceanu-Steinherr, 1998; Beldiceanu, 1995). National historiographies in the Balkans often emphasize the mass deportations of local populations to Anatolia and other parts of the Empire during the initial Ottoman conquests. Ottoman sources confirm that forced population transfers were indeed a common strategy for consolidating imperial control. For example, during the conquest of the western Balkans, thousands of Albanians were relocated to the newly acquired province of Trabzon. Following the defeat of the Karamanid principality in central Anatolia, a large portion of its population was forcibly transferred to the Balkans. Similarly, after the conquest of Istanbul, many people—especially Greeks from the Aegean islands—were resettled in the city to aid in its repopulation (Barkan, 1949-50, 1951-52, 1953-54; Yerasimos, 2019; Lowry, 2003; Hacker, 1992).

Comparable processes occurred after the conquests of Cairo and Tabriz, when thousands of skilled artisans and craftsmen, along with their families, were relocated to Istanbul to serve the imperial court and administration. Numerous Turkoman tribes from Anatolia were also forcibly resettled in the Balkans (Petkova, 2019).

In the 19th century, migration patterns shifted significantly with the emergence of nation-states in the Balkans. In countries such as Greece and Serbia, Muslim populations were subjected to massacres, expulsions, or organized deportations (Örenç, 2009; Özkan, 2011; Katsikas, 2021; Kotsonis, 2025). These transfers were often formalized through bilateral agreements with the Ottoman government (Hacısalıhoğlu, 2018). This trend of agreed-upon forced migration of Muslims continued into the 20th century. As a result, millions of Muslims from the Balkans resettled in Anatolia, bringing with them rich traditions of music and dance. Conversely, in 1923, the population exchange between Greece and Türkiye led to the forced migration of the Christian population of Anatolia—primarily Orthodox Greeks—and Muslims from Greece, profoundly influencing the musical and cultural landscapes of both regions.

Another key factor in the formation of a shared musical and cultural tradition in the Balkans was the widespread conversion to Islam. Within the Muslim population, ethnic and linguistic differences played a relatively minor role in social and cultural divisions. Interethnic marriages were common under the umbrella of Sunni Islam, not only in the

Balkans but also in Anatolia and the Caucasus. A similar pattern was observed among the Orthodox Christian subjects of the Empire—Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians, Albanians, Serbs, and Montenegrins—where intermarriage and shared religious traditions contributed to cultural blending. These intra- and interethnic marriages represented one of the most direct forms of cultural interaction. Greek-speaking Muslims in Crete, Georgian- and Laz-speaking Muslims in the eastern Black Sea region, and the majority of Albanians, Bosniaks, Pomaks, and Torbesh in the Balkans were closely connected both to each other and to the Turkish Muslim population. As a result, cultural differences were more often defined by geography than by ethnicity. Distinctive cultural traits—including music and dance traditions—could vary significantly between regions, even between valleys, yet within the same locality, people of different ethnic backgrounds often shared similar cultural practices.

For instance, the musical and dance traditions of Turkish Cypriots more closely resemble those of their Greek Cypriot neighbours than those of Turks from mainland Anatolia. Likewise, the Turks of Macedonia exhibit stronger cultural affinities with Albanian, Macedonian/Bulgarian, and Serbian traditions. Nevertheless, there were exceptions, such as the Turkish Yörük communities, who maintained a more isolated lifestyle and preserved unique cultural features distinct from those of other Muslim groups in the region.

Shared Military Duties of Muslim and Christian Subjects as a Channel of Cultural Interaction

Another crucial context for understanding Christian-Muslim relations during the early centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans was the Empire's military and administrative organization in the provinces. Both Muslim and non-Muslim (primarily Christian) populations were assigned various military and administrative roles. During Ottoman military campaigns, Muslim and Christian auxiliary units often spent extended periods—sometimes several months—together, far from their home regions (İnalçık 1987; 1952; Beldiceanu, 1985; Stojanovski, 1974).

In the early phases of Ottoman expansion, several Christian vassal rulers accompanied the Ottoman sultan or chief commanders on military campaigns, contributing their own troops. The Sultan's enemies at this time included both Muslim and non-Muslim dynasties

in Anatolia and Southeastern Europe. For instance, the Serbian ruler Stefan Lazarević joined his son-in-law, Sultan Bayezid I, in the battle against Timur at Ankara in 1402, bringing with him an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 men (Kämpfer, 1979; Kostenečki, 2008). Another notable example is Marko Kraljević, who became an Ottoman vassal and died in battle serving the Sultan against the Wallachian ruler at Rovine in 1395. These are among the best-known examples of Christian auxiliary troops participating in Ottoman campaigns.

Beyond these prominent cases, numerous Christian groups fought alongside their Muslim compatriots and spent considerable time together in military service. While this aspect is largely known only to specialists in late medieval or early modern history, it is significant. In many districts of the Western Balkans, large portions of the male population were organized into military units such as *timariots*, *müsellems*, and *voynuks*. In earlier periods, they also served as *akıncıs* (raiders), operating ahead of the main army. It is therefore likely that Christian auxiliary forces made up a substantial portion of the Ottoman army during campaigns. What happened during the long marches to and from the front lines? While the martial music of the Janissaries is well-documented, less is known about how auxiliary soldiers passed their time, especially during stops at military waystations (*menzil*). These moments of pause provided opportunities for social interaction, bonding, and undoubtedly, cultural exchange.

To illustrate this idea with a more recent analogy, I would like to share a story from my father's military service in the 1950s in Türkiye. When he was recruited, he walked from the small town of Tonya to the port of Vakfıkebir on the Black Sea coast, where larger ships could dock. He was carried on the back of a porter to a small boat (*kayık*), which brought him to the ship. Upon boarding, he found himself among hundreds of recruits from other Black Sea towns. One of the first things he remembers is a fellow recruit taking out a *kemençe* (a traditional Black Sea string instrument) and playing local dance music. A circle of recruits soon formed, dancing on the deck of the ship.

Although the modern military conscription and Ottoman military organisation were very different; it is reasonable to assume that recruits in the 14th or 15th centuries engaged in similar cultural expressions. Some likely carried musical instruments and, during stops along the campaign route, played local melodies and performed traditional dances. These

groups, coming from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, interacted closely sharing songs, food, stories, and hardships. They fought together, assisted wounded comrades, and developed a sense of camaraderie. Thus, military campaigns also became periods of intense cultural interaction among Muslim and non-Muslim members of the Ottoman military.

This culturally integrative aspect of military service persisted into modern times. When universal conscription was introduced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, concerns about its assimilative effects emerged. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, for example, opposed the conscription of Orthodox Christians into the Ottoman army, fearing that such service would lead to the Turkification and eventual assimilation of Greek men (Gülsoy, 2000; Heinzelmann, 2004).

In conclusion, the active participation of Balkan Christian communities in the Ottoman military—particularly up to the early 18th century—fostered deep cultural interactions between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in the Balkans.

Urban Spaces of Cultural Interaction: Courtly Life, Konaks, and Provincial Musicians

Provincial centers—both cities and towns—were home to a local upper class or provincial nobility. This included Ottoman Muslim officials such as *beys*, *pashas*, and *aghas*, as well as members of the Orthodox Christian elite, known as *kocabaşı* (or *kotchabashi*). Among the Serbs, these figures were often referred to as *knez*, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy also played a significant role, particularly bishops and metropolitans. Their residences, typically known as *konaks*, served not only as administrative hubs but also as spaces where refined cultural life—including music and dance—flourished. The *konaks* were often staffed by individuals of various ethno-religious backgrounds. For instance, the gardeners or horsekeepers in the household of a Muslim bey in the western Balkans could easily have been Orthodox Slavs, possibly Serbs or Bulgarians. As previously mentioned, religious institutions—including dervish lodges (*tekkes*), churches, and mosques—were deeply connected to musical traditions and thus served as additional venues for cultural exchange.

It is reasonable to assume that musical life in the *konaks* differed somewhat from rural or village folk traditions. There were also professional musicians who performed at

weddings, festivals, and other public and private events.

But who exactly were these musicians?

The Ottoman *Temettuat Defterleri* (income and property registers) from the 1840s, which record both household assets and professions, help us answer this question. For example, in the register of Muslim inhabitants of Philippopolis (Filibe, modern-day Plovdiv, Bulgaria), only one individual among Muslims was identified as a full-time musician (*çalgıcı*). He resided in the *Kıbtıyan* (Gypsy) quarter (Ersoy, 2003: 215).

A similar situation is documented in *Niš* (in present-day Serbia) during the same period. There, too, only one musician was recorded, also from the Gypsy quarter (*Kıbtıyan-ı Kebir* – Large Gypsy Quarter). Additionally, a singer (*şarkıcı*) was listed in the *Hünkâr* quarter (Kordić, 2019: 50). In the town of Tulcea in the Dobruja region (now Romania), two Christian violinists (*kemanacı*)—Rasil (Vasil) and Alex—were registered. It was noted that they owned no property beyond their homes and made their living exclusively from music (*çalgıcılık*).³ Tulcea also had one foreign musician who earned his income similarly (Polat, 2019: 301-302). In Lüleburgaz (modern-day Türkiye), only one musician (*çalgıcı*) was recorded (Purodran, 2010: 46), while in Edirne—then the largest city in the Balkans—two musicians were listed, both of whom were Christians (Sert, 2011: 152-278).

It is implausible that these musicians could have sustained themselves by performing exclusively within their own ethno-religious communities. Ottoman archival records clearly indicate that musicians performed across communal boundaries, serving Muslim audiences as well as Orthodox Christians (including Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs), Armenians, and Catholics. These musicians likely performed diverse repertoires adapted to the specific musical and dance traditions of different communities, not only in the cities but also in surrounding villages. Their performances were, by necessity, a synthesis of regional cultural expressions. In the cases of Plovdiv and Niš, we see that Romani (Gypsy) musicians played an especially important role in the musical life of the region. Other sources confirm the centrality of Romani musicians throughout the Ottoman Empire. For instance, a document prepared by the Istanbul Municipal Administration in 1890 lists licensing fees for musicians, including a category for ‘wandering Gypsy musicians’ (*geşt-i*

³ Both are registered one after another in the quarter Ehli Beştepe in Tulça (Polat 2019: 252)

güzar Kıbtî çalgıcı). The standard monthly license fee for a regular musician was 150 *kuruş* (previously 200), while a Gypsy musician paid only 50 *kuruş* (previously 100). During Ramadan, these fees increased to 700 and 300 *kuruş*, respectively.⁴

The *Temettuat Defteri* for Niš also includes a list of the city's 27 tavern keepers (*meyhaneci*), seven of whom were Gypsies living in both the large and small Gypsy quarters. The remaining tavern owners were all Christians (Kordić, 2019: 51). The annual income of a musician in Niš, as well as one of the two musicians in Edirne, was recorded as 150 *kuruş*—equivalent to that of a skilled barber—while the singer in Niš earned 100 *kuruş*. A second musician in Edirne had a higher income, suggesting that larger urban centres offered more lucrative opportunities for professional musicians.

Detailed records also exist for Skopje in the second half of the 19th century. Musicians there were required to obtain licenses from the municipal authorities, and event organizers had to pay fees to hire them. A document from 1894 contains the names of musicians and ensembles, the instruments they played, the names of event organizers, the neighborhoods where performances took place, and the duration of the events.⁵

Name and fame of the wedding owner / <i>Düğün sahibinin ismi ve şöhreti</i>	Names of the neighborhood / <i>Esami-i mahalle</i>	Name of the musician/musical troupe / <i>Çalgıcının ismi</i>	Type of instrument / <i>Çalgının nev'i</i>	Price in Piastre (Kuruş)	Duration
Rüstem Kıbtî (Romani/Gypsy Rüstem)	Yeni tepe	Receb taifesi (Receb's troupe)	Tabla	15	3 evenings
Zabtiye Osman onbaşı	Orduca tepe?	Rode ve İlo taifeleri	Drum and frame drum (Davul ve def)	10	3 evenings, köçeks (dancers) in the harem
Hasan	Ali Beg hanında	Usta Hasan	Rope acrobat (ip canbazı)	19	4 days
Kıbtî Receb	Yeni tepe	İlo taifesi	Drum (davul)	10	2 evenings
Kortin?	Hudaverdi	Şahzo taifesi	Frame drum (def)	5	Köçeks in the harem, 2 evenings
	Ma'arif kahvecisi Eyüb Ağa	Osman Çavuş taifesi	Violin (keman)	38	1 month, at Eyüb's coffeehouse
Kıbtî Hüseyin bin Kıbtî Abdullah?	Yeni tepe	Receb taifesi	Tabla	10	3 evenings
Kıbtî Halil	Yeni bayır	Nuri taifesi	Drum (davul)	10	2 evenings

⁴ BOA, ŞD. 757/30, 29 Teşrinisani 1306 [11 December 1890].

⁵ BOA, YB.021.102/64, Mali 23.2.1310 [5.5.1894].

Yahudi Lazar	Yahudi	Erso taifesi	Violin (Keman)	5	2 evenings
Kıbtî Nikola	Merane? karyesi	Nikola?	Reed flute (Ey?)	5	10 days?
Rastanaklı? Semur	Hacı Yunus	Kula taifesi	Tabla	10	2 evenings
Kıbtî Abdullah	Tobhan	Manca? taifesi	Tabla	10	3 evenings
Kosofçalı Ali	Mustafa beşe?	Sa'dullah taifesi	Violin (keman)	5	1 evening
Rastanaklı? Semur	Hacı Yunus	Çakır taifesi	Frame drum (def)	5	2 evenings in the harem
Fasilbend? Emin	Hacı Lala	Zabaş? taifesi	Frame drum (def)	5	2 evenings in the harem
Ahmed Beg	Kebir Mehmed Çelebi	Aliço? taifesi	Frame drum (def)	5	1 evening in the harem
Gogoş	Ine beg sagir?	Başar? taifesi	Violin (keman)	5	1 evening
Bıçakçı Abdullah	Hacı Yunus	Aişe taifesi	Frame drum (def)	5	2 evenings in the harem
Zülfikar? efendi	Hudaverdi	Naile taifesi	Frame drum (def)	5	1 evening in the harem
Kadri	Hacı Lala	Çakır taifesi	Frame drum (def)	5	2 evenings in the harem
Anderya	Hacı Lala	İliya	tabla	10	3 evenings
Kıbtî Selim	Yeni tepe	Malya taifesi	Drum (davul)	10	3 evenings

Table 1. List of findings from the document, 5.5.1894

Ottoman archival documents reveal that both male and female musicians and dancers were active in the city of Skopje, earning their livelihood by performing at various events, particularly weddings. A significant number of musical gatherings were organized exclusively for women (harem), where only female performers were permitted. In such settings, women predominantly played the *def* (tambourine), while instruments such as the *keman* (violin), *davul* (drum), and *tabla* were commonly used for performances involving men or mixed audiences.

The sources also indicate a high degree of mobility among musicians, including performers who came from abroad. Certain coffeehouses (*kahvehane*) in urban areas hired musicians for specific periods. For instance, an 1887 document records the arrival of two musicians, *Çalgıcı Görgi* and Anton, from Italy to Skopje, where they requested permission to perform for fifteen days in a coffeehouse known as *Alatin Bazerganı Kahvesi*.⁶ Similarly, a 1913 document from Istanbul mentions an Italian musician, Donatoriçi, who regularly played the harp in the coffeehouse of Koco Kostantinidi—likely an Orthodox Vlach or Greek—in the Fanar district. The document makes clear that the

⁶ BOA, YB.021. 83/108, tarih 6 Haziran 103 [18.06.1887].

musician relied entirely on this engagement for his livelihood.⁷

Following the establishment of municipal administrations (*belediye*), one source of city revenue came from taxes on music-related events, especially weddings. A register from Skopje in the early 1870s lists the names of all event organizers, noting that the fee for a music permit for a one-evening celebration was 5 *kuruş*.⁸ Musicians were required to obtain official authorization to perform. For example, a group of Romani (Gypsy) musicians and male dancers (*çalgıcı ve köçek*) from Leskovitsa and Vranje submitted a petition to the Skopje municipality requesting permission to perform.⁹

Regulations were strictly enforced. Musicians granted permission to perform in women's events (harem) were explicitly forbidden from entertaining men. A document from 1890 reports that a Jewish resident of Skopje named Yako received a permit for a group of dancers called *Pamuk* to perform at a family wedding. However, during a routine police patrol, the dancers were found performing in front of male guests, a violation that was promptly reported to the municipal authorities for action.¹⁰ Female musicians were also strictly limited to performing for women; public performances before men were prohibited.¹¹

Complaints and concerns about musicians were not uncommon. For instance, the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community submitted a complaint to the Sultan, alleging that certain individuals entered households under the guise of performing music during religious rituals. In homes where no husband was present, these individuals were allegedly engaging in prostitution. The Chief Rabbi requested that such musicians be banned from entering these households.¹²

The documents also reveal incidents of violence and harassment against musicians. In Sivas, a musician was prevented by locals from performing at weddings and other events, effectively obstructing his ability to earn a living.¹³ In another case, a musician named

⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.VRK. 22/22, 20 May 1329 [2 June 1913].

⁸ BOA, YB.021.68/182, and YB.021.101/96.

⁹ BOA, YB.021.56/17, Rumi 31.3.1298 [12.6.1882].

¹⁰ BOA, YB.021. 88/221, Rumi 21.06.1306 [02.09.1890].

¹¹ BOA, YB.021.88/134, Rumi 24.9.1306 [6.12.1890].

¹² BOA, C.ADL. 26/1533, tarih 11.04.1200 [11.02.1786].

¹³ BOA, A.DVN.131/33, H. 08.09.1274 [22.04.1858].

Mita(n) from Korça (Görice) was robbed while traveling from a village back to the city.¹⁴ Near Prishtina, a group of Romani musicians and their female dancers (*rakkas Kıbtı karıları*) were attacked by men who attempted to sexually assault the dancers and rob the musicians.¹⁵

There were also cases where musicians violated regulations and performed without official permission. For example, despite a prohibition on playing music during public festivities (*mesire*), a Romani musician named Şeker Ahmed from Ayvan Saray (Istanbul) continued to perform between 1825 and 1826. He was eventually apprehended and exiled to Edirne.¹⁶ In another case, a musician from Constanța abandoned his family in İzmir and relocated. His wife later petitioned the authorities to either compel him to provide support or grant her a divorce.¹⁷ Musicians were also investigated for misconduct, including the use of obscene or ‘offensive language’.¹⁸

Toward the end of the 19th century, political and revolutionary songs became popular, particularly among Macedonian and Armenian nationalist groups. Ottoman authorities classified such music as subversive and banned its performance. Between 1892 and 1909, several individuals were prosecuted for performing revolutionary songs, with many receiving harsh penalties (Yiğit, 2022).¹⁹

Conclusion

The Ottoman experience in the Balkans produced two seemingly contradictory, yet deeply interconnected outcomes. On the one hand, the peoples of the Balkans were largely able to preserve their core ethnic and confessional identities—such as language or dialect, religion, clothing, and other markers of communal distinctiveness. On the other hand, centuries of shared life under Ottoman rule gave rise to a common cultural fabric, particularly visible in areas such as family customs, social organization, music, and dance. This shared culture was not the product of formal policy alone but was shaped by numerous everyday encounters and systemic structures within the empire.

¹⁴ BOA, DH.MKT. 2564/36, H-21-08-1319.

¹⁵ BOA, MVL.991/32, H.6.4.1381 [8.5.1864].

¹⁶ BOA, C.ZB.66/3277, tarih 18.06.1241 [28.01.1826]

¹⁷ BOA, HR.TH.127/50, Mali 16.1.1893.

¹⁸ BOA, DH.MKT. 93/23, H. 9.1.1311

¹⁹ İrfan Yiğit, “Osmanlı Arşiv Vesikalarında Muzır Müsiki Kavramı”. *Tetkik* 2 (Eylül 2022), pp. 229-284. <https://doi.org/10.55709/tetkikdergisi.2022.2.76>

Several key mechanisms facilitated this cultural convergence. These included the Ottoman military and administrative structures—especially during the empire’s early centuries—where Christian and Muslim subjects served side by side; the networks of provincial nobility, whose *konaks* (residences) functioned as important cultural hubs; the widespread presence of dervish lodges and Orthodox churches, each fostering their own musical traditions; and the vibrant urban life of Ottoman cities, where people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds coexisted and interacted in markets, coffeehouses, and during public celebrations.

Population movements—both voluntary and forced—also played a central role. From the relocation of Albanians to Trabzon, and Greeks to post-conquest Istanbul, to the mass arrival of Muslim refugees in Anatolia during the collapse of Ottoman control in the Balkans, these migrations carried with them musical styles, instruments, and repertoires that became embedded in local traditions. Particularly Romani (Gypsy) musicians were important cultural intermediaries, often serving as the primary musical performers at weddings and festivities across religious and ethnic lines. Ottoman archival sources from cities such as Skopje, Plovdiv, Niš, and Edirne clearly document this intercommunal dynamic.

As a result, drawing rigid cultural boundaries between Balkan peoples proves problematic. Confessional or linguistic differences were often insufficient to prevent the emergence of shared musical forms and practices. This cultural proximity, however, later became a source of political tension. During the formation of modern nation-states in the Balkans, the deep cultural entanglement inherited from the Ottoman era provoked anxieties about identity and fears of assimilation. These anxieties sometimes led to the marginalization, suppression, or forced assimilation of minority groups, often under the pretext of national unity (Hacısalihoglu, 2019).

Therefore, when analysing musical and dance traditions in the Balkans, it is more accurate to consider regional and local contexts rather than imposing broad ethnic or national labels. Rather than speaking simply of ‘Turkish’ or ‘Serbian’ music, it may be more fruitful to examine the musical culture of specific regions—such as the Danube Valley (e.g., Belgrade, Smederevo), Niš, or the Sanjak area—where overlapping influences shaped a common expressive language.

A personal anecdote from the Eastern Black Sea region of Türkiye illustrates this point well. In three neighbouring villages, the spoken Turkish dialects differ significantly, yet the musical traditions—songs, dances, and instruments—are virtually identical. Why? Because the same musicians serve all three communities. This example reflects a broader historical truth across the Balkans: cultural boundaries, particularly in music and dance, often followed the paths of mobility, community interaction, and shared experience more than those of language or religion.

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Two Song Festivals in Kosovo: *Akordet e Kosovës* and the RTK Song Festival – Historical Narrative, Continuity, and Transformation (1960s-2020s)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evolution of Kosovo's song festivals through the perspective of two pivotal events: *Akordet e Kosovës* (organized by Radio Television of Prishtina) and the RTK Song Festival (organized by Radio Television of Kosovo). Though both originated from the same media institution, their transformation from the former to the latter was decisively shaped by Kosovo's political history. The study focuses on four interrelated aspects: the narrative of cultural continuity, the transformation of song festivals, their role in constructing Kosovo's musical heritage, and their broader socio-cultural significance. Beginning with *Akordet e Kosovës* in 1963 - the first major Albanian song festival in the former Yugoslavia, the paper traces its role in Kosovo's music landscape. Special attention is given to the socio-political circumstances that made the history of festivals, and indeed Kosovo's musical development as a whole, uniquely specific, being largely conditioned by non-cultural factors such as political upheavals and social transformations. Methodologically, the study is primarily qualitative and historical, employing documentary and content analysis to identify patterns, themes, and contextual factors that have shaped the development of the festival. This paper investigates the roots, development, and discontinuity of the first festival and the emergence of the second, at once similar, yet profoundly different. Ultimately, the study of these festivals offers key insights into the dynamic interplay between cultural expression, political shifts, the ongoing formation of Kosovo's artistic identity, and future perspectives.

KEYWORDS

Song festivals

Kosovo

Socio-political
influence

Akordet e Kosovës

RTK Song Festival

Historical Context: Music Festivals in Kosovo 1940s-1990s

This study situates Kosovo's song festivals within the broader discourse of cultural memory and the role of music in post-conflict identity formation (Bohlman, 2010). Under a historical overview, the analysis reveals that music festivals, along with the broader political, social, and cultural landscape of Kosovo, have undergone significant transformations. These transformations exhibit changes, continuities, interconnections, contrasts, and diverse forms of engagement. Drawing on Christopher Small's concept of 'musicking,' music festivals can be understood not merely as performances but as social processes in which music is created, experienced, and negotiated among performers, audiences, and communities (Small, 2011). This perspective provides a broader understanding of how music festivals, shaped by temporal and contextual conditions, have historically functioned as sites of cultural production, community engagement, and identity formation.

In Kosovo, the development of music festivals must be examined within the wider historical and socio-political landscape of the region, particularly in the Balkans and the post-World War II period. During this era, developments across the republics and provinces of the former Yugoslavia followed broadly similar patterns, reflecting shared institutional frameworks, cultural policies, and artistic infrastructures, while also allowing for local particularities and expressions. Festivals platforms in Kosovo began for the first time in the post-World War II period, when the process of cultural institutionalization started to take shape. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, key milestones such as the establishment of music schools and performing ensembles laid the foundation for a formalized musical culture in Kosovo (Perkola, 2023a).

The earliest events which took the form of competitive presentations in Kosovo, began to appear since the late 1940s. They were events/festivals catering to an amateur level and were known as *Rivistat kulturore* [Cultural Revues] or *Rivistat e shoqërive kulturore* [Revues of Cultural Societies], which at that time were few in number (M., 1956; Sopi 1958). Since then, the cultural diplomacy of former Yugoslavia was also implemented in Kosovo, and as studies on Yugoslav cultural history have shown, Western cultural influences were embraced former Yugoslavia as early as the 1950s (Vučetić, 2012; Vuletić, 2008). During the 1960s, an entire popular music infrastructure was established including recording facilities, broadcast media, and specialized press which fostered the

emergence of remarkably rich and diverse music scenes in the following decades. Within this framework, the founding of *Akordet e Kosovës* in 1963 can be understood as regional cultural development and an integral part of Yugoslavia's broader strategies of cultural policy and diplomacy, which relied heavily on festivals as vehicles for projecting 'modernity,' fostering cultural diversity within the federation, and shaping international perceptions of Yugoslavia as a distinctive socialist state open to Western influences.

However, during the 1960s, Kosovo continued to be one of the most underdeveloped provinces of Yugoslavia in economic, educational and cultural terms. Therefore, any investment in the socio-cultural sphere was vital, necessary and welcomed. In the years 1961-63, two of the most famous music events were founded: the Folk Provincial Folklore Festival *Gllgovci*, in 1961, and the Song Festival *Akordet e Kosovës*, in 1963. Then, the early 1970s in Kosovo marked a transformative period characterized by a growing enthusiasm for the arts and a desire to establish a robust musical tradition.

In response to this cultural climate, there was an increase in artistic activities within the realm of music, and several key moments distinguish this decade. First was the establishment of the Kosovo Composers' Association in 1972, (as an independent institution, although it had already existed since 1969 as a branch of the Serbian Composers' Association) - this marked the creation of a formal body for the planning and enhancement of general musical developments. Second, the establishment (or re-institutionalization) of the Symphony Orchestra of RTP (see Perkola, 2023b) transitioning from the status of the Pristina City Symphony Orchestra to the Symphony Orchestra of Radio Television of Pristina in 1974, marked a decisive step in elevating and systematizing local musical activities. Another significant milestone was the opening of the Department of Music at the Faculty of Arts in 1975 (Berisha, 2004) which formalized higher music education and contributed to the professional development of numerous musicians in the subsequent decades.

Regarding, festivals, it was the inception of the first two art music festivals: *Skena Muzikore e Prishtinës* (SMP) [Music Scene of Prishtina] in 1974, and *Ditët e muzikës Kosovare* [Days of Kosovan Music] in 1979, that provided vital platforms for the presentation and promotion of art music in broader level. Based on models and formats of similar festivals such as *BEMUS*, *The Yugoslav Musical Tribune*, *Music Biennale Zagreb*,

Opatija Music Tribune, etc., these events aimed at promoting both the creativity of various composers, and the interpretive skills of various musical ensembles. E.g., only by late 1970s over forty-eight musical ensembles from the former Yugoslavia had participated in SMP and around and three hundred and fifty works had been performed (Koci, 1978), while until the last edition held in 1988 were featured over five hundred and fifty musical works spanning various genres, including orchestral, vocal-instrumental, chamber, instrumental, vocal, and choral compositions (Perkola, 2024a).

In the 1970s and 1980s, two significant song festivals were established in Kosovo: *Kosovarja Këndon* [Kosovan Women Sings], in 1972 in Ferizaj, and *Zambaku i Prizrenit* [Lily of Prizren] in 1986 in Prizren, both of which continue to thrive today, reverberating with the sounds of the songs they promote. Particularly notable was/is *Kosovarja Këndon*, a festival that, especially during 1970s and 1980s had the dual purpose of not only promoting Albanian song but also highlighting the role of women in music.

Following the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy by the Serbian Parliament in 1989 (Vickers, 1998), the decade that ensued brought immense hardship for the Albanian population in Kosovo. The early 1990s marked a profound turning point in Kosovo's political, social, artistic, and cultural landscape. The collapse of the Yugoslav state-supported model of multiethnic collaboration, underpinned by the ideology of "brotherhood and unity" until 1989, forced Kosovo Albanian politics, education, and cultural life into parallel, informal, and largely un-institutionalized realities, wherein all Albanian spheres were systematically marginalized.

Case studies from diverse geopolitical contexts, including Turkey, Ukraine, or Palestine, have illuminated how music survives and asserts claims to cultural belonging and self-determination amid contested sovereignty and political marginalization (see Turino, 2008; Bohlman, 2011). A similar dynamic was present in Kosovo during the 1990s, when art music was profoundly affected by political repression and institutional collapse. During this period, it became impossible for song festivals that had been organized in earlier decades to continue; in the absence of even the most elementary conditions – freedom, such events were interrupted. In such circumstances, a distinctive feature of the 1990s was the outward movement of certain Kosovo Albanian musical activities. Some musicians sought opportunities across the border, most notably by participating in the

Song Festival organized by RTSH in Tirana. This temporary artistic 'migration' underscores both the limitations of Kosovo's cultural infrastructure during that decade and the adaptive strategies of artists who turned to Albania as an alternative platform for artistic expression.

A Narrative Overview of *Akordet e Kosovës* (1963-1996)

The socio-cultural development that was 'bolstered' during the 1950s in Kosovo, along with the little progress made in institutional infrastructure such as Radio Prishtina Media (RP) established in 1945, and RP Music Production (as a 'record company'), made it possible for popular and so called 'light' music to develop and be promoted through festivals that were mostly dedicated to the 'entertainment' music genre. Following the trend of Yugoslav festivals with award ceremonies, (e.g., *Zagrebački Festival* [Zagreb Festival] (1953), *Opatija Festival* (1958), *Split Festival* (1960), *Beogradsko proleće* [Belgrade Spring] (1961), *Slovenska popevka* [Slovenian Song] (1962), and in Albania the *Festivali i Këngës në RTSH* [Festival of Song in RTSH] (1962), inspired by the same influences, Kosovo artists felt the need to showcase their cultural existence through same type of festival. This vision came to fruition with the inaugural edition of the festival, held on 24 May 1963 in the hall of the Provincial Popular Theater and broadcast live on TV Belgrade (Sokoli, 1996).

The festival was originally named *Akordet Muzikore* [Music Chords], but over time it became widely known by the label *Akordet e Kosovës* [Kosovo Chords]. For Kosovo in the 1960s, this festival represented a culminating achievement, which soon echoed beyond the provincial borders. The festival officially gained an institutional status in 1971 (Shita, 1970) and succeeded in presenting Kosovo music identity among the multinational citizenry of former Yugoslavia, and symbolically it was said that it was the *Albanian San Remo* (Albumi *Akordet e Kosovës*, 2018). Severin Kajtazi who served as a member of the artistic council of the festival during the 1960s and later as its director in the 1970s stated: Perhaps we do not yet fully appreciate its cultural significance, but this festival showcases our beautiful melodies, and its impact will be felt for years to come (Kajtazi, 1971). After Radio Prishtina was transformed into Radio Television of Prishtina (RTP) in 1974 (see Sokoli, 1996), it became the main broadcaster of this iconic song festival, which was the most popular and celebrated event dedicated to song contests. The festival contest was divided into three music categories/musical evenings with: children's songs, folk songs,

and entertainment songs.

According to Mehmet Emërllahu (1986) due to the growing popularity of the festival from the 1970s onwards, interest in participation exceeded all expectations and organizational capacities, so as a result, the festival's organizers decided to expand its format from three to four or five nights of performances. Each category typically accepted around 18 songs, bringing the total number of performances to approximately 54 melodies across the festival (Piraj, 1986). A fundamental aspect of festival was its award ceremony, which encompassed a diverse range of prizes recognizing artistic excellence across three distinct musical categories. The professional jury was responsible for granting the three principal awards: first, second, and third prizes, within each category. Additionally, the 'Golden Ocarina', determined by audience vote, recognized the most outstanding composition, while the 'Golden Plaque', awarded by the Union of Composers of Yugoslavia, acknowledged the best song from a professional perspective. Literary merit was also celebrated through the 'Golden Pen', an award presented by the editorial office of *Rilindja* newspaper for the finest lyrical content. Further awards included the 'Gratitude Award', conferred by the Composers' Association of Kosovo to the winners of the three competing categories, and a financial prize of 1,500 Yugoslav Dinars, accompanied by a traditional statue, bestowed by the Belgrade-based daily *Večernje novosti* for the best song of the festival. So, beyond its competitive dimension, this festival played a crucial role in promoting artists who later gained national and Yugoslav-wide recognition.

Many performers, composers, and lyricists who debuted at this festival went on to establish prominent careers. Among the most notable composers were: Severin Kajtazi, Gjergj Kaçinari, Tomor Berisha, Musa Piperku, Hüseyin Kazaz, Reshat Randobrava, Enver Stafai, Sinan Alimanović, and others. In the realm of female composers, Sevime Kabashi-Gjinali and Pranvera Badivuku were trailblazers, and the only two female composers who made a great contribution to *Akordet e Kosovës* (Bejtullahu, 2018). Their efforts paved the way for later female composers, such as Selvete Krasniqi Ismaili, Ilirijana Kuriu and others, who continued to enrich the festival's musical content during the 1980s. Historically, the position of women as composers was marginalized and inadequately recognized, with their legacy to composition largely overlooked (MClary, 1991). The same occurred in Kosovo, where it was not until the 21st century that women began to consistently emerge as composers. Prior to this period, women were more commonly

promoted as performers, particularly as vocalists and/or instrumentalists. So, through festival *Akordet e Kosovës* became well-known and artistically matured performing artists: Nexhmije Pagarusha, Shehendere Bërlajolli, Liljana Çavolli, Milica Milisavljević, Shpresa Gashi, Mirjana Pavlović, Ivana Vitalić, Vera Oruçaj, Tonina Bala, then (male singers) Alush Nush, Bashkim Paçuku, Luan Hajra, Haki Misini, Sabri Fejzullahu, Xhelal Bakraçi, Riza Bytyqi, Besnik Krajku, and others (Perkola, 2024b).

During the era of *Akordet e Kosovës* (1963-1980s), festival programs and media coverage reflected Kosovo’s dual positioning within Yugoslavia: affirming Albanian cultural heritage while simultaneously participating in broader multiethnic frameworks. The festival itself was emblematic of multinationalism and multiculturalism within Kosovo, featuring songs performed in Albanian, Serbian, and Turkish, and embodying the ideological framework of ‘brotherhood and unity’ proclaimed by Yugoslav governance.



Figure 1. Collage of photographs from the *Akordet e Kosovës* Song Festival, 1970s-1980s¹

¹ Collage components: Retrieved from Webpage *Fest Akordet*, accessed December 28, 2025, <https://www.festakordet.com>. Collage created and annotated by the author.

Following the political crises of the 1990s, however, the dynamics of cultural development changed dramatically, facing numerous challenges, particularly regarding institutional continuity. The year 1989 marked the last regular edition of *Akordet e Kosovës* festival. Efforts to hold the next edition of *Akordet e Kosovës* began in 1995, but only one event took place before the festival was interrupted by the Serbian regime's police. Another attempt on December 26, 1996, resulted in a hastily organized edition, which ultimately marked the festival's conclusion. Writing a historical narrative and compiling data on this festival, which has not been sufficiently explored in Kosovan musicology, proved challenging due to the scarcity of available sources. Indeed, even in the scholarly literature of the former Yugoslavia's popular music festivals, *Akordet e Kosovës* remains notably absent from local and Balkan musicological discourse (see Arnautović, 2020). Its legacy has not been documented, leaving a gap in scholarly research on its impact and contributions. Due to the limited development of musicology in Kosovo, no detailed documentation of this festival has been produced thus far, with the exception of recent pioneering efforts. Notably, my PhD dissertation includes Appendix 2, which presents tables (though not fully completed with data) listing the songs, singers, and composers by most of festival editions (Perkola, 2024a). Additionally, the digital platform *Fest Akordet* (Bytyqi and Sefedini, 2023) offers an emerging resource, which includes a partial online archive of the festival, featuring songs, books, scores, photographs, documents and media writings from the time, as well as interviews with singers, festival directors, and others.

Interim period

The transition from the 1990s to the post-war era in Kosovo brought profound transformations in its social and cultural landscape, shaped by the aftermath of war and the pursuit of peace, as well as by the tension between nationalism and multiculturalism, and between tradition and modernity. These societal changes significantly influenced the musical environment, where the post-2000 period witnessed efforts to move away from past practices while seeking rapid integration into new institutional and cultural structures. Kosovo's society underwent a marked political and social shift, moving from the 'forced' multicultural unity of the Yugoslav era to a system characterized by democratic pluralism (Bardhoshi and Canolli, 2021). Consequently, the broader artistic landscape exhibited a tendency to replace everything 'old' with the 'new'. Especially, modernity significantly influenced the emerging democratic society.

Music festivals, particularly in post-conflict societies, play a crucial role in shaping national identity and collective memory (Bohlman, 2010). New adaptive and strategic pathways were necessary to rebuild a sustainable model for festivals. They were one of the main activities that created new opportunities for the development of music, that promoted new music in a programmatic and systematic way, and were the only manifestation that can restore the lost space (Rudi, 2013). From the *International Festival of Chamber Music* (founded in 2000) to the *Sunny Hill Festival* (founded in 2018) and RTK Song Festival (founded in 2023) a considerable growth has been seen in the number of music events and competitions (classical, jazz, rock, pop, folk, etc.).

Year	City	Genre	Festival Name
2000	Prishtina	Art Music	Kosova Kamer Fest - International Chamber Music Festival
2001	Vitia	Folklore	Flakadani i Karadakut
2001	RTV21 Media	Song Festival	Polifest
2002	Prishtina	Art Music	ReMusica International Contemporary Music Festival
2003	Prishtina	Children's Dance Festival	Ylberi i Prishtinës
2005	Prishtina	Art Music	Ars Kosova - International Competition of Young Musicians
2005	Prishtina	Jazz	Prishtina Jazz Festival
2006	Prishtina	Art Music	DAM – International Festival of Music
2007	Gjakova	Children's Festival	Lyra Fest
2008	Various Towns	Art Music	International Piano Competition the Young Pianist
2009	Gjilan	Children's Festival	Lyra
2010	Prishtina	Art Music	Chopin Piano Fest
2010	Prishtina	Song Festival	Kosova Fest
2011	Prizren	Pop, Rock, Hip-Hop, Electronic, Folk, Classical	NGOM Fest
2013	Prishtina	Art Music	Viluela Guitar Fest
2016	Peja	Art Music	Peja International Guitar Festival
2016	Komoran	Folk	National Folk Festival
2016	Ferizaj	Children's Festival	International Festival a-mol
2017	Prishtina	Art Music	Kosova Brass Festival
2018	Prishtina	Art Music	Prishtina International Vocal Festival
2018	Prishtina	Pop, Hip-Hop, Electronic Dance Music (EDM)	Sunny Hill Festival
2018	Peja	Folk	Folk Song Festival
2018	Gjilan	Children's Festival	Rising Star
2023	RTK Media	Song Festival	RTK Song Festival
2024	Prishtina	Folk	Ocarina Fest

Table 1. Post-2000 Music Festivals Established in Kosovo: Overview. Table compiled by the author.

When examining the trajectory of song festivals, the continuity of tradition from the latter half of the 20th century into the early decades of the 21st century is evident through the existential persistence of certain festivals established in the 1970s and 1980s. Notable examples include *Kosovarja Këndon* - a festival dedicated to celebrating the female figure as a performer of Albanian folk music, and *Zambaku i Prizrenit* - as a traditional song festival with a competitive character. This continuity underscores the enduring cultural significance of these events. However, it becomes apparent that Kosovo required a festival akin to *Akordet e Kosovës*, one that could function as a nationally significant televised song competition under the auspices of the state broadcaster. There have been numerous initiatives. While some of these festivals gained popularity for a certain period, such as *Polifest* (2001-2010), organized by Polifonia and RT21 Media, *Kosova Fest* (2010-2018), and *ShowFest*, none have succeeded in creating lasting continuity or an institutionalized format comparable to song festivals in other region countries such as Zagreb, Ljubljana, Belgrade, Tirana and others places.

Recent years tendency has shown that festivals have evolved into multimedia events, offering an array of performances that encompass not only music but also visual and interactive elements, designed to immerse audiences and align with the festivals' broader thematic objectives (Gligorijević, 2019). A prominent illustration of a contemporary international cultural festival event in the Balkans is the Sunny Hill Festival, inaugurated in 2018 by internationally acclaimed artist Dua Lipa and her father Dukagjin Lipa (Sunny Hill Festival, n.d.). The festival quickly established itself as a transnational hub that connects Kosovo with global cultural circuits. Its cosmopolitan profile is visible in the high percentage of international participants, around 45% of tickets are purchased from abroad, particularly by members of the diaspora (Xharra and Zeqiri, 2024), and in its lineups, which bring together internationally renowned artists with global digital reach. Situated in Prishtina, Kosovo, this event has rapidly garnered international attention, effectively transforming the region into a focal point for both global and local talent.

The revolutionary shift in festival platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be overlooked too. It had a profound impact on song festivals worldwide. Live performances, a fundamental aspect of these events, were severely limited, disrupting both artistic production and audience engagement. Song festivals struggled to maintain their continuity, because traditional festival formats were either canceled or transitioned to

online platforms, significantly altering the interactive and communal aspects of these events. For the first time in its history, the *Eurovision Song Contest* (the biggest and most famous international song competition in Europe, since 1956) was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic (Savage, 2020). The effects continued through 2021 and 2022, until festival life gradually began to return to normal. More recently, globalization and modernization have driven numerous transformations, softening boundaries between musical genres and various global social distinctions. This has given rise to hybrid forms that challenge traditional classifications.

Consequently, the interplay of globalization, technology, and social awareness is shaping the future of music in ways that reflect the complexities of contemporary society, ultimately fostering a more dynamic and interconnected musical world. Within this broader global context, Kosovo too has entered a new phase: precisely after these global transformations, the moment arrived to establish, in 2023, a festival under the auspices of the public broadcaster RTK, an initiative that aspires to provide Kosovo with a nationally significant and institutionally grounded song festival with international standards.

The Birth of the RTK Song Festival (2023) and Kosovo's Aspirations for Eurovision

So, to establish a song festival at RTK (Radio Television of Kosovo), Kosovo needed a concerted effort spanning 24 years after the war to organize its inaugural event within the state broadcaster. For many years the idea of establishing a song festival (in RTK media) has been at the center of the attention of various cultural institutions in Kosovo, however, these efforts had not taken a definitive shape until year 2023 (Minga, 2023). This first Festival edition, that came as a result of collective efforts from various individuals, not only successfully brought this project to fruition but also stirred profound excitement among the public. On October 26, 2023, a new and vibrant song festival was inaugurated at RTK Media. This festival represented a significant step forward for new musical genres, offering an opportunity for competition and affirmation, a new gateway to various possibilities and a unique, multifaceted event. But, for those deeply rooted in the collective memory of the past, it was challenging to accept that this festival was being referred to as the 'first edition' of a Song Festival, because the connection with 'tradition' is something that could not be easily overlooked. Also, from the perspective of musicological discourse and historical documentation, it is natural to trace early evidence

of cultural events and, when such evidence exists, to emphasize their extended existence and longevity rather than disregard their historical continuity. This principle remains valid even when the festival's format has been adapted to accommodate different political and social circumstances. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that the Song Festival at RTK, in broader terms, should be regarded as a continuation of the *Akordet e Kosovës* in RTP. Although these festivals belong to distinct cultural milieus, they share an intrinsic connection in terms of format, purpose, and institutional affiliation. This connection underscores a continuity that transcends the immediate temporal and contextual differences, further enriching their historical and cultural significance.

RTK Song Festival was conceived as an 'invention' as something that starts from the beginning, and not on the basis of a tradition. This approach was claimed by Adi Krasta (director of the festival), specifying that *Akordet e Kosovës* was not a free activity but was held under the umbrella of the former Yugoslavia, and therefore such activities should not be combined (RTK, 2023). However, this assertion is not only disputed by myself but also by many artists and musicians who disagree with the prevailing view that Kosovo's cultural developments during its time in Yugoslavia are negligible.

The socio-political landscape from the 1940s to the 1980s, despite its flaws, played a crucial role in fostering significant cultural progress across various musical activities, such as education, performance groups, and festivals. Musicians had the opportunity to study in different regions of Yugoslavia and engage with European musical trends through various Yugoslav festivals, enriching their artistic expressions and practices. Comparative experiences demonstrate that cultural progress can flourish within larger state frameworks. For example, music festivals in Croatia or Slovenia maintained continuity from the Yugoslav period into the era of independence, undergoing processes of modernization and institutional development while preserving discernible traces of their historical origins.

Kosovo could have adopted a similar model, cultivating a trajectory of cultural continuity that allows its musical and festival heritage to evolve without severing connections to its formative past. Also, from a methodological standpoint, musicological and historical research requires tracing the earliest possible imprints of cultural and artistic traditions, rather than erasing or artificially reinventing them in a contemporary framework

(Dahlhaus, 1983). Recognizing *Akordet e Kosovës* within its Yugoslav context is therefore not a diminishment but an affirmation of continuity, illustrating how cultural identities evolve through adaptation rather than rupture. So, regarding this, Song Festival in RTK marked the beginning of an innovative song contest journey; however, it raises the question: Should this festival be considered a continuation of *Akordet e Kosovës* or regarded as a distinct entity?

To approach to this question, it should be compared with similar cases in post-conflict or politically transitional societies. For instance, the transformation of music festivals in Eastern European countries after the fall of communism, such as Poland's Opole Festival, might offer insight (Korzeniewska, 2021). Many of these festivals faced dilemmas about how to balance historical legacies with new political realities, as they transitioned from state-sponsored events to more modern, independent formats. The same is true for some post-Soviet republics, where festivals had to navigate the cultural shift between Soviet traditions and new independent identities.

In the case of RTK Song Festival, neither the first nor the second edition demonstrated any connection to the successful legacy of *Akordet e Kosovës*. In the second edition (24-26 October 2024) which included moments aimed at bridging the past and tradition with the present and modernity, the existence of *Akordet e Kosovës* was still denied. In the supplementary segments, such as the musical collages accompanying the competitive songs, priority was given to past festival songs and performers from Albania, while at no point the songs of key figures such as Musa Piperku, Gjergj Kaçinari, Tomor Berisha, Reshat Randobrava, or Severin Kajtazi were performed or even mentioned. This complete omission of Kosovo's rich musical tradition from the 1970s and 1980s represents a significant departure from the historical context.

For participating artists, winning national festivals represents the realization of a dream, offering a valuable opportunity to showcase their talents on the international stage. Such victories often serve as springboards, propelling artists to greater recognition and facilitating cultural exchange with artists from diverse backgrounds. A prominent example of this is the Eurovision Song Contest, where winners frequently gain global visibility, and their music transcends national borders. However, in Kosovo, the political context directly shapes these artistic opportunities. Winners of the RTK Song Festival are

unable to participate in Eurovision because Kosovo's public broadcaster, RTK, is not a member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), a prerequisite for entry (Papadopoulos, 2023). This structural limitation illustrates how state recognition, international political membership, and the geopolitical status of Kosovo constrain its artists' access to global cultural platforms.

From the perspective of globalization and network society, as theorized by Manuel Castells, cultural participation is increasingly mediated through transnational networks of media, communication, and institutional connections (Castellas, 2000). Kosovo's absence from these networks, resulting from political non-recognition and institutional exclusion creates a tension between local cultural expression and global integration. This reflects the reality that contemporary music networks and cultural developments are profoundly shaped and constrained by political factors more than the cultural ones.

Conclusion

The evolution of song festivals in Kosovo reflects a broader narrative of transformation, and adaptation in response to shifting socio-political realities. From *Akordet e Kosovës* (1963-1996) to the RTK Song Festival (2023), these events have served not only as artistic showcases but also as markers of the Kosovo's historical and political transitions. *Akordet e Kosovës* flourished within the cultural policies of socialist Yugoslavia providing Kosovan musicians with a platform for national and regional recognition because it was not merely an entertainment event but a key site of cultural affirmation within the complex framework of Yugoslav multiculturalism.

Following its dissolution in the 1990s, the erasure of its legacy from official narratives exemplifies what Pierre Nora terms 'the selective construction of memory' where certain cultural institutions are forgotten, while others are rebranded to fit new national narratives (Nora, 1989). The RTK Song Festival, emerging sixty years later, represents Kosovo's contemporary aspirations for cultural reintegration and artistic globalism, yet it remains constrained by political obstacles that hinder full international participation. The absence of explicit recognition of *Akordet e Kosovës* within the RTK Song Festival exemplifies what Andreas Huyssen terms presentist nationalism, where cultural production is oriented toward future aspirations rather than historical continuity (Huyssen, 2003).

However, as Philip Bohlman (2010) and Simon Frith (1998) argue, musical events inherently carry historical resonance, meaning that despite its rebranding, the RTK Song Festival inevitably positions itself within the lineage of its predecessor. This paradox underscores a critical pattern in post-socialist and post-conflict societies, where cultural institutions are reconfigured to align with shifting political narratives (Huysen, 2003). Furthermore, the comparison between these two festivals highlights the persistent entanglement of cultural production with political determinants. While *Akordet e Kosovës* operated in a restrictive yet structurally supportive environment within Yugoslavia, the RTK Song Festival unfolds in an era of globalization and digital connectivity, theoretically offering artists greater exposure. Yet, systemic barriers, such as Kosovo's non-membership in the EBU, continue to limit its international visibility. This contrast underscores a crucial irony: in an era where technological advancements have made artistic mobility more accessible than ever, Kosovo's cultural institutions still face structural limitations that restrict their full participation in global music networks. Ultimately, song festivals in Kosovo function as more than mere entertainment platforms; they serve as dynamic sites of cultural memory, artistic innovation, and identity formation. They reflect the shifting intersections of history, politics, and music, revealing the complexities of cultural continuity and rupture within a changing national landscape.

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Theme: *Music and Dance in the Balkans: Intersections of Tradition, Identity, and Innovation*

Research Article

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Between Ottoman Legacy and Hybrid Dance Identity¹

ABSTRACT

The Ottoman Empire reigned in the Balkans from the second half of the 14th until the beginning of the 20th century. During their reign of over 500 years in Serbia alone, almost all aspects of life and tangible and intangible cultural heritage were strongly influenced by the Ottomans and the Turkish, in general, oriental way of life. These living circumstances and constant socio-political challenges greatly influenced the national and ethnic identities of Serbs, Albanians, Turks, Roma, and Gorani, residing in and outside of the territory of today's Republic of Serbia, leading to political and turbulent events throughout history. The current territorial and ethnic disputes in the province of Kosovo and Metohija are a result of the last wars and conflicts in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the 1990s and early 2000s. The impact of acculturation and cultural influences among diverse ethnic groups due to migration and socio-political situations has long been a topic of interest for researchers. This has led to a multifaceted perspective on ethnicity, identity, and tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This article will concentrate on an ethnochoreogenetical exploration and movement analysis of the dances *Kılıç*, *Kalač*, *Kalačojna*, and *Kolloqoj* from the area of Prizren, which Turks, Serbs, Albanians, Roma, Aromanians, and Gorani have practised while presenting that ethnic and national identity through common dance history and practice can be fluid and hybrid, particularly in politically disputed and disrupted regions such as the province of Kosovo and Metohija.

KEYWORDS

Kosovo and
Metohija

Serbia

Dance identity

Multiculturalism

Ethnochoreology

¹ This article presents an excerpt from the author's Master's thesis (2024).

Kılıç, Kalač, Kalačojna, or Kolloqoj?

First, I will delve into the origins of the contextual traditional folk dances of this article. Utilising a methodological approach that integrates ethnophilological approaches to ethnochoreology, ethnomusicology, ethnology, and history, I coin the term ‘Ethnochoreogenesis’ within this work to signify the method of scrutinising the genesis of a traditional folk dance.² While I will partially incorporate this method in my subsequent writing, the precise approaches, research methods, and the term itself will be subject to further exploration in my future research endeavours.

Originating from the times of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the mentioned dances emerged from the area of Prizren through the dance repertoire of the Turkish and specifically the dance *Kılıç*, while the area was intensely polarised through Ottoman law. Although this dance was primarily performed as a sword dance, other ethnic groups in the region adopted and adapted it, making it part of their intangible cultural heritage, which benefited the collective self-identification of the ethnic groups.³ The origins of the ‘original’ dance *per se* have not been studied thoroughly enough, but by examining its originating Turkish name *Kılıç* (Turk.: Sword, Knife) and the early dance practice, where the Turkish men held swords while dancing (Janković and Janković, 1939: 29; Ranković, 2016: 118), it can be suggested that this dance has an even longer history of origin and dance practice, where sword dances, or war dances in general, have been an integrated practice in the territories of the Balkans, Anatolia, and Central Asia dating back to prehistoric times (Solmaz and Feratan, 2023: 753-754). These war dances presented a dramatisation of “courage and bravery since ancient times” (Solmaz and Feratan, 2023: 749), leading to the fostering and nurturing of unity in communities, as their past ‘heroism’ has not been forgotten (Solmaz and Feratan, 2023: 749; Hoerbürger, 1994: 38-39). Janet Susan Reineck notes that the Albanian version of the dance from the region of

² In this article, I introduce the concept of ‘Ethnochoreogenesis’ to describe a preliminary method for exploring the origins, transformations, and transmission of traditional folk dances. While I apply it to a single dance, here it is employed comparatively across multiple related dances to trace shared characteristics, adaptations, and hybridisations over time. The approach combines movement analysis, as well as structural-formal analysis of a dance, with ethnophilological investigation. In this context, ethnophilology aims to recover lost performances using historical, cultural, philological, and textual evidence. This approach, called ‘ethnopaleography’ by Dennis Tedlock and ‘ethnoarchaeology’ by others, was redefined as ‘ethnophilology’ by Joseph Harris. It offers a promising way to interpret earlier performative traditions through texts, considering contemporary expressions and understandings in relation to historical writings (Tangherlini, 2003: 146). Ethnochoreogenesis, as first employed in this article, constitutes a first formulation of the concept and methodology, which remains to be further developed in future research.

³ For further information on the transmission of traditional folk dances between Anatolia and the Balkans, see (Özbilgin, 2012).

Opolje, namely *Këllçoja*, can be categorised as one of the Albanian war dances, which supports the earlier presumption:

Though local amateur groups sometimes perform *Këllçoja* with sabres, none of the informants questioned during this study recall ever having seen sabres actually being used at weddings. However, based upon the kinds of motifs and movement style associated with *Këllçoja*, the derivation of the name and other references to the use of sabres in this dance, it is reasonable to assume that it falls into the general category of Albanian war dances (Valle Luftarake) having been danced in the past with weapons and depicting battle motifs. In today's *Këllçoja* as performed in Opoja [Albanian name for the region of *Opolje*], no weapons or weapon substitutes are used, but the wide, slow sweeping arm gestures and the heavy steps which characterize the dance seem to reflect its precious association with rehearsal and reenactment of fighting motifs. (Reineck, 1985: 93-94)

Milica Ilijin's ethnochoreological fieldwork from 1956-1957 in Prizren contributes to the understanding of the Serbian version of the dance *Kılıç*, known as *Kalač* (Ilijin, 1959), indicating its Turkish origin. Ilijin concludes that *Kalač* (among Albanians, also named *Kolloqoj/Kollxhojn*, and among Muslims – Gorani, *Kalačojna/Kaladžojna* or *Kaladžojna/Kaladžojna*) is an "imported dance from Turkey which among us, as well as in Turkey, appears in various choreographic, rhythmic and melodic variants. [...] Serbs in the villages do not know about K'ł'č [Serbian writing method of the Turkish *Kılıç*], which supports the fact that it is an adopted dance among Serbs, and not of Serbian origin, as [opposed to how] individuals in Prizren present it." (ibid. 155).⁴ Furthermore, Ilijin notes that *K'ł'č*, performed by Serbs, Albanians, Turks, Aromanians, and Roma, is considered a shared cultural heritage with variations evolving over time depending on socio-political changes and needs in the region (ibid.). Other ethnic communities replaced the use of swords by the Turkish in the dance with symbolically equivalent props such as wooden sticks or handkerchiefs over the centuries. In this context, the Janković sisters also observed the use of swords such as scimitars in the dance during their fieldwork among the Muslim community in Prizren (Janković and Janković, 1937: 99).

The Ottoman Empire's rule had a profound influence on the Balkan region, leading to a significant migration of tangible and intangible cultural heritage from the entire empire. The emergence of characteristic oriental ornaments and structures in music and song, as

⁴ Previous and further translations by the author, unless otherwise stated.

well as the direct migration of instruments, has led to a symbiosis of cultural heritages in the area. Although rural areas were less impacted than urban regions, the vast influence of Ottoman culture was visible among all ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija, particularly in the economically strategic city of Prizren, where the Ottoman orchestra form of *Çalgı* accompanied the ethnically various versions of *Kılıç* (Serb.: Čalgija; Alb.: Çalgija). This form consisted of instruments such as the *Oud* (Turk.: Ud), *Qanun* (Türk.: Kanun), clarinet (Serb.: Grnata; Alb.: Gernata), violin, *Saz* (Serb.: Saz; Alb.: Saze), *Cümbüş* (Serb.: Džumbuš; Alb.: Xhumbush), *Daire/Dajre*, *Def/Daf*, *Darbuka* (Serb.: Tarabuka). However, this was limited exclusively to urban areas, whereas rural regions accompanied the dance with the instruments *Zurna* (Serb.: Zurla) and *Davul* (Serb.: Tapan; Alb.: Tupan). This practice has also found its way to the Balkans during Ottoman rule (Hoerburger, 1994: 55-57; Vasić, 2011: 15-16).

While the historical context of *Kılıç* reveals how the traditional folk dance spread and was adapted across communities, its movement structures offer the clearest evidence of this transformation and a shared cultural heritage. By analysing its formal structures and movement, the foundation for the later variants of *Kalač*, *Kalačojna*, and *Kolloqoj* can be, indeed, traced back to *Kılıç*. The following writing of this article, therefore, turns to a detailed movement analysis, beginning with *Kılıç* itself.

Formal Characteristics and Structures of *Kılıç*

To date, there has been limited written information on the particular origins and characteristics of the dance since its first recording. Only a handful of researchers, mainly Serbs and Germans, would write about these factors.⁵

The *Kılıç* is a structured and lateral Turkish traditional folk dance performed by both males and females, where they could dance 'isolated' (every group for themselves based on gender) or 'mixed' (both genders together) (Ilijin, 1959: 155), in the rhythm of 12/8 (3+2+2+3+2), although the musical accompaniment is in 22/8 and 24/8. Its most notable feature is the incorporation of 'swords' into the performance, although this has transformed into the replacement of swords with handkerchiefs.⁶ The Janković sisters

⁵ Due to this fact, I will rely upon the analytical aspect of the dance based on the video recording primarily by Dauer *et al.* (1980b) and, secondary, on the audio recording by Milica Ilijin (Lajić Mihajlović and Jovanović, 2018a: 173; Lajić Mihajlović and Jovanović, 2018b: 40).

⁶ Milica Ilijin also documented the use of 'sabres' by the Turkish ethnic community during her fieldwork in the village of Mamuša (Prizren area) in 1956 and 1957 (Ilijin, 1959: 155).

suggested that this dance may have had ritualistic significance (Janković and Janković, 1937: 99).

Based on the video provided by Dauer *et al.* from 1971 (see Appendix 1), four men form an open, non-formally interconnected circle while facing the opposite partner. Afterwards, they begin the dance to the right following constant lateral movement (right-left), with occasional turns around their own axis in the same spot (always in the second bar of each phrase).⁷



Figure 1. Presentation of the first motif in the Turkish traditional folk dance *Kiliç*. Screenshot of recorded video provided by Dauer *et al.* (1980b) at 0'29" min.

In examining the kinetics of the dance, the initial position entails bent knees. Subsequently, the right leg is raised, while the left foot only raises its heel. From this initial position, the right foot takes a step slightly to the right, shifting the body's weight to the right leg. Following this, the left foot steps to the right, crossing over the right leg. The sequence continues as the right foot makes a step slightly to the right, once again shifting the body weight to the right leg. This sequence constitutes the first motif of the dance, which is then repeated laterally – all steps are mirrored to the left. Moving to both right and left would be accompanied by the upper body facing slightly in the directions while the head focuses on the centre of the circle.

⁷ The dance was choreographed for the purpose of recording the video, and therefore, the geometrical formation of a line with sagittal movement can be seen, as well. For further information on the entire content of the film, see (Pllana, 1980b).

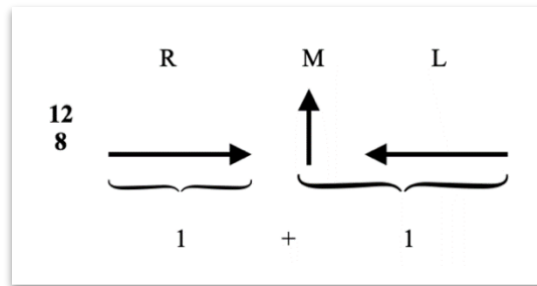


Figure 1.1. Movement directions to the right (R), middle (M) and left (L) of *Kılıç* in 12/8 for one entire part (two bars: 1 + 1) of the dance.

The initial hand position at the start of the dance involves the left arm rising to a middle level and then facing the centre of the circle, while the right arm remains at a low level next to the body and subsequently moves to the lower back. For the subsequent movement to the left, the hand gestures are mirrored, with the left hand placed on the lower back while the right arm rises and faces the centre.

Despite the lateral movements in the dance, the pathway consistently circles to the right and predominantly shifts leftward, resulting in larger steps to the right than to the left.

In terms of music, the dance would be accompanied by the orchestral form of *Çalgı*, in this case specifically, the instruments *Ud*, *Kanun*, clarinet, violin, *Darbuka*, *Cümbüş* in the Makam *Mahur*, which consists of the Jins *Ajam* and *Rast*.⁸

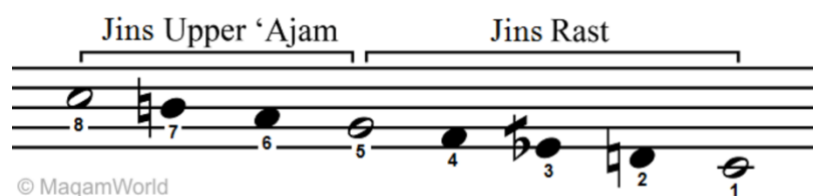


Fig. 1.2. The basic scale for the Makam *Mahur*, consisting of the Jins *Ajam* and *Rast*, available: <https://www.maqamworld.com/en/maqam/mahur.php> (accessed: 28/07/2024).

Formal Characteristics and Structures of *Kalač*

The established Turkish traditional folk dance, *Kılıç*, was adopted and adapted by the Serbian population of the Prizren area, known among the Serbs as *Kalač* (see Appendix 2). Although it originated from the Turkish, the Serbian population would have a varied version of the dance “assimilated in the Slavic spirit” (Ilijin, 1959: 155), in which the basic rhythm was transformed from 12/8 to various rhythms with five ‘figures,’ with the meters

⁸ Milica Ilijin notes in her fieldnotes that she also encountered the Makam *Hicaz* for the melody of *Kılıç* (Lajić Mihajlović and Jovanović, 2018a: 173).

of 5/4; 2/4; 4/8 + 5/8; 3/4 (Janković and Janković, 1937: 113; Trifunović, 2017: 50).⁹ These figures consist of the same step patterns, differentiated primarily by their adaptation to distinct rhythms and the varied accentuation of certain movements. The last figure would be performed in a livelier manner, also known among the Serbian population in Prizren as *Ćifte*. According to Dejan Trifunović, a good male dancer would be considered someone “who performs the figures the best, and for a good female dancer one who looks beautiful while dancing, dances to [the] bar and humbly waves [with her] hand” (Trifunović, 2017: 50).

Kalač is performed by both men and women in an indirectly interconnected open circle in which the performers connect in two ways: 1. a single handkerchief is being held on one end with one hand by all dancers in the circle; 2. opposite partners hold one handkerchief by its ends so that it results in a crossing of handkerchiefs between all performers (Ilijin, 1959: 155).¹⁰ According to the Janković sisters, the reason for such an interconnection was that the Serbian population of Prizren “did not have bigger space for dancing, nor do they have it today. Therefore, [the] Oro could not expand neither in houses nor in courtyards” (Janković and Janković, 1937: 95). In the case of the female performers, they could also be non-formally-interconnected in an open circle, where each female dancer holds a folded handkerchief in their right hand and waves with it from left to right throughout the entire figures and according to the rhythm.

As is the case with *Kılıç*, the Serbian traditional folk dance *Kalač* is a structured and lateral dance with circular movement pathways that lean always to the right. The dance begins with the formation of an open but indirectly interconnected circle through handkerchiefs in which the dancers face the opposite partner in the circle while the body is faced to the right. While performing the dance, the dancers slightly bend their knees while their upper body is upright throughout the entire dance, showcasing the style of ‘pride and elegance’ of their cultural heritage, which was also a characteristic of most of the cities under Ottoman occupational rule, where Serbs lived. Although there were no particular turns

⁹ During my fieldwork in Belgrade, I also encountered the rhythm 9/8, which was presented by performers of the Serbian National Ensemble ‘Kolo’. I did not encounter this rhythm in any written descriptions and analyses by other researchers, which suggests that this particular rhythm was used for choreographic purposes as the dance presented by the performers was taken from the choreography *Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena* (1948) by Olga Skovran, although the basic dance step patterns were based on the analysis of steps by the Janković sisters (see Janković and Janković, 1937: 113-121). See <https://youtu.be/WJIRzKFQdxg?si=Mmcf3JcdUWHMRv21&t=338> (accessed: 28/07/2024).

¹⁰ It is suggested that “Kalač was [in] earlier [times] performed with crossed swords.” (Trifunović, 2017: 50).

around the axis, the male dancers would sometimes perform a Grande Plié in front of the female dancers. The dance *per se* is structured in the same way as the Turkish version, in which the left heel rises in the beginning while the right leg is lifted. Afterwards, the right leg takes a step to the right, transferring the body's weight. This sequence is then repeated with the left and right legs. Subsequently, the left leg crosses in front of the right while the body realigns to face the centre before returning to its initial position. Following this, the right heel once again lifts as the left leg steps to the left, and then the right leg crosses in front of the left, concluding the entire phrase of the dance.

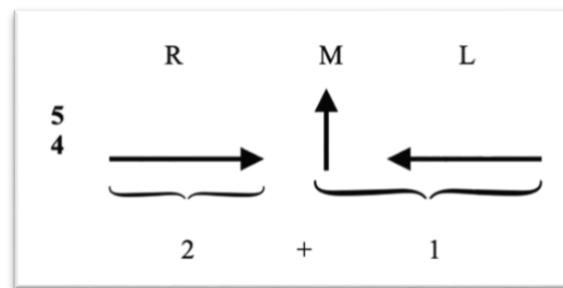


Figure 2. Movement directions to the right (R), middle (M) and left (L) of *Kalač* in 5/4 for one entire part (three bars: 2 + 1) of the dance.

The Janković sisters observed that the dance was accompanied by an orchestral form of *Čalgija*, which would have been led by local musicians of Romani descent, who were ordered and paid to play. Unlike the Turkish version, this orchestra was comprised solely of the violin, *def* (large frame drum), and *grnata* (clarinet) (Janković and Janković, 1937: 96-97), which would later in choreographed and staged artistic pieces be transformed and accompanied by entire orchestras, who either play in a symphonic or ‘authentic’ style.¹¹

¹¹ Olga Skovran’s Traditional Folk Dance Choreography *Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena* (1948) would incorporate a symphonic sound style as musical accompaniment, including the Opera singing style of ‘Bel canto’ (see Nikola Petrović, 2024). The National Ensemble “Kolo” would in 2013, present a different choreography for the Prizren area by Dejan Trifunović in which the music is presented in a ‘traditional’ setting. The musical arrangement would expand the Janković sisters’ mentioned instruments, including the *tarabuka* (goblet drum) and *čalgija*, in the musical accompaniment of the choreography. See (Aneta Belic, 2013).



Figure 2.1. Misé-en-scene of Olga Skovran's *Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena* showing the male performers' interconnection with handkerchiefs, 1950s (Đurić, 2021: 58).

Formal Characteristics and Structures of *Kalačojna*

The Gorani and Muslim traditional folk dance known as *Kalačojna* (or *Kaladžojna*) is a significant traditional folk dance within the Gorani ethnic group and is commonly performed in the ethnically divided region spanning across Serbia (territory known as *Prizrenska Gora*) – southern region, Albania (territory known as *Kuksa Gora*) – northern region, and North Macedonia (territory known as *Pološka Gora*) – western region.¹² This particular dance is typically performed at weddings, celebrations, and significant events, however, exclusively by men.¹³ Ljubica and Danica Janković noted that “Muslims in Prizren [meaning: Gorani people] to date dance *Kaladžojna* with Yatagan’s, but with other melodies. The Prizren population [Serbs] believe that the Muslim *Kaladžojna* does not have anything in common with *Kalač*, which is danced by the Orthodox [population of

¹² It should be noted that this dance was also practised among the Serbian population in the area of Sirinička Župa and Peć, as well as among the Serbs in Tetovo, Polog region, northwestern North Macedonia. Although the name of the dance was the same, it varied to a greater extent, leaving only limited visible similarities. In Tetovo and Sirinička Župa, women performed it in an open, non-interconnected circle, where each hand, depending on the movement pathway, would be placed in front of the eyes. Nevertheless, the limited similarities in the basic dance step patterns and the formation, interconnection, and name of the dance suggest that this traditional folk dance had a history of migration to these localities (see Janković and Janković, 1939: 107-109; Lakušić, 2015: 70-73; 113). This connection will be researched in the future.

¹³ According to Vladimir Janevski, this traditional folk dance “has no ritualistic complex, but perhaps sometime in the past, this dance lost its ritual status over long periods and gained the primacy of a secular dance.” (Janevski, 2016: 3).

Prizren].” (Janković and Janković, 1937: 99). Unlike the previously mentioned traditional folk dances, *Kalačojna* does not revolve around a single dance. Instead, it encompasses a collection of dances that all belong to the category of *Kalačojna*.¹⁴ For the purpose of this analysis, I will examine two distinct traditional folk dances of *Kalačojna*, drawing comparisons to the Turkish, Serbian, and Albanian variations (see Appendices 3 and 4).

In the first version of the dance, the dance is performed in the rhythm 12/8 (3+2+2+2+3), although there can be versions where the rhythm is *poco rubato*.¹⁵ The performers form a non-interconnected open circle, facing the opposite partner in the circle. Following this, the traditional folk dance would have constant lateral, and in some instances sagittal, movement, where the dance follows a movement pathway that leans to the right with occasional half-turns around the own axis as well as full bends of the knees, which are held in that position for the duration of one musical bar.

One distinctive stylistic element of this dance is the maintenance of slightly bent knees throughout the entire performance. The dance begins with the right leg rising while the left heel only raises. Subsequently, the right foot makes a step to the right from its previous position, and the left foot crosses the right with the next step. Following this, the right foot takes a step to the right while the body reorients itself towards the center. As this occurs, the right heel rises while the left leg also rises into a gestural position, transferring the body’s weight onto the right leg. From this position, the left leg steps to the left, and the right foot crosses over the left. In completing this sequence, the left foot steps backwards and raises its heel while the right leg is raised. This entire phrase can then be repeated once more.¹⁶

¹⁴ According to my North Macedonian contacts, of whom one is an ethnochoreologist of Gorani descent, I was told that these are not varied versions but rather 17 semi-independent and connected traditional folk dances concluding the *Kalačojna*.

¹⁵ For the first version, see (RamusD 2006). Regarding the *rubato* rhythm, see (Dzek 2011).

¹⁶ In a version of the dance originating from the Albanian side of the Gora territory, particularly in the vicinity of Kukës, *Kalačojna* is performed at the 15th Folklore Festival of Songs and Dances (Alb.: *XV Festivali folkloristik kenges dhe i valleve*) from 1959 in Kukës, Albania. This rendition involves two male children executing larger springs between each step as they move in a circular pathway towards the right. Unlike the earlier analysed form of the dance, they hold handkerchiefs in their right hand with the other often positioned freely in the mid-level airspace. See <https://youtu.be/EaaUPWE-r0A?t=281> (accessed: 31/07/2024). It should be noted that in this case, the children could be of Albanian or Gorani descent, as it is not defined. Their traditional folk costumes, the dance, and the locality support both possibilities.

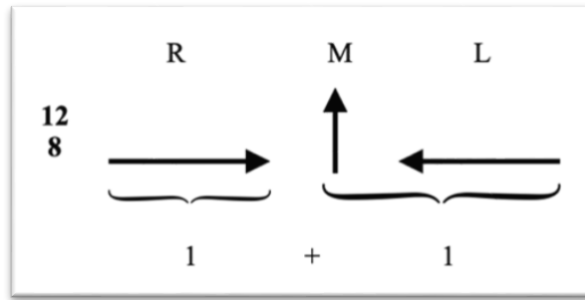


Figure 3. Movement directions to the right (R), middle (M) and left (L) of *Kalačojna* in 12/8 for one entire part (two bars: 1 + 1) of the dance.

The use of hands is visible throughout the dance. In the beginning, the left hand is held at mid-level while facing the centre of the open circle, while the right hand is placed on the lower back of the dancer. This continues for the entire first motif of the dance. With the next motif, or more generally, the next direction of the dance, the performers change their hands, meaning that now the left hand would be placed on the lower back while the right hand is placed at mid-level facing the centre of the circle. During the occasional knee bends in the last motif, the dancers would place one hand on their back while the other is at a low level facing the inner circle and performing, according to the last two quarter-notes of the bar, a gestural accentuation, or ‘tap’, of the right hand – fast downward movement of the hand, guided by the wrist, while being started as a swing of the forearm at a right angle to the upper arm and ending parallel to the left knee.

The second version of the dance is performed in a *rubato* rhythm, denoting a flexible tempo, or more specifically, *ad libitum*.¹⁷ It is typically executed at a very slow pace, with musicians fully focused on the dancers, and is exclusively performed by males. Commencing with a lateral movement to the right, the right foot makes a step to the right while the left foot is raised with an upward motion to assume a mid-level position. Subsequently, a forward step is executed with the left foot while the bodies retain alignment in the same orientation. This is followed by a rapid movement of the right foot to converge with the left foot, succeeded by a swift crossing step of the left foot over the right. Afterwards, the knees bend and come back to the former position for the duration of two eight-notes while the left foot still crosses the right. The right foot makes a step forward, and the knees bend and rise again. This would conclude the first motif of the dance, which is then followed by lateral repeating, thus finalising the second motif and

¹⁷ See <https://youtu.be/190GqkXzQx4?si=zIRbmoIODVa3ipl-&t=14> (accessed: 31/07/2024).

first phrase of the dance.¹⁸

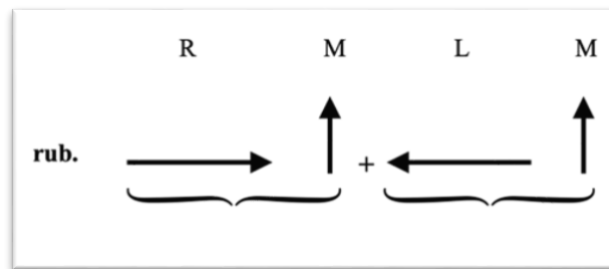


Figure 3.1. Movement directions to the right (R), middle (M) and left (L) of *Kalačojna* in *rubato* for one entire part (tempo: *ad libitum*) of the dance.

Kalačojna is accompanied by the instruments *Zurna* and *Tupan*, or as Birthe Trærup states:

a large cylindrical drum *tupan* and two large oboe-shawms of similar size with the local name *svirla* (also known as *zurla*, *zurna*) [...] This ensemble can be enlarged to consist of more musicians. [...] The group as a whole, comprising both drummers *tupandžiji* and shawm players *svirladžiji*, is simply called *tupani* (= drummers). In the texts of folk songs they are repeatedly named as *čift tupani*, i.e. a pair of drums (with shawms) and *dve rale tupani*, i.e. two sets of drums (with shawms). The musicians are gypsies of the district, e.g. from the village Mlike, or from Prizren. (Trærup, 1975: 58)

During the dance, the drummers would maintain the rhythm, while the *Svirladžiji* would frequently improvise the melody. One *Zurla* player typically improvised the melody, while the other provided accompaniment with sustained notes, resulting in a drone or bourdon effect.

¹⁸ In an example video from the village of Shishtavec in the Albanian part of the Gora territory from 1973, male dancers can be seen performing the traditional folk dance. However, in contrast to the analysis, it can be seen that in the second motif of the dance the movement direction towards the middle is non-existent. Furthermore, the dancers would hold the bodyweight on the left foot while the right foot rises and the body turns towards the right side, and then continue the dance from the start (R-M-L). See <https://youtu.be/OaCyXSiTZFs?si=xSVEIEGVX6MMIa-R&t=47> (accessed: 31/07/2024).



Figure 3.3. *Kalačojna* in *rubato* rhythm from the Gora region (Dokle, 2016: 165).

Formal Characteristics and Structures of *Kolloqoj*

Kolloqoj (or *Këllçoja*) as the Albanian version of the Turkish traditional folk dance *Kılıç*, presents an exclusively male performance in the geometrical formation of an indirectly or non-interconnected open circle in 12/8 as well as *rubato* rhythm (see Appendix 5 and 6).¹⁹ Janet Susan Reineck notes in her dissertation that *Kolloqoj* is not a single traditional folk dance but rather, as in the case of the Gorani population, “a series of dances performed with weapons or weapon-substitutes.” (Reineck, 1985: 93).²⁰

Apart from the practice of this dance in the Province of Kosovo and Metohija in Serbia, various forms of the *Kolloqoj* can be seen performed in other regions of the Balkans by Albanians. In this instance, Felix Hoerburger notes that he encountered in 1952 in the city of Prilep, today’s North Macedonia, a similar dance being performed by Albanians from Tetovo, North Macedonia:²¹

¹⁹ It should be noted that this analysis is based on a limited number of sources, as I have restricted access to written material in Albanian and do not possess the language skills or resources for translation. As a result, this analysis will rely exclusively on the written material provided by Felix Hoerburger (1994), Janet Susan Reineck (1985), and supplementary information from other scholars, as well as the video material provided by Dauer *et al.* (1980a).

²⁰ Further, Reineck showcases that the number of dances can vary between four to 24 with nine different figures concluding the entire series of *Kolloqoj* (Reineck, 1985: 93).

²¹ Felix Hoerburger studied in his work (1994) the Albanian population of the Province of Kosovo and Metohija (Federal Republic of Serbia) and the Federal Republic of Macedonia during the socialist era. However, in his work, he deems many populations, traditional folk dances, and songs as ‘Albanian’, although this was not the factual case. While referencing many works of the Janković sisters, who were studying the Serbian population of various regions in the Balkans, Hoerburger would often falsely identify the Serbian (Muslim/Gorani) population as Albanian, which would lead to confusion and problems concerning the concepts of cultural identity and the methodological approach to ethnogenesis.

I myself saw an Albanian men's dance by people from the town of Tetovo at a Macedonian national festival in 1952 in Prilep. There were five men dancing in a circle without touching each other. As must be the case in the dances described above, they looked into the circle and each held a 'mahrama' (cloth) in the right hand, which he swung in front of him – again a representation of the sword. And the dance was called K'il'indža. (Hoerbürger, 1994: 40)

In the video provided by Dauer *et. al.* (1980a), five men can be seen performing the *Kolloqoj* at a wedding in the village of Žur, Prizren-surrounding.²² They form an open indirect or non-interconnected circle around a larger bole in the middle, where the first *Kolloqoj* begins in the *rubato* rhythm. The dance sequence commences with a forward step using the left leg, followed by a swift bending of the knees to return to the initial position while maintaining the body's orientation to the right. Subsequently, a lateral step to the right is executed with the right foot, accompanied by a body weight transfer, as the left leg ascends in a gestural motion and advances from its original position. This movement sequence is followed by the right foot advancing and aligning with the left leg, followed by a rapid step forward with the left foot crossing over the right. As the knees swiftly bend, the right foot advances again, prompting another quick bend in both knees.²³ Subsequently, the left foot steps back, and the right leg elevates into a dynamic gestural position. From this stance, the right foot proceeds forward as the body inclines in the same direction. Simultaneously, the left foot manoeuvres towards the right leg in a gestural manner, returning to its initial position to bear the body's weight once more. During the last sequence of the dance, the right foot is crossed over the left leg, with subsequent knee bending. Following, the left foot moves to the left, again accompanied by a quick knee bending. This sequence concludes the first phrase of the dance, after which it is repeated once from the beginning. Afterwards, the sequence continues with a lateral change of direction during the second motif.

Throughout the entire performance of the dance, the dancers would hold a handkerchief in their right hand, which is raised and receded (and occasionally stretched towards the centre of the circle), while the left arm is oriented towards the centre of the circle.²⁴ When

²² For further information on the entire content of the film, see (Pllana, 1980a).

²³ Janet Susan Reineck describes this kinetic motif as a "staccato bending and straightening of the knees while one foot is placed slightly in front of the other" (1985: 94).

²⁴ Milica Ilijin notes that she encountered during her fieldwork in Žur from 1956 and 1957 the use of "wooden sticks" instead of handkerchiefs to represent swords in the dance (Ilijin, 1959: 155).

the direction of the dance changes, the hands would also change, meaning that the right hand with the handkerchief would be oriented towards the centre of the circle while the left hand faces the outside of the circle.

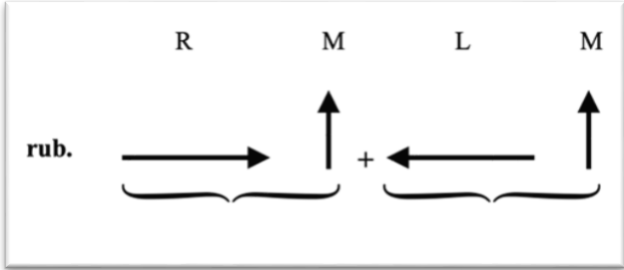


Figure 4. Movement directions to the right (R), middle (M) and left (L) of *Kolloqoj* in *rubato* for one entire part (tempo: *ad libitum*) of the dance.

In the second version of the *Kolloqoj* in 12/8 (3+2+2+2+3), the male dancers interconnect using handkerchiefs. They cross and hold one handkerchief by its ends, resulting in a crossing of handkerchiefs between all performers, while in their right hand, another handkerchief is being held and occasionally waved or the hand is placed on the lower back. In the context of kinetics, the steps or movements are in direct connection the same as in the 12/8 rhythmic version of the Gorani *Kalačojna*, while the musical accompaniment is also followed by the instruments *Zurna* (or *Cule*, *Curle*) and *Tupan* (or *Lodër*) (Trærup, 1977: 77).

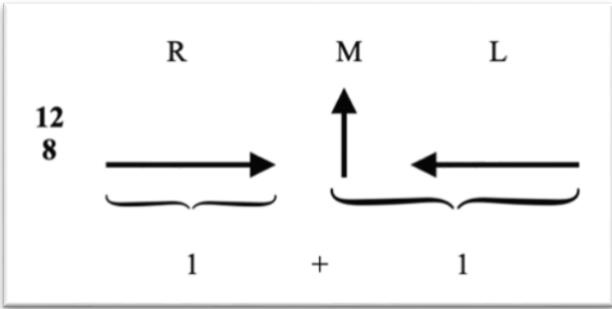


Figure 4.1. Movement directions to the right (R), middle (M) and left (L) of *Kolloqoj* in 12/8 for one entire part (two bars: 1 + 1) of the dance.



Figure 4.2. Presentation of *Kolloqoj* in *rubato* rhythm. Screenshot of recorded video provided by Dauer *et al.* (1980a) at 1'05" min.



Figure 4.3. *Kolloqoj* in the rhythm 12/8 shows the dancers' interconnection through handkerchiefs. Screenshot of recorded video provided by Dauer *et al.* (1980a) at 2'52" min.

Differences and Commonalities: A Comparative Movement Analysis of Hybrid Dance Identities

Based on the formal analysis of the contextual traditional folk dances, several commonalities are evident. This section of the article will briefly present these observed similarities based on the examples provided in this paper (Appendix 1-4). The first observed similarity between all versions is both the movement directions, right-mid-left (Fig. 5.1) or sometimes the last extension towards mid (Fig. 5.2) with lateral movement, and the movement pathway, which is constantly circular to the right.

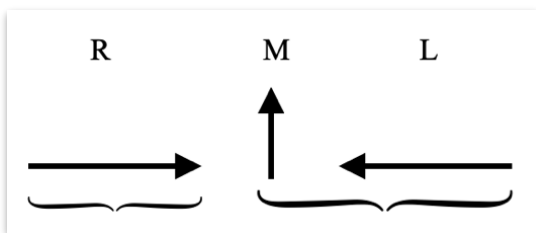


Figure 5.1. Movement directions for *Kılıç*, *Kalač*, *Kalačojna*, and *Kolloqoj*.

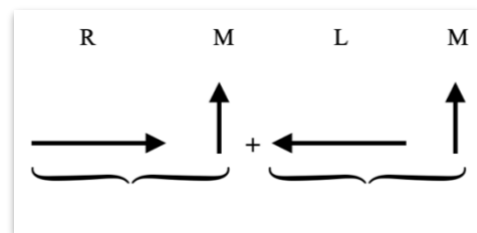


Figure 5.2. Movement directions for *Kalačojna* and *Kolloqoj* in rubato.

Although the various versions differ from each other in terms of dance style, participation of genders, and certain varied steps, the main structure and some step characteristics remain the same. In this case, moving towards the right in *Kılıç* and *Kalač* results from a rising of the heels followed by a gestural movement of the free leg which is then placed from its position as a step forward or slightly in front of the leg with the previously held body weight (Kin. 1a-b). In contrast to *Kalačojna* and *Kolloqoj* in *rubato*, this motif has been varied as a longer-lasting step with the right leg to the right while the left leg moves to a gestural position and places the foot, afterwards, in front or slightly in front of the right leg, as in the case of the Turkish and Serbian version of the dance (Kin. 1c-d). This is then followed by smaller steps forward (oriented towards the right) before the legs cross and the body turns towards the middle of the circle.

Following these movements, in *Kalač*, the left foot makes a step forward or slightly in front of the right foot and moves back to a gestural position while the right leg holds the body weight while in *Kılıç*, the right leg holds the body weight and the body rotates to the left (Kin. 2a-b). This particular motif has been varied in the rubato versions of *Kalačojna* and *Kolloqoj* in *rubato*, where the steps during the movement direction toward the mid of the circle have been replaced with two knee bendings while in the versions of the rhythm

12/8, this motif remains the same as in the other versions (Kin. 2c-h).²⁵

In the rhythm of 12/8, all versions exhibit as the last motif in movement direction to the left a step with the right foot slightly in front of the left and returning to a gestural position where the left leg holds the body weight and the dance continues from the beginning (Kin. 3a-b) while in the case of the rubato versions of *Kalačojna* and *Kolloqoj*, this would be replaced by two knee bendings, which is then followed by the continuation of the dance from the beginning (Kin. 3c-d).

Observing the hand and arm gestures/movements, in all versions except *Kalač*, one arm is constantly held at mid-level while directed towards the middle of the circle and holding in their right hand a handkerchief which resembles the use of a sword, or, more general, weapon. The other arm is either placed on the lower back of the performer or next to the dancer's body in a neutral stance (Kin. 4a-e). In the case of *Kalač*, the male performers would hold a handkerchief in their right hand while whirling it constantly, during which the arm is held at high-level. On the other hand, the female performers would constantly hold a handkerchief in their right hand, as well, but move their right forearm from left to right at mid-level (Kin. 4f-g).

Through ethnochoreogenetical exploration and movement analyses, it is suggested that the various versions of the dances originate from the Turkish traditional folk dance *Kılıç*. This dance, characterised by its use of swords and intricate movements, has been adopted and adapted by diverse ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija. These processes of adoption and adaptation produce(d) hybrid dance identities, where cultural expressions maintain continuity with the 'original' form while embodying the specific socio-historical experiences of each community. These hybrid identities are not only performative but also symbolic, reflecting the negotiation of cultural boundaries and the co-existence of multiple ethnic, historical, and political influences within a single form. The analysed dances in this article serve as evidence to the resilience and adaptability of traditions and cultural heritages, highlighting the ability of (multicultural) communities to navigate and negotiate their identities amidst ongoing territorial and ethnic disputes.

Placed within the framework of multiculturalism, these dynamics become even clearer. In this context, Caleb Rosado defines multiculturalism as "beliefs and behaviors that

²⁵ Kin. 2c, e-h are based on video provided by (Dzek, 2010). Kinetograms for Kin. 2e-h were transcribed by Henrik Kovács (2024). Transcriptions for Kin. 1d, Kin. 2d, Kin. 3d and Kin. 4e by Susan Janet Reineck (1985: 140). Kin. 4e was digitised by Nikola Petrović (2024).

recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.” (Rosado 1996: 2). In this sense, multiculturalism is not simply the coexistence of diversity but the fostering of conditions in which that diversity contributes to a shared whole.

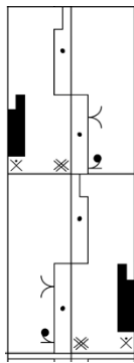
The transformations of *Kılıç* across different ethnic groups exemplify such processes: movements and forms are adopted or adapted, rhythms are modified, and performance contexts are reinterpreted, creating a spectrum of forms that are distinct yet interconnected. Each community negotiates its own identity through the dance, while simultaneously participating in a broader, multicultural framework, and hybrid dance identities emerge when each community maintains its stylistic and cultural markers while also engaging in shared performative aspects.

Nevertheless, scholars caution that multiculturalism in practice is not without its challenges. Malory Nye points out that multiculturalism is tied to the specificity of local historical and social contexts, the temporary and evolving nature of interethnic dynamics, and the built-in tensions arising from social and political disparities (see Nye 2007: 116-118). In this context, the analysed dances exist within this complex framework: while they offer a shared cultural ground, the ongoing political and ethnic tensions in Kosovo and Metohija demonstrate the fragility and contested nature of such intercultural engagement.

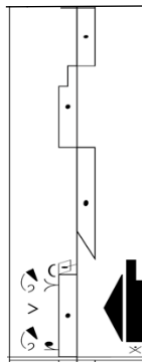
In this sense, hybrid dance identities, as shown through this case study, function as both cultural archives and living negotiations of identity. They embody a form of multiculturalism in practice: differences are not erased but co-exist dynamically, producing cultural forms that are both individual and shared. These traditional folk dances allow communities to express their distinctiveness while participating in a common dance heritage, as in this case, through Ottoman times and their influence, demonstrating how cultural practices can mediate interaction in politically disrupted and socially complex settings, such as the Province of Kosovo and Metohija. The hybridisation of *Kılıç* into *Kalač*, *Kalačojna*, and *Kolloqoj* highlights the capacity of traditional folk dances to foster dialogue, mutual understanding, and subtle forms of reconciliation, making them substantial indicators of cultural resilience, multicultural negotiation, and identity formation.

Kinetograms 1a-d. Beginning motifs (Phrase A)

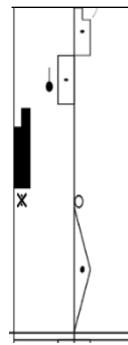
Kalač (1a), Kılıç (1b), Kalačojna (1c), Kolloqoj (1d)



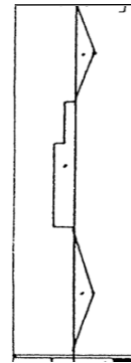
Kin. 1a



Kin. 1b



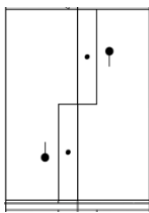
Kin. 1c



Kin. 1d

Kinetograms 2a-h. Motifs of movements in place (Phrase A)

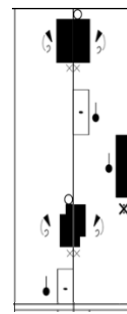
Kalač (2a), Kılıç (2b), Kalačojna (2c), Kolloqoj (2d), Kalačojna (2e-2h)



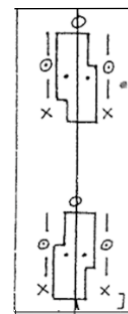
Kin. 2a



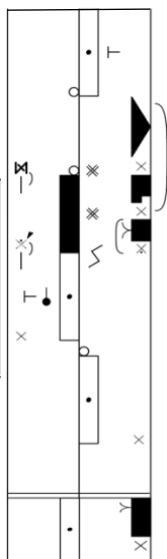
Kin. 2b



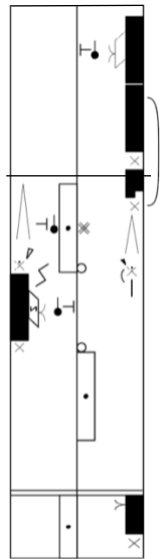
Kin. 2c



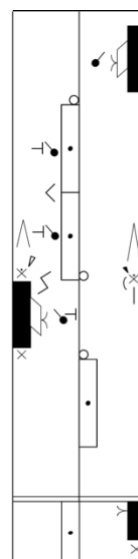
Kin. 2d



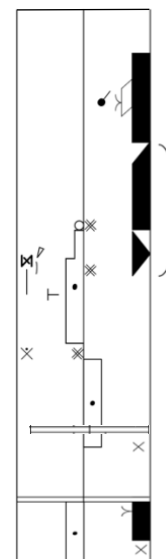
Kin. 2e



Kin. 2f



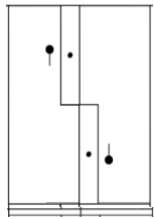
Kin. 2g



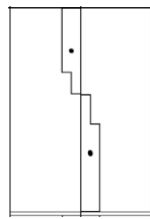
Kin. 2h

Kinetograms 3a-d. Motifs of movements in place (Phrase B)

Kalač (3a), Kılıç (3b), Kalačojna (3c), Kolloqoj (3d)



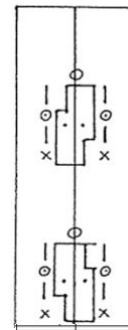
Kin. 3a



Kin. 3b



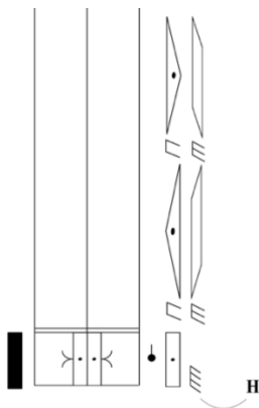
Kin. 3c



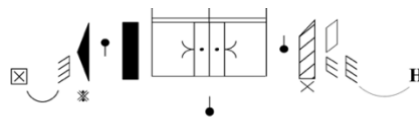
Kin. 3d

Kinetograms 4a-e. Use of arms and hands

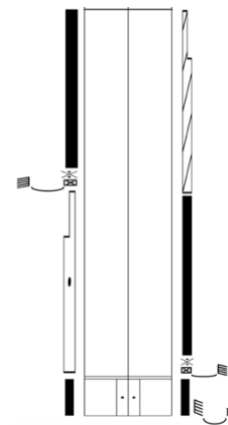
Kalač - female (4a), Kalač - male (4b), Kılıç (4c), Kalačojna (4d), Kolloqoj (4e)



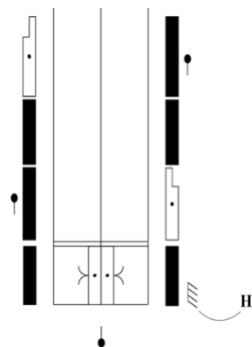
Kin. 4a



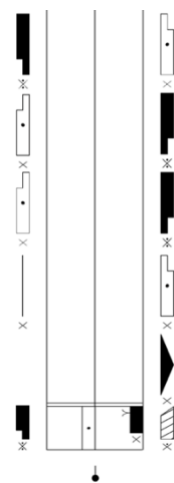
Kin. 4b



Kin. 4c



Kin. 4d



Kin. 4e

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(T-totus):	Kılıç – 12/8
(P-part)	A 2
(F-phrase)	<u>A</u> <u>B</u>
(M-motif) = (E-element)	<u>A</u> = a b c b1 <u>B</u> = a' c b1v c1

Table 1. Structural analysis of the kinetic formal unit of the Turkish traditional folk dance *Kılıç*. Methodological analysis based on the modification of the ICTMD's setting of morphological kinetic analysis by Selena Rakočević and Zdravko Ranisavljević (see Ranisavljević 2021: 26-32).

Transcription: Ahmet Tufan Gültaş (2024)

Melography 1. *Kılıç*, transcription based on recording from 1971 by Dauer *et al.* (1980b).



QR Code 1 – *Kılıç* performed in 1980 by the Turkish ensemble “Doğru yol” from Prizren. Recording by Dauer *et al.* (1980b).

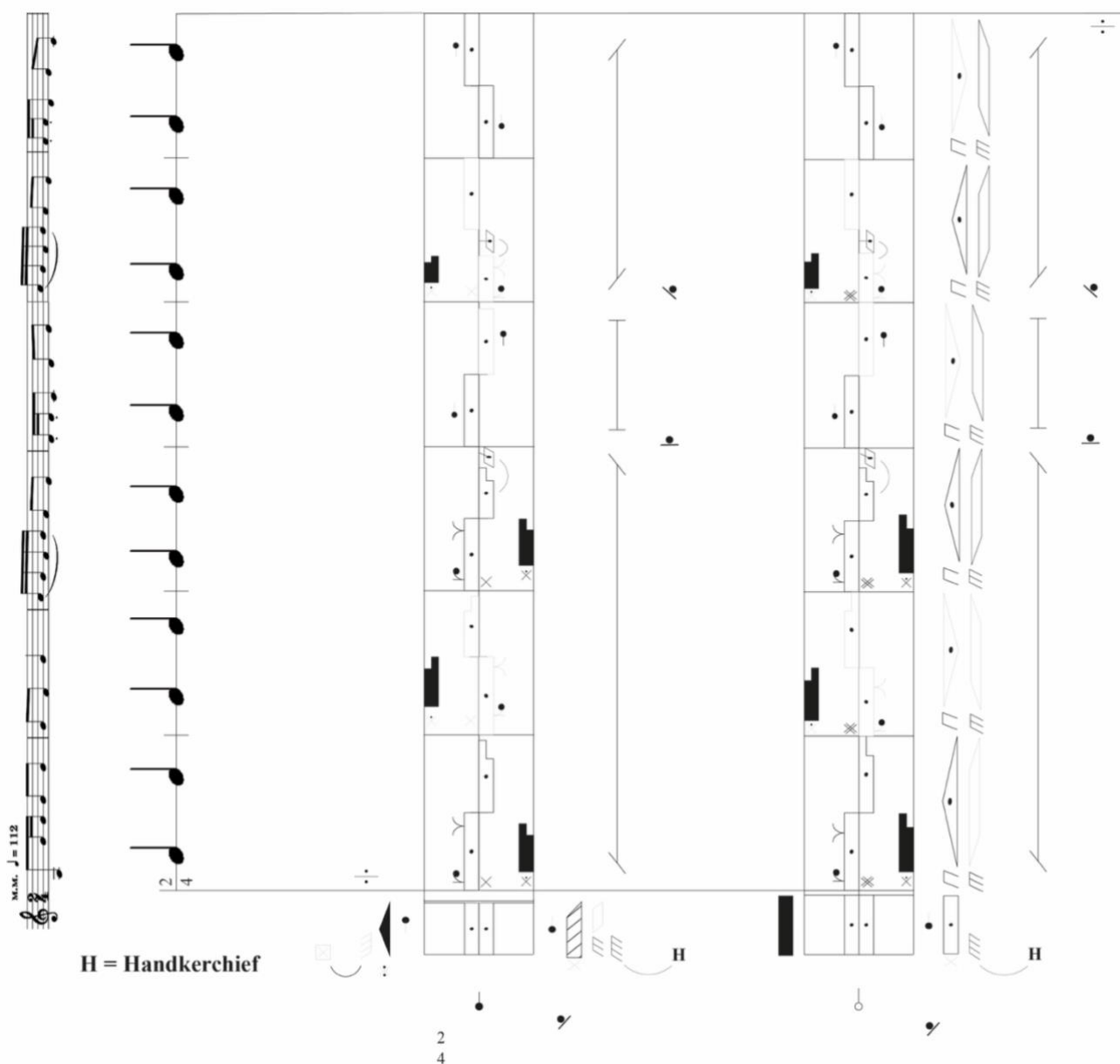


QR Code 2 – Fieldwork recording of *Kılıç* (audio) by Milica Ilijin from October 28, 1954 in Prizren. Performed by musicians of the Turkish ensemble “Doğru yol” from Prizren (Lajić Mihajlović and Jovanović 2018a: 173).

APPENDIX 2

Kalač in 2/4

Kinetogram: Nikola Petrović



(T-totus):	Kalač (Калач) – 2/4
(P-part)	A 6
(F-phrase)	<u>A</u> <u>B</u>
(M-motif) = (E-element)	<u>A</u> = a a' a1 <u>B</u> = b a1 v b'

Table 2. Structural analysis of the kinetic formal unit of the Serbian traditional folk dance *Kalač* in the rhythm 2/4.

Transcription: Ljubica S. and Danica S. Janković (1937) [original],

Jovana Ždero (2024) [digitised]

M.M. ♩ = 112

Melography 2. *Kalač* in the rhythm 2/4 (Janković and Janković 1937: 168).

Note - Steps are based on the visual presentation of the Serbian National Ensemble “Kolo” during fieldwork in Belgrade, May 22, 2024. Steps presented and transcribed are part of the Traditional Folk Dance Choreography “Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena” (1948) by Olga Skovran.



QR Code 3 – *Kalač* in 2/4 as part of Olga Skovran’s Traditional Folk Dance Choreography “Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena” from 1948, performed by the Serbian National Ensemble “Kolo”, October 19, 2022.

Kalač in 5/4

Transcription: Ljubica S. and Danica S. Janković (1937) [original],

Jovana Ždero (2024) [digitised]

I фигура

М.М. ♩ = 126

The musical score is written in 5/4 time with a tempo of 126 beats per minute. It begins with a piano introduction in G major, consisting of five staves. The first staff is marked 'I фигура'. The key signature changes to B-flat major in the second staff, and then to D-flat major in the fourth staff. The introduction concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to D-flat major. The vocal melody follows, also in 5/4 time, with a tempo of 126. It consists of four staves of music with lyrics in Cyrillic. The lyrics are: 'Ој, мо - ри, фр - бо зе - ле - на, / Ој, мо - ри, фр - бо зе - ле - на, / слег - ни ми гра - не до зем - ље, / слег - ни ми гра - не до зем - ље!'. The melody features a variety of note values, including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and triplets. The piece ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to D-flat major.

Или:

М.М. ♩ = 126

Ој, мо - ри, фр - бо зе - ле - на,

Ој, мо - ри, фр - бо зе - ле - на,

слег - ни ми гра - не до зем - ље,

слег - ни ми гра - не до зем - ље!

Melography 3. *Kalač* in the rhythm 5/4 (Janković and Janković 1937: 167-168).



QR Code 4 – *Kalač* in 5/4 as part of
Olga Skovran’s Traditional Folk Dance
Choreography “*Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena*”
from 1948, performed by the Serbian
National Ensemble “*Kolo*”, October 19, 2022.

Kalač in 4/8 and 5/8

Transcription: Ljubica S. and Danica S. Janković (1937) [original],
Jovana Ždero (2024) [digitised]

III фигура

M.M. ♩ = 208

The musical score consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a 4/8 time signature, and a repeat sign. Above the first staff, the tempo is marked 'M.M. ♩ = 208'. The first staff contains a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2.'). The subsequent staves continue the melody with various time signatures (4/8, 5/8, 4/8, 5/8, 4/8, 5/8, 4/8, 5/8, 4/8, 5/8, 4/8, 5/8). The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Melography 4. *Kalač* in the rhythm 4/8 and 5/8 (Janković and Janković 1937: 169).

Kalač in 3/4

Transcription: Ljubica S. and Danica S. Janković (1937) [original],
Jovana Ždero (2024) [digitised]

M.M. ♩ = 152

IV фигура

M.M. ♩ = 152

V фигура

Melography 5. *Kalač* in the rhythm 3/4 (Janković and Janković 1937: 169-170).



QR Code 5 - *Kalač* in 3/4 as part of
Olga Skovran's Traditional Folk Dance
Choreography "Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena"

from 1948, performed by the Serbian
National Ensemble "Kolo", October 19, 2022.

**Kalač in Olga Skovran's Traditional Folk Dance Choreography "Kalač - Igre iz
Prizrena" from 1948**

Transcription: Božidar Trudić (1948) [original],
Tamara Jerić (2024) [digitised]

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece is in 5/4 time. The right hand features a melody with chords and eighth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of quarter notes.

Musical notation for measures 5-8. Measure 5 is marked with a '5'. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 5. The left hand continues with quarter notes.

Musical notation for measures 9-12. Measure 9 is marked with a '9'. The right hand features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 9. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 11.

Musical notation for measures 13-16. Measure 13 is marked with a '13'. The right hand has a melody with chords, and the left hand has a steady quarter-note accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 17-20. Measure 17 is marked with a '17'. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 17. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 19. The piece concludes with a 2/4 time signature change in measure 20.

21 **FIGURA II**

Musical notation for FIGURA II, measures 21-27. The piece is in 2/4 time. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of quarter notes, primarily on the lower notes of the piano.

28

Musical notation for FIGURA II, measures 28-35. This section includes a repeat sign (double bar line with two dots) at the beginning of measure 30. The right hand continues with its intricate melodic lines, while the left hand maintains the quarter-note accompaniment.

36

FIGURA III

Musical notation for FIGURA III, measures 36-41. This section begins with a key signature change to three flats (B-flat major/D-flat minor), indicated by a double bar line with a key signature symbol. The right hand has a more flowing, eighth-note melody, and the left hand continues with quarter notes.

42

Musical notation for FIGURA III, measures 42-45. The right hand features a melodic line with some grace notes, and the left hand continues with a steady quarter-note accompaniment.

46

Musical notation for FIGURA III, measures 46-49. The right hand has a melodic line with some chromaticism, and the left hand continues with a steady quarter-note accompaniment.

50

Musical notation for FIGURA III, measures 50-53. The right hand has a melodic line with some grace notes, and the left hand continues with a steady quarter-note accompaniment.

Musical score for the first system, measures 52-57. The music is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The melody in the treble staff features eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals, while the bass staff provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes.

58

IV FIGURA

Musical score for the second system, measures 58-63. This system begins with a double bar line and a key signature change to one flat. The time signature changes to 3/4. The treble staff contains a melody with quarter and eighth notes, and the bass staff features a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

64

Musical score for the third system, measures 64-69. The treble staff has a melody with quarter notes and rests, while the bass staff continues with a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

1.

2.

FIGURA V

Musical score for the fourth system, measures 70-75. This system includes a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2.'). The second ending features a triplet of eighth notes in both the treble and bass staves.

Musical score for the fifth system, measures 76-81. This system continues with triplet markings (marked '3') in both the treble and bass staves.

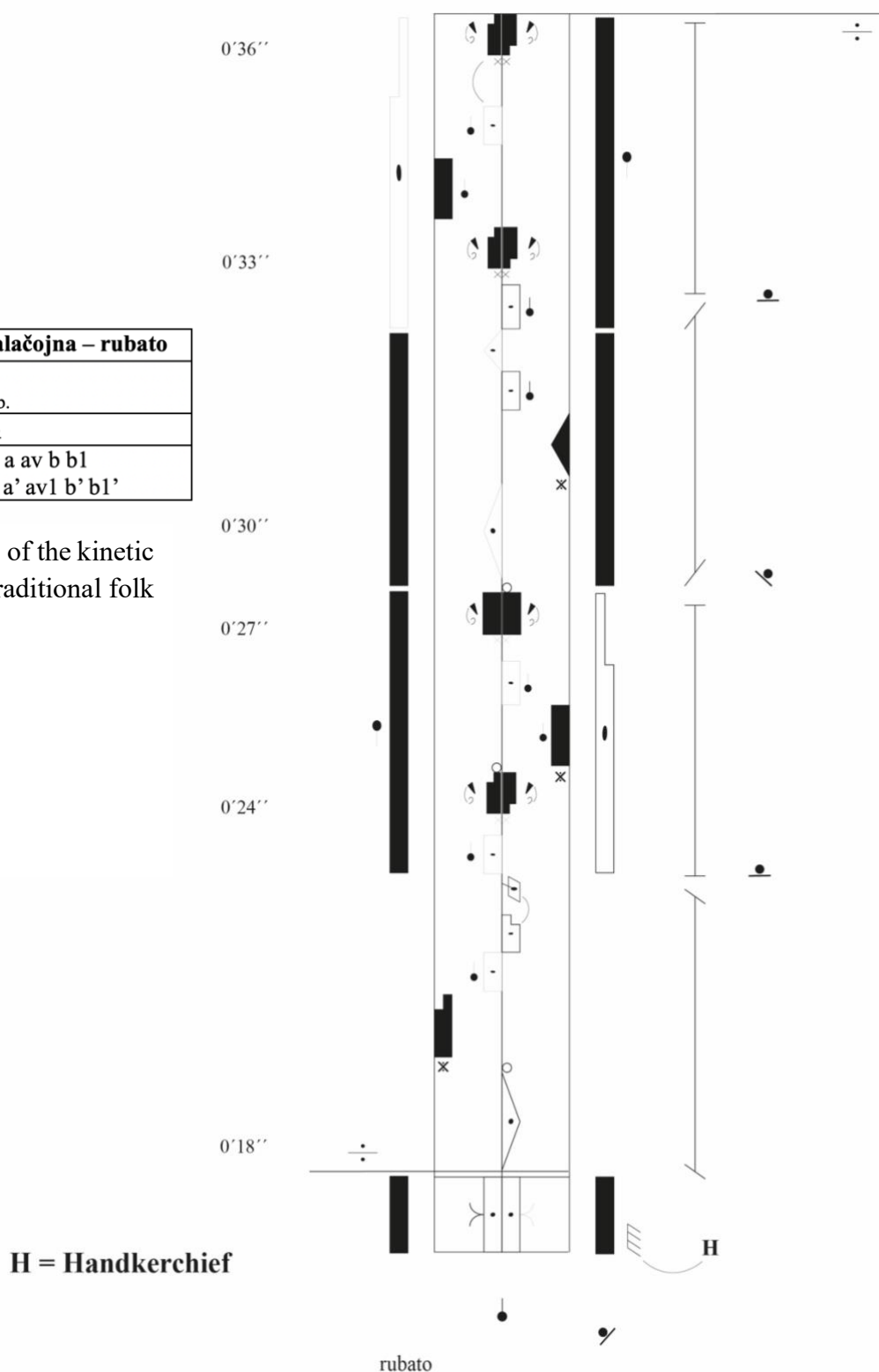
Musical score for the sixth system, measures 82-87. This system concludes with triplet markings (marked '3') in both the treble and bass staves.

Melography 6. *Kalač* in Olga Skovran's Traditional Folk Dance Choreography "Kalač – Igre iz Prizrena" from 1948, musical arrangement by Božidar Trudić.

APPENDIX 3
Kalačojna in rubato

(T-totus):	Kalačojna – rubato
(P-part)	A ad lib.
(F-phrase)	<u>A</u> <u>B</u>
(M-motif) = (E-element)	<u>A</u> = a av b b1 <u>B</u> = a' av1 b' b1'

Table 3. Structural analysis of the kinetic formal unit of the Gorani traditional folk dance *Kalačojna* in rubato.

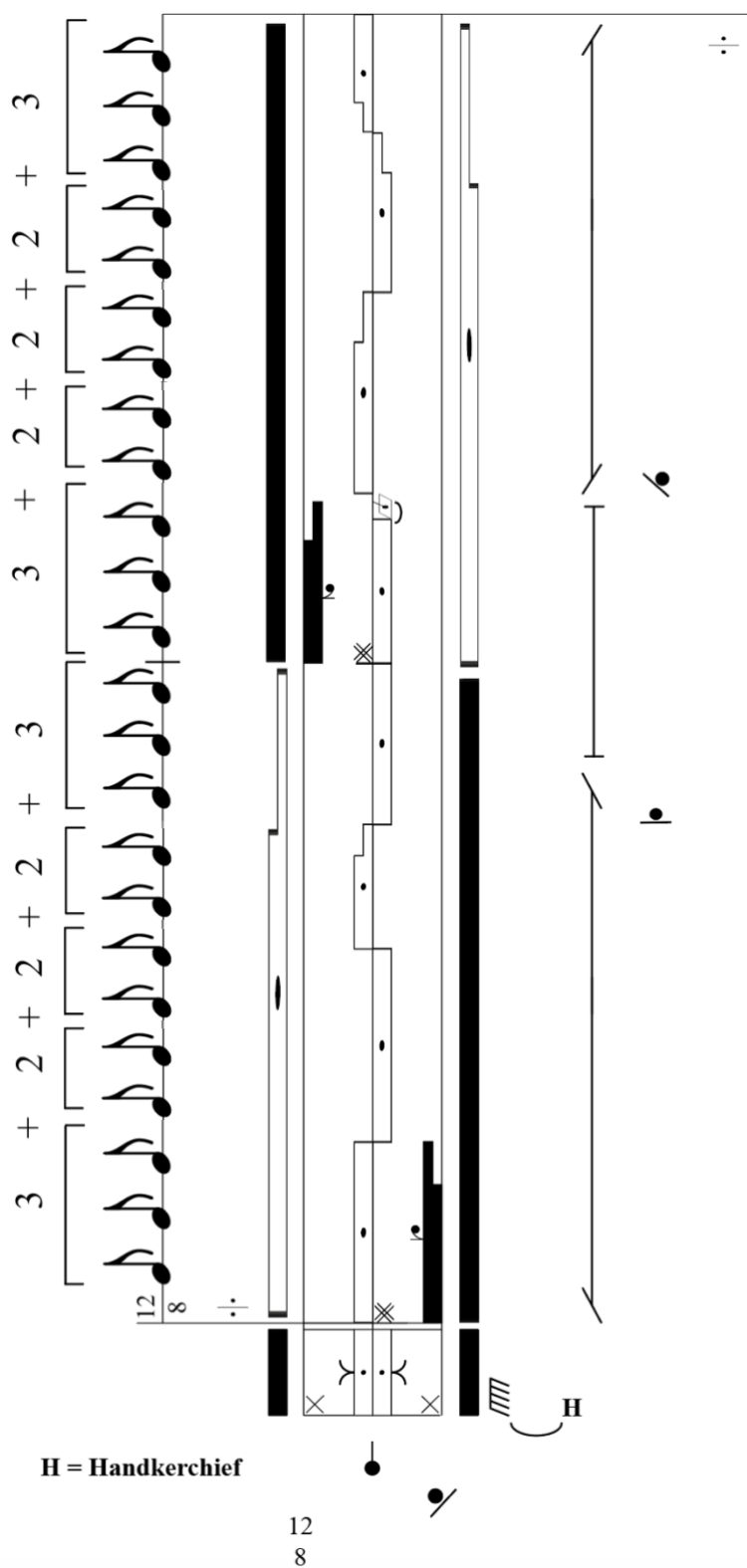


Note – Movements were transcribed based on video recording provided by (Dzek 2010).

***Kalačojna* in 12/8**

(T-totus):	Kalačojna - 12/8
(P-part)	A 2
(F-phrase)	<u>A</u> B
(M-motif) = (E-element)	<u>A</u> = a b c b1 <u>B</u> = a' c b1v c1

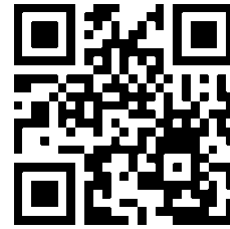
Table 4. Structural analysis of the kinetic formal unit of the Gorani traditional folk dance *Kalačojna* in 12/8.



Note – Movements are transcribed based on video provided by (RamusD 2006).



QR Code 6 – *Kalačojna*
in 12/8. Date and Place
unknown. Video by
(RamusD 2006).

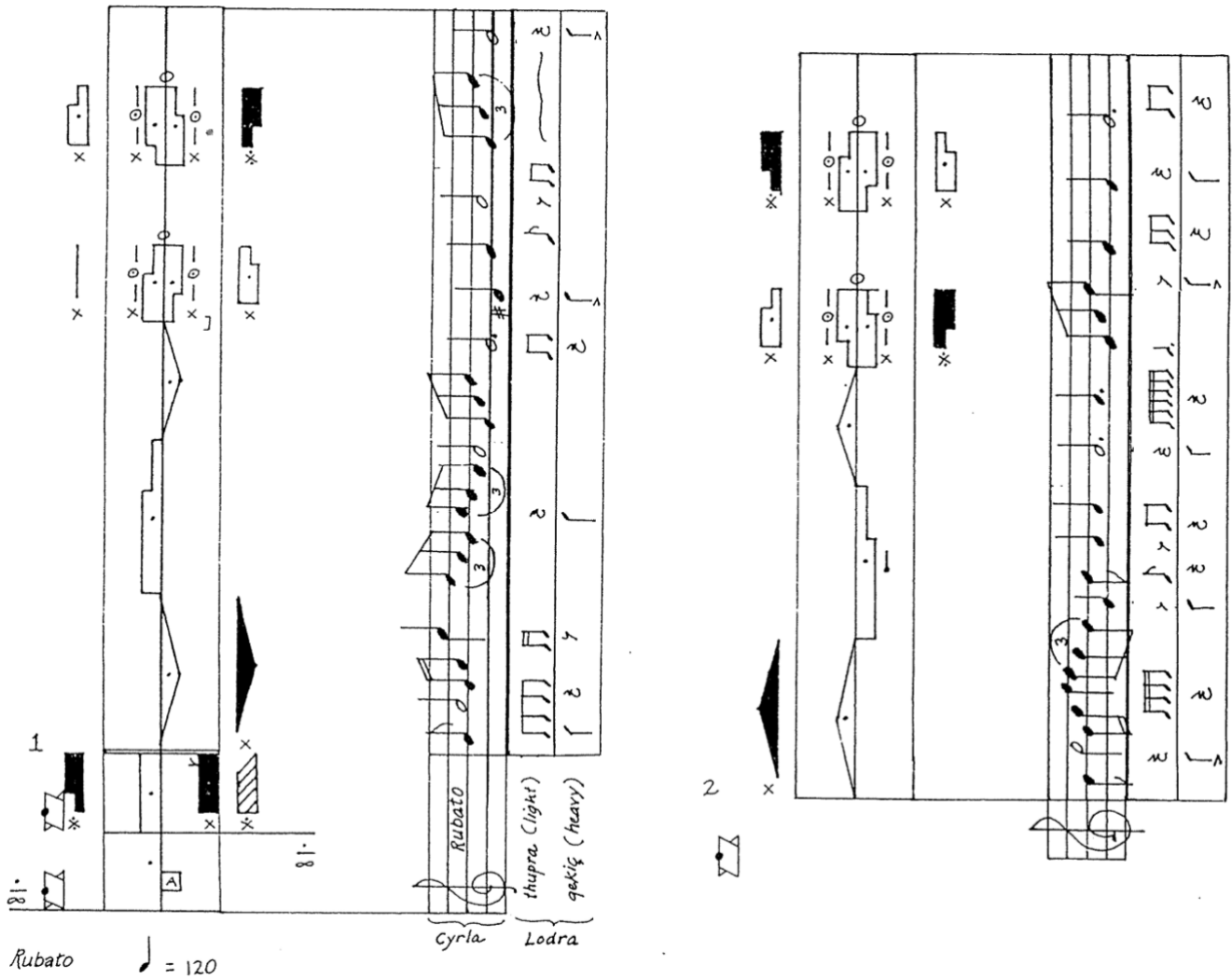


QR Code 7 – *Kalačojna* in rubato.
Village of Gornje Ljubinje, 2006.

APPENDIX 4

Kolloqoj/Këllçoja in rubato (Opolje region)

Kinetogram: Janet Susan Reineck (1985: 140)



(T-totus):	Kolloqoj – rubato
(P-part)	A ad lib.
(F-phrase)	<u>A</u> B
(M-motif) = (E-element)	<u>A</u> = a av av1 <u>B</u> = a' av' av1'

Table 5. Structural analysis of the kinetic formal unit of the Albanian traditional folk dance *Këllçoja* from the Opolje region based on transcription provided by (Reineck 1985: 140).

Transcription: Felix Hoerburger (1995) [original],
Tamara Jernić (2024) [digitised]

The first system of music consists of two measures. The treble clef staff begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4. The second measure contains a complex melodic line with many sixteenth notes, including accidentals (sharps and naturals), and ends with a trill on a half note G4. The bass clef staff is empty in both measures.

The second system contains two measures. Measure 3 starts with a half note G4 marked with a trill symbol (tr). The treble clef staff continues with a melodic line of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass clef staff features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 4 continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns.

The third system contains two measures. Measure 5 begins with a half note G4, followed by a melodic line of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass clef staff has a consistent eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 6 continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns.

The fourth system contains two measures. Measure 7 starts with a half note G4, followed by a melodic line of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass clef staff has a consistent eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 8 continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns.

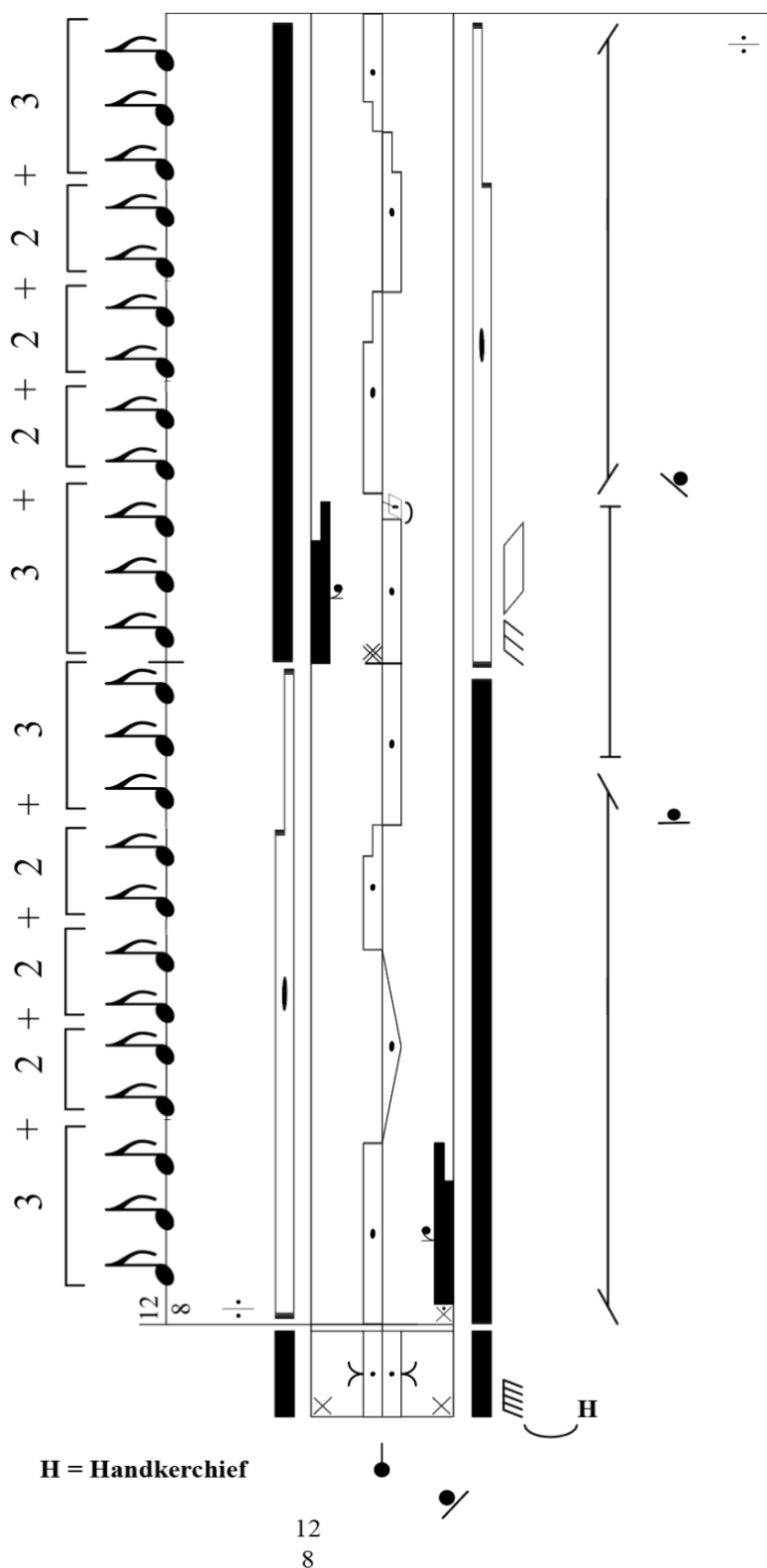
The fifth system contains two measures. Measure 9 begins with a melodic line of eighth and sixteenth notes, including trills. The bass clef staff has a consistent eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 10 continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns.

Melography 7. *Kolçoja* in rubato from the village of Brodosavce, Opolje region, encountered by Felix Hoerburger during his fieldwork on August 17, 1959 (Hoerburger 1995: 198).

Kolloqoj/Këllçoja in 12/8 (Opolje region)

(T-totus):	Kolloqoj – 12/8
(P-part)	A 2
(F-phrase)	A B
(M-motif) = (E-element)	A = a b c b1 B = a' c c1 clv

Table 6. Structural analysis of the kinetic formal unit of the Gorani traditional folk dance *Kalačojna* in 12/8.



Note – Movements are transcribed based on video provided by (World Dance for Humanity 2021).



QR Code 8 – *Kolloqoj* in rubato. Fieldwork recording material (video) by Janet Susan Reineck. Date and Place unknown.



QR Code 9 – *Kolloqoj* in 12/8 (poco rubato). Fieldwork recording (video) by Janet Susan Reineck from 1988 in Prizren.

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Research Article

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Serbian Newly-Composed Folk Music of the 1960s-1980s in Post-Yugoslav Diaspora as a Dissonant Heritage

ABSTRACT

Newly composed folk music (NCFM, Serbian: *novokomponovana narodna muzika*), as a genre of popular folk music in Serbia and Yugoslavia since its beginnings in the late 1960s, is distinguished by its contrast with rural traditional folk music. Although it was regarded by the cultural elite as “corrupted” folk music and, in some cases, as kitsch, it was unequivocally accepted as a more progressive form of folk music among its target group - newly arrived migrants from the countryside who, during that period, moved to larger cities as well as abroad. Emigration continued in the 1990s, when emigrant population left the disintegrating Yugoslavia, but the NCFM continued to exist among the emigrants, including those of non-Serbian origin. To this day, it has survived in various post-Yugoslav emigrant communities, parallel to choreographed folklore (i.e. arrangements of traditional folk music for dance accompaniment) and contemporary forms of popular folk music (such as *popfolk* and *trepfolk*).

In this article, two levels of the nostalgic existence of the NCFM are examined - associations with the homeland and with the past. In particular, the article examines whether the NCFM has become a cultural heritage of the diaspora, and whether the popular music (unintentionally?) become a Serbian/Yugoslav cross-border “soft power”? On the cases from field researches conducted in Türkiye and Hungary, we will approach the NCFM by applying the concept of dissonant heritage, questioning the apostasy of this popular genre from official cultural identity politics and considering it as a living practice that serves as an identification tool in dynamic diaspora communities.

KEYWORDS

Newly-composed folk music (NCFM)

Post-Yugoslav diaspora

Critical heritage studies

Dissonant heritage

Introduction

This article explains the existence of a dynamic and essential relationship between the controversial yet highly popular genre of *newly-composed folk music* (NCFM; Serbian: *novokomponovana narodna muzika*) from Serbia with its diaspora communities. Following an introduction to its history in Yugoslav socialist context, the NCFM is interpreted as a form of dissonant heritage, with the aim of critically expanding ethnomusicological and heritological perspectives. This article is based on two recent case studies from the countries with atypical Serbian diaspora communities: Hungary, where Serbs actually were not immigrants but became minority due to the changes in state borders; and Türkiye, where a Muslim population emigrated from Serbia in an exceptional eastward direction. In this context, we question whether the NCFM can be considered not only as an identification tool, but also a form of dissonant heritage (from the perspective of heritage regimes) and a regional soft power.

Newly-Composed Folk Music: History and Heritage

The NCFM is a genre of popular folk music in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia, which emerged in the late 1960s. It is characterized by a conceptual and structural contrast with rural traditional folk music, and it symbolized the progress of socialist society, in which social and geographical mobility was achievable for the working class. From the beginning, the NCFM was enabled by Yugoslavia's economic liberalization, which led to the expansion of mass production and wide distribution of this content (Momčilović, 2025: 149). Although often dismissed at the time by the cultural elite as "corrupted" or even kitsch, the NCFM was widely embraced as progressive genre by its target audience - migrants from rural areas who had either relocated to urban centers or emigrated abroad during that period. Migration continued throughout the 1990s, especially as people fled the disintegrating Yugoslav state. Despite these upheavals, the NCFM persisted and flourished within emigrant communities, including among non-Serbian audiences. Today, the NCFM coexists in the diaspora alongside choreographed folklore performances (typically covers of traditional music) and newer genres such as *popfolk* and *trepfolk*. Among diaspora audience, this genre represents connection with the distant homeland (both geographically and temporally), and it continues to exist as a non-recognized heritage.

The history of the NCFM in Yugoslavia is related to the aforementioned fundamental social circumstance in post-World War II Yugoslavia - the migration of the rural population. This context defines the core community that has practiced this genre on a participatory level until today. Building on the frequent elitist narrative about how “peasants” came to the city and brought their habits and music, a culturological research conducted thirty years ago examined who is the audience of the NCFM and what defines it:

Defining the populist, newly-composed cultural model as a specific category, we had in mind the assumption that it is characteristic for certain social strata, primarily for the rural population, workers of all qualifications, employees in service activities and private individuals (restaurateurs and craftsmen), and administrative officers. So, mostly, those whose place in the social division of labor is among less respectable occupations (jobs require a lower educational level and provide relatively little power and participation in management). We assumed that the members of this model are characterized by a working lifestyle, as well as a desire to move into a status lifestyle [...]. (Dragičević Šešić, 1994: 32)

Here, lifestyle is defined as the intersection of occupation, patterns of consumption, and ways of spending free time. As theoreticians who later strongly criticized *turbofolk* (i.e. successor genre in Serbia) noted, this folk music was also popular among the diaspora, precisely because of its similar incommensurability with elite culture:

(...) new folk music means a saving combination of idealized folk tradition and ‘modern’, i.e. of modernized traditions, therefore, for them [guest-workers in Western Europe, M. D. V.], it means a salutary solution to the problem of identity. Our man on a temporary work abroad is comforted by the memory of his native land, to which he will one day return. (Kronja, 2001: 28)

After decades, this genre continues to live within diaspora communities, in parallel with genres that developed from the NCFM. It is accepted today by both younger and older generations, which makes the NCFM a legitimate topic of contemporary heritage research.

The NCFM in Serbia represents the most common local phenomenon of popular music. It originates from pre-war urban folk music (for more about the development of urban folk genres, see Dumnić Vilotijević, 2018; Dumnić Vilotijević, 2019a; Dumnić Vilotijević, 2020). Unlike rural folk music, this tradition was based on lyrical love poetry - initially, with

emphasized pastoral motifs - melodically and harmonically shaped as a combination of simplified elements of Western Romantic art music with national folk music. Urban folk music was characterized by (and its derivatives continues to be characterized today in adapted forms with similar principles) an obligation to include local elements (and in some cases also 'foreign', i.e. 'Eastern' elements such as melodic ornaments), alongside a desire to follow contemporary arranging tendencies from the broader global market. These tendencies are primarily reflected in dance-based metro-rhythms, instrumentation, and harmonization.

Popular folk music in Serbia from the pre-World War II period to the present day has been characterized by its performance context and modes of media distribution. First and foremost, it was performed in taverns (*kafane*), specific 'third spaces' situated at the intersection of the public and private spheres of life in the Balkans. This type of venue, which combines presentational and participatory performance according to audience demands and specific communication dynamics, has remained, with modifications, until today. It functions both as a space for recruiting performers and as a community mechanism of institutional approval - if a song or musician proves successful in such performance settings, it is considered valuable. Consequently, following their media breakthrough, tavern performers often become popular within the diaspora, primarily as singers at weddings, baptisms and similar festivities, which are often organized by Romani communities. In her seminal work on the NCFM, Ljerka Vidić Rasmussen pointed to the tavern context of the origin of this genre, which from the beginning was competitive with publishing as a parameter of popularity, and later prevailed (2002: 69).

Nevertheless, with the regard to the NCFM in the diaspora, performances in taverns or organized concert performances exist in parallel with music distribution. Dissemination was based on gramophone records, audio cassettes, as well as on local and satellite radio and television programs (in borderland areas, Serbian stations were also present). Since its beginnings, the NCFM has maintained the distance from state control; in its later period and up to the present day, its profit-driven orientation has become fully explicit. In contemporary years, audio carriers and journalistic discourse have ceased to be the primary media of diaspora market, as they have largely been replaced by electronic platforms for listening and watching music (YouTube, Spotify etc.) and by promotional interactive content on online social networks. This shift makes both ethnography and

netnography useful and necessary methodological approaches for insider ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological research in diaspora contexts.

This musical genre has a periodization that is also mirrored in diaspora tours of prominent performers of the time. After World War II, when the NCFM emerged in Yugoslavia, a division of repertoires according to republics, provinces and regions - each with its own *melos* (a particular music style based on folklore tradition, in musicians' jargon) - became highly significant. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were numerous performers, as well as a much larger number of active songwriters than before. In the media, the song *Od izvora dva putića*, published by Lepa Lukić in 1964 for the Production of Gramophone Records of Radio-Television Belgrade and written by Petar Tanasijević (a hit-maker of this genre), most often appears as the foundation of the NCFM. This music was published by the major state discographers (Production of Gramophone Records of the Radio-Television of Belgrade, Jugoton), but even more so by non-state-owned record companies that were not constrained by ethics and professionalism being primarily profit-oriented and aiming at large circulations of printed records (e.g. Diskos). As noted by an anthropologist Ivan Čolović, the 1960s marked an expansion of record publishing as well as the expansion of the network of local radio station networks, which led to an increase in the number of songs, as well as their creators and performers (Čolović, 2000: 155). According to published records, he identified three "waves" in the development of this genre, i.e. chronologically arranged the generations of singers. In the first (1962-1969) there would be Lepa Lukić, the Bajić brothers, Toma Zdravković, Bora Spužić Kvaka and Predrag Živković Tozovac. According to Čolović, the generation that "entered the scene in the 1970s" is represented by Šaban Šaulić, Novica Negovanović, Bora Drljača, Silvana Armenulić, Dobrivoje Topalović and Meho Puzić, while in his time (from the end of the 1970s to the end of the 1980s) the "newer" generation was represented by Zorica Brunclik, Miroslav Ilić, Mitar Mirić and Nada Topčagić (Čolović, 2000: 156). Subsequently, Vidić Rasmussen (2002) pointed out several names as the most prominent cases (Predrag Cune Gojković, Lepa Lukić and Silvana Armenulić), which are all significant to the story about reception in a diaspora. In the complexity of Yugoslav NCFM she pointed out three stylistic streams and related musical features to them - Serbian, Bosnian and Oriental - today all of them exist in nostalgic resignification and revalorization of the NCFM.

The identification role of music in diaspora context has been a fruitful topic in ethnomusicology. The Serbian diaspora, as well as Serbs living in neighboring countries without emigration ('Serbs in region', the official term in Serbia), is numerous in comparison with the population of Serbia itself, especially in Western countries, and particularly in North America and Western Europe (for example, Chicago and Vienna are often singled out as cities with the largest Serbian populations outside Serbia). Some immigrants were refugees, while others were economic migrants who lived in those countries even for up to six generations. Highly important role have the so-called guest workers (*gastarbajteri*), i.e. temporary workers abroad who have been leaving since the end of the 1960s. However, a lesser-known eastward diaspora from Serbia proved exceptionally interesting for this article - the community of Bosniaks in Istanbul and Izmir. In addition, Serbs in region, particularly in Hungary, are also researched, while Serbian communities in overseas diaspora require attention for future researches. Music has a particularly important role as a means of identifying the diaspora, and on the other hand, from Yugoslav past to ex/post-Yugoslav ('Balkan') presence, the existence of the NCFM and its successors-genres overcomes the borders - not only in diaspora communities, but also in transnational context (more about these concepts in: Faist, 2010), where Romani musicians have particularly important networking role.¹ Discussions of (self-)identification among diaspora members reveal many nuances (e.g. regional, ethnic, and state-based), but as case studies demonstrate, confirming Vidić Rasmussen's conclusion: "the Yugoslav project is finished, the song remains" (2002: 202).

The sonic, linguistic, emotional, and corporeal importance of music from the homeland brings together diaspora communities that cherish particular musical genres and events as a heritage. As Majsova and Šepetavc concluded:

Music - as a mobile, fluid cultural form - is a key element of diasporic cultural heritage; communities invest their efforts in organising dances, festivals etc. to preserve their heritage and affirm their identity in the context of the majority society. Communities also incorporate the music of a certain place and time of the new environment into their musical traditions, creating their own hybrid musical forms that speak to the migration experience or articulate new hybrid identities. (2023: 1286)

¹ Popular music in the Balkans from a transnational perspective, including comparative research with *chalga*, *manele* and the like is beyond the scope of this article.

Folk music in Serbian diaspora communities today primarily exists in two forms - as staged traditional folk music cultivated in national cultural-artistic societies, and as popular folk music that is performed at celebratory events and in nightclubs. In the first case, music and performance education is conducted by local amateur choreographers, often with the involvement of ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists, aiming to preserve national heritage, provide ethnic identification with the homeland in a foreign context, and render the community culturally distinctive within its environment (see Rašić, 2022). In such settings, there is officially no place for the NCFM - it is not considered sufficiently representative for stage presentation in folk costume, unlike rural folklore. This is unsurprising, given that these societies model their staged presentations of music and dance folklore on practices from the country of origin. On the other hand, since the 2010s, *trepfolk* has been popular in nightclubs in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and their diaspora, and it is a genre that openly patinizes the controversial *turbofolk* of the 1990s and nostalgically refers to the imaginary Balkans, i.e. post-Yugoslav countries, even musically. It is interesting that the target group is not a nationally determined community in the diaspora, but that it is aimed at young 'Balkans', since the topos of the Balkans is used in all the texts of these songs, which have different themes (more in: Dumnić Vilotijević, 2020). In other words, traditional (or choreographed) folk music exists as a strong national identity marker in diaspora, while popular folk music genres transcend national boundaries, underlining an integrative approach within post-Yugoslav diasporic communities that share the language. In this process, the NCFM originally performed by artists of Serbian origin and/or published by companies based in Serbia becomes a shared heritage for diaspora communities, articulating their vernacular identity.

For the functioning of the NCFM as a living practice in diaspora, the concept of nostalgia is of the highest importance. It simultaneously performs longing for a distant home and for the Yugoslav past, yet differs from retro phenomenon such as *YU rock*. As a genre of popular music, the NCFM activates precisely nostalgic potential that enables its transformation into heritage (more about heritagization of popular music in: Bennett and Janssen, 2016), while the diaspora context provides it with an abstract yet specific spatiality (more about sites of popular music heritage in: Cohen, 2015). The NCFM in diaspora context can be studied through various lenses and sources: lyrical analysis of

songs produced for the *gastarbajter* market; examination of international concert tours by genre 'stars' and their performances at diasporic weddings (particularly in Western Europe and North America); media content produced within expatriate communities; and participatory performances at gatherings such as celebrations, balls and other special events. This article examines two levels of nostalgic existence of the NCFM - associations with the homeland and with the past - through the application of Svetlana Boym's model of restorative and reflective nostalgia, where the former refers to mourning for a distant home and the latter to melancholic recollection of past times. In its original meaning, nostalgia is "a longing for a home that no longer exists, or never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance for one's own fantasy" (Boym, 2001: XIII). Furthermore, "contemporary nostalgia is not so much about the past as about vanishing the present" (Boym, 2001: 351). The life of the NCFM in diaspora is precisely a combination of these two models of nostalgia. Moreover, the NCFM does not propagate 'ethnic nostalgia' in former Yugoslav diaspora (precisely, in Slovenia) and may be consumed by members of various ethnic group (Radović, 2010: 128-132). As demonstrated in the example of *old urban music (starogradska muzika)* in Serbia, nostalgia is a mechanism in the ever-vital processes of musical (and in general cultural) patinization:

After the war and the appearance of the NCFM, pre-war urban folk music was rebranded as *old urban* and historicized (therefore, as more 'valuable') folk music. [...] What is ongoing today is the patinization of NCFM until the 1990s, and thus the once 'bad' folk music performed by acoustic instrumental ensembles in Skadarlija becomes 'good' - old urban music. (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2019b: 25-26)

Mentioned resignifications of particular popular music genre are happening actually in and for diaspora - e.g. North American diaspora preserved pre-World War II repertoire which was censored in Serbia with continuous discographic activity, while on the other hand the NCFM lives in diaspora communities as 'contemporary' popular folk music.

Finally, in this study, we examine the NCFM from a heritage perspective. Findings from field researches focused on live performances at emigrant gatherings are particularly valuable, as they demonstrate how the NCFM functions simultaneously as traditional, contemporary and living heritage. Furthermore, the NCFM is inclusive, representative and community-based - aligning with UNESCO key criteria for intangible cultural heritage

(UNESCO, n.d.). However, despite characteristics that could affiliate it with ICH - including intergenerational and media transmission, ongoing creativity, an active scene, and the ability to unite diverse ethnic and generational audiences who identify the music as 'ours' (Serbian: *naša*) - the NCFM (including its performativity) remains absent from official heritage discourses and listings. From the perspective of critical heritage studies, the reason may be: "Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, cultural elitism and the fetishizing of expert knowledge have all had a crucial impact on how cultural heritage is discussed, used and managed" (Lähdesmäki et al., 2019: 2). Mentioned omission reveals a critical gap between the lived, omnipresent reality of the NCFM and the structure of the ICH system as practiced in Serbia (and, apparently, in countries hosting Serbian diaspora). In Serbia, the heritage framework remains primarily focused on performances of folklore forms canonized during the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) period as the tradition of the Serbs. The current system of recognizing, inscribing and subsequent safeguarding heritage elements largely serves to reaffirm these previously legitimized forms, under the direction of heritage management bodies. This explains why certain potential ICH elements are problematic for inscription on national list due to ethics, copyright, privacy or occasionality (more in: Sikimić, 2022). As a result, the NCFM - a genre that continues to exist self-sustainably within both local and diasporic communities - remains excluded due to its historically low cultural status among intellectual elites and heritage gatekeepers. This study addresses that dissonance by asking what kind of heritage the NCFM actually represents.

The NCFM is considered here to be significant from the perspective of Serbian ethnomusicology, bearing in mind that popular music can function not only as an entertainment, or a means of identification but also as soft power with tangible societal impact. As Bulgarian ethnomusicologist Lozanka Peycheva claimed:

The power policies of the media, which use soft power, have the effect of attracting public attention [...]. Music is among the important priorities in media policy because popular media music has a large scope and strong influence, regardless of style and genre characteristics. Technological music production and its communication through the mass media enable individual music artists (composers, conductors, performers etc.) to exert influence on people's lives and play a role in mobilizing the audience and in forming broad audiences with certain values and tastes. (Peycheva, 2020: 7)

Related to the NCFM, ethnomusicologist Vencislav Dimov has shown that ethnopop music in Bulgaria was initially identified as ‘Serbian,’ resulting in the prominence of musical content perceived as ‘Eastern’ (despite its western geographical origin) due to its structural characteristics and its contrast with dominant NCFM trends since the 1980s (Dimov, 2023). During that decade, various NCFM styles and performers gained popularity beyond the borders of former Yugoslavia and outside *gastarbeiter* and Western diaspora circles, largely through smuggled and pirated audio cassettes in Bulgaria and Romania. This foreign music significantly influenced local scenes while simultaneously becoming part of a broader Balkan popular folk music heritage. Dimov interprets these Balkan popular folk music genres as manifestations of soft power: “It is known that chalga and turbofolk can function as ‘countercultural strategies’—expressions of local cultural choice constructed against Europe and the West, containing resistance to negative stereotypes about the Balkans. Local ethnopop music in the Balkans (*chalga, laika, arabesk, turbofolk, manele, talava*, etc.) is among the most visible agencies of attractive and seductive soft power” (Dimov, 2020: 53).

In this article, we recognize the benefits of the thesis that the heritage has contextualized and neutral value, which grants its potential as an instrument of reconciliation rather than merely social separation (Ćuković 2017; Milenković 2016; for the example of *tambura* playing in multireligious Montenegrin context and the proposal of inclusive ICH register toward minorities see: Banović et al., 2024). The NCFM is observed here using the term for conflicting sound, i.e. as a *dissonant heritage*, an opposite of validated sonic representation of a national heritage. As Tunbridge and Ashworth defined, the dissonances in the transmission can be caused by contradiction, failure, obsolescence and undesirability (1996: 28-29), so from the heritage system perspective the NCFM in diaspora may be historically undesirable or nowadays contradictory. We have in mind benefits of the heritage system, but we also acknowledge the discrepancies in interpretation of the NCFM between cultural elites and heritage industry on one side, and diaspora communities who enjoy it (both as listeners and events’ participants) and economically and culturally support it, together with various music performers who sustain it, on the other side. This heritage is excluded from official heritage systems, but as we will demonstrate with the case studies, diaspora communities created their own appreciation of the NCFM, which is especially enhanced with genre’s tradition. To this, we

add mentioned value of soft power (more about heritage and soft power in: Winter, 2015) and connectedness with the country of origin. The aim of this approach is not to advocate for the inclusion of the NCFM within UNESCO ICH frameworks, nor to pursue aesthetic validation through scientific assessment of musical forms or heritage management with safeguarding measures. Rather, the goal is to conceptualize music-related heritage beyond the ICH paradigm and to recognize its social and identity value within communities, independent of validation by the heritage industry.

NCFM in Post-Yugoslav Communities in the Diaspora: Case Studies

The following analysis is grounded in the ethnographic research of both authors, including individual research on Serbian communities in Hungary, as well as joint research on post-Yugoslav communities in Türkiye within the TRackerRS project. It addresses different contextual and geopolitical settings of the NCFM among post-Yugoslav communities in diasporic contexts over the past decade. The selected case studies illustrate that while the NCFM manifests in similar ways across communities, it carries different meanings in contemporary diasporic settings. Moreover, the case studies reveal differences related to minority status, community goals, and varying interpretations and potentials of the NCFM as a vital cultural practice.

NCFM and the Serbian community in Hungary

According to the recent census, the Serbian community in Hungary nowadays counts around 8.000 members (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2022). Its structure is dual, comprising Serbs who migrated from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 17th century and those who have migrated from former Yugoslavia since the 1990s (Nikolić, 2023a). Although those two communities are not strongly interconnected, this case study focuses on the so-called native Serbs who migrated centuries ago to the territory of the present-day Republic of Hungary. Consequently, the community under study cannot be analyzed through the lens of migrant ‘generational count,’ as their ancestors emigrated centuries ago. They are therefore categorized as “Serbs in the region,” rather than ‘Serbs in the diaspora,’ according to the Law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, n.d.).

Music has long been a significant component of cultural and social life among Serbian and other ex-Yugoslav communities in Hungary that migrated centuries ago. It has played an

important role in identity representation within minority contexts alongside the language, religion, dance and other ethnic symbols (see: Felfeldi, 2003; Kokanović, 2009; Marjanović, 2019; Nikolić, 2023c; Nikolić, 2024; Vujičić, 1978; Vujičić, 2020). Ethnographic research by Tihomir Vujičić, an ethnomusicologist and a member of the Yugoslav community in Hungary in the 20th century, documented the music repertoire of those communities with a focus on traditional music in the localities of ex-Yugoslav communities all over Hungary (see: Vujičić, 1978; Vujičić, 2020). His work traces the development of musical repertoire in the first half of the 20th century from local traditional music to the appearance of “newly composed songs in folk spirit”, which creatively upgraded traditional music creatively through Western classical approaches to harmonization and instrumentalization (composers such as Isidor Bajić, Marko Nešić) (Vujičić, 2020: 97). A new interwar genre, named “folk music in *kafana* style”, was disseminated by Radio Belgrade (Vujičić, 2020: 98).² Vujičić’s remark that these genres “are present even today” (2020: 98), suggests that local traditional repertoires and (old) urban folk songs remained dominant within the Serbian community until the early 1970s. These genres frame the development of musical repertoire within the Serbian and other post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary with the NCFM is the next stage, but also the last one as the other genres developing in Serbia have rarely been accepted in this context.

The NCFM has been continuously present among the Serbian community in Hungary from its emergence in former Yugoslavia to the present day. Recent ethnographic research and interviews with informants of different ages (2019-2025) reveal a persistent and strong interest in this genre as the core repertoire of social events. Moreover, the NCFM has come to dominate such events -Serbian balls, weddings, and other celebrations- largely replacing earlier local traditional music.

The repertoire within the Serbian community in Hungary initially mirrored the market and production of this genre in former Yugoslavia. Radio served as the primary medium

² Those songs are defined as *urban folk music* that is “regional popular folk music which can be traced from the 19th century, which is an amalgam of local rural folklore practices, Eastern and Western influences and which is conditioned by production, reproduction, dissemination and consummation via mass media and live performances” (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2019b: 95-96), in which genre can be interpreted as the music composed before World War II. The continuation of this genre, and music made after World War II, is conceptualised as *old urban music* or *starogradska* in the Serbian language, which Nikolić’s informants mostly mentioned during the interviews. That music is mainly related to performance in *kafana* (Serb.), taverns located all over the former Yugoslav space.

for transmitting the NCFM, representing virtually the only connection to Yugoslav cultural life during the second half of the twentieth century. Radio Belgrade was the preferred station, broadcasting both traditional folk music and the NCFM. Gramophone records by popular musicians were also present, but they were less accessible than radio broadcasts. Many interlocutors described various attempts to obtain records from Yugoslavia, which were regarded as valuable household possessions. Due to limited direct contact with Yugoslavia, radio thus became a crucial link to the NCFM. In addition to radio, musicians played a central role in incorporating these songs into vernacular repertoires and transforming the community's cultural heritage. They transcribed song titles, melodies, lyrics, harmonizations, and other musical elements from radio broadcasts, transmitted this knowledge to other ensemble members, and subsequently performed it at social events (Nikolić, 2023b). In this way, both musicians and the broader community gradually reshaped their musical preferences, composing and transforming their heritage under the strong influence of Radio Belgrade.

Post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary followed musical developments in former Yugoslavia until the 1990s, when this mirroring ceased with the emergence of *turbofolk* in Serbia. As one informant noted, “the war did not happen here,” when explaining relationships among people, musicians, and cultural heritage in post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary (Nikolić, 2023b). Accordingly, the NCFM has remained the dominant genre at social events across post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary, despite the rich market of *turbofolk* and other genres developing in Serbia.

As an integral component of social events, the NCFM is perceived as “theirs” and serves to distinguish post-Yugoslav communities from other ethnic groups in Hungary, including both minorities and the Hungarian majority. While ethnically determined songs and dances may be performed exclusively at the Serbian or Croatian Ball, most of the repertoire overlaps. Namely, it largely consists of songs by prominent NCFM singers from the period of the SFRY, such as Miroslav Ilić, Predrag Živković Tozovac and Snežana Đurišić. Additionally, contemporary Serbian and Croatian events in Hungary frequently include Macedonian songs and dances, also associated with the SFRY era. Music produced after the 1990s is present but represents a comparatively small portion of the repertoire.

The popularity of the NCFM genre has long been reflected in the concert activities by leading performers of the genre. Namely, the most prominent and favorite singers and musicians in the community, such as Miroslav Ilić, Cune Gojković, Dušica and Nedeljko Bilkić, were often invited to the Yugoslav Balls and other bigger events of the post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary. Ethnographic research over the past six years indicates ongoing practice of the concerts of popular singers at the Serbian Balls and other post-Yugoslav communities such as Lepa Brena, Miroslav Ilić, Rade Jorović, Biljana and Aleksandar Jeftić, followed by the musicians of the Folk Orchestra of Radio-Television of Serbia or the Folk Orchestra of Radio-Television of Vojvodina. The selection of performers also reflects ethnic distinctions, as Serbian communities tend to favor musicians from Serbia.

The continuous and vital presence of the NCFM among the Serbian community and other post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary has fostered the creation and transformation of new cultural forms, particularly dances. Several dance forms have been identified as syncretic combinations of the NCFM and kinetic patterns of different traditions. For example, the dance *makedonsko* combines a kinetic pattern derived from Greek *syrtos* and music structures in 7/8 metrorhythmical pattern. Songs may come from the NCFM or traditional repertoires, such as *Makedonsko devojče*, *Ajde, Jano*, *Topla zima*, *plava žena* etc. Another example employs a similar kinetic pattern with musical structures in 4/4 meter and rumba rhythm, using exclusively NCFM songs such as *Luckasta si ti* (Miroslav Ilić) or *Ramo, ramo* (Muharem Serbezovski). These examples position the NCFM as a platform for creative transformation by the community itself - a key criterion of cultural heritage characterized by adaptability alongside continuity.

The performance and creative potential of the NCFM in Hungary thus relates to the sustainable cultural heritage of Serbian community and other post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary nowadays. It is an element that distinguishes all of those communities within minority contextual circumstances as a central cultural element of all social events. It also narrates a strong post-Yugoslav identity as it has not been influenced by the later post-Yugoslav constructs such as *turbofolk*, *trepfolk* and others. Some members of the Serbian and other post-Yugoslav communities still live with the nostalgia of everyday life within one umbrella term "South Slavic" (Hungarian: *délszláv*) since their shared migrations to the space of present-day Hungary. They have lived together in the same space, creating

shared values, traditions and culture. One of the shared cultural elements is the NCFM, which they have accepted, performed and used as a ground for creating new cultural forms. From that lens, the present performance of the NCFM and Macedonian repertoire among Serbian and other post-Yugoslav communities has a nostalgia for the officially shared and coexistent life as one minority in Hungary.

At the same time, the NCFM's prominence in participatory and vernacular contexts reinforces shared cultural identity across post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary. Ethnic distinctions in new minority circumstances from the 1990s are expressed through the invitation of singers or musicians from Serbia, showcasing specific dance and music forms. Hence, the NCFM in Hungary has several meanings while intertwining the ethnic and cultural identities among the Serbian and other post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary. On the one hand, it has a role of the ethnic determination for the Serbian community among other post-Yugoslavian communities with distinguished Serbian musicians. On the other hand, it presents the shared cultural heritage among all post-Yugoslavian communities grounded in long-standing coexistence and shared living in this geographical and cultural space. In the Hungarian case study, the NCFM demonstrates its capacity and strength as both a strategy for community identification and as a foundation for cultural heritage transformation.

NCFM and Bosniak community in Türkiye

Ethnographic research by both authors of post-Yugoslav communities in Türkiye focused primarily on the largest and most cohesive groups - the Bosniak communities in Istanbul and Izmir, and in the later city Macedonian community as well. As empirical material demonstrated a particularly strong presence of the NCFM within Bosniak communities, the following analysis concentrates on their cultural and social practices. Participant observation at Macedonian social events revealed a predominant focus on Macedonian songs and traditional dances, with only sporadic inclusion of NCFM songs originating from Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Bosniaks in Istanbul and Izmir are Muslim immigrants originating from the anthropogeographical region of the Raška District (emically referred to as Sandžak), located between present-day Serbia and Montenegro (see the map in: Petrović and Vlahović, 1984: 13). This region historically hosted the South Slavic community of Muslim

faith within former Yugoslavia in the cities such as Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Priboj, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Kolašin, Tutin, Rožaje, which are also the localities of the origin of contemporary Bosniak community in Türkiye (Petrović, Vlahović, 1984: 12; Ajzenhamer, 2012: 18-20). Migration to Türkiye occurred in multiple waves from the seventeenth century through the 1990s. Informants in Izmir primarily descend from migrations during the period of the former Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, when post-World War II policies encouraged the emigration of economically disadvantaged Muslims to Türkiye (Mušović, 1979: 112-114). Some families migrated during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, while others relocated to Istanbul during the 1990s. Accordingly, interviewed community members represent first-, second-, and occasionally third-generation migrants. Many originated from families that identified as Turkish while holding Yugoslav citizenship, adopted Turkish names and surnames, and, in some cases, possess limited proficiency in Serbo-Croatian (Mušović, 1979: 112).

Compared to the Serbian and post-Yugoslav communities in Hungary, the Bosniaks in Türkiye gather through NGO-based cultural and social associations. Social events are related to weddings and other family celebrations without many dance and music events *per se*.³ In both localities, the Bosniak communities gather in those associations, which are consistently named after “Bosna’ (part of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and mentioned “Sandžak”. During the research, we could speak with the members of three associations of the Bosniak communities - *Türkiye Bosnia-Sanjak Association (Türkiye Bosna Sancak Derneği)* and *Istanbul Anatolian Side Bosnia-Sanjak Social Assistance and Culture Association (İstanbul Anadolu Yakası Bosna-Sancak Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği)* in Istanbul, and *Bosna-Sandžak Association / Izmir Bosna Sancak Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği* in Izmir. Each of them has an agency of identity presentation, culture maintenance and social cohesion of the community in the minority contextual circumstances. Additionally, some of them present cultural heritage and host concerts that incorporate music and dance activities (Bayrampaşa Association). For example, the Bosniak community in Istanbul has dance amateur ensembles (Özbilgin, 2023; Ranisavljević, 2023) and music choirs which perform the urban folk music from former Yugoslavia

³ The informants mentioned only one annual social and dance event on the 29th of October, a national holiday commemorating the proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923. Interlocutors in Izmir highlighted this event as significant for the community, where many members participate and dance *čačak kolo* and other dances practiced by Bosniaks.

(Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023). Significant for this article are the choirs in Istanbul within the Pendik Association, which perform the *sevdalinka* songs and the songs of NCFM genre.

Short-term fieldwork conducted in Istanbul in May 2022 (by Abdullah Akat, Marija Dumnić Vilotijević, Ivana Medić, Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin, Belma Oğul, Zdravko Ranisavljević, Katarina Tomašević) with the *Türkiye Bosnia-Sanjak Association* and the *Istanbul Anatolian Side Bosnia-Sanjak Social Assistance and Culture Association* resulted the presence of two types of urban folk music related to former Yugoslavia. The first one is *sevdalinka* as a music genre which evokes their Ottoman ancestry, and the second one is the NCFM, music genre relating to the Yugoslav period from the time of the informants' youth (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023: 47). Both genres the members of the Associations perform in a so called *sevdalinka* choirs, amateur and open-membership groups, while singing in unison and with the instrumental harmonic-rhythmical accompaniment (accordion and keyboard, while violin and clarinet may be included) (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023: 50). The purpose of these choirs is dual - presentational through the concert activities and ethnic identification, and participatory as a medium of gathering, social cohesion and cultural contact of the community with evocation of the homeland (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023: 50).

The singers of the choirs are mainly women, while the instrumental players and conductors are men. They perform the most popular songs of *sevdalinka* genre, such as *Moj dilbere*, *Čudna jada od Mostara grada*, *Crven fesić*, highlighting the most prominent singer of this genre - Safet Isović (for more on the repertoire performed by one choir, see: Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023: 51). Furthermore, another part of the repertoire consists of the songs of the most prominent performers of the NCFM genre from period of former Yugoslavia such as Miroslav Ilić, Dragana Mirković and Šaban Šaulić (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023: 51-52). The choice of the repertoire reflects the presence of a tie with the Ottoman legacy and Turkish loanword *sevdah* - meaning "love, love longing, love exaltation" (Škaljić, 1966: 561), while *sevdalinka* in the field "is perceived as a folk song typical for Bosniak communities" (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023: 50). In opposite, the appearance of the NCFM genre relates to Serbian, but also to the broader Yugoslav context, and to Yugonostalgia as a shared cultural heritage with other diasporic communities and a shared homeland prior to emigrations.

The participatory and social context of Bosniak communities in Izmir also includes the NCFM genre. Ethnographic research conducted with the *Izmir Bosna Sancak Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği*, as well as netnographic research of available video recordings online of the Bosniak communities in both cities, revealed a rich structure of musical repertoire and genres. Specifically, social events of the Bosniak community in Türkiye include the NCFM, but also a more substantial presence of more recent music genres that developed after the NCFM - *turbofolk*, *zabavna muzika*, *trepfolk*, which creates a more nuanced repertoire from the perspective of musical genres when compared to the case study in Hungary. All of these genres are integral parts of social events and are organized through medleys, due to the dance genres involved and the formal and structural characteristics of both music and kinetic features.

For example, there is the “*čačak* medley”, which consists of one kinetic form and numerous vocal and vocal-instrumental structures in 2/4 meter and *allegro* tempo (cca 150 BPM) from the NCFM, *turbofolk*, *zabavna muzika* genres (see: Boşnak Dünyası TV, 2023b). Further, there is a *kolo u tri* medley, which is characteristic of the dance genre - *kolo u tri*, but incorporates distinct instrumental music named as *topčinsko*, *rijetko* and *užičko kolo* dance, which are performed from the slowest to the fastest tempo in a medley (Özbilgin, Ranisavljević, Nikolić, 2023). Social events of the Bosniak communities also include “*šote kolo* medley”, which features one kinetic pattern of *lako kolo* and numerous vocal-instrumental songs from the NCFM and *turbofolk* genres in 4/4 meter and specific *rumba* rhythm (see: Özgüneş, 2024). Common to all medleys is the incorporation of many vocal-instrumental songs of the NCFM, *turbofolk*, *zabavna muzika*, *trepfolk* genres within long multi-hour dancing at the social events.

An analysis of songs from the NCFM, *turbofolk*, and *zabavna muzika* genres performed at these events showed the prevalence of singers originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most popular among them are Halid Bešlić, Dino Merlin, Halid Muslimović, and Hanka Paldum. This reflects the ethnic and regional framing of urban folk music genres from the perspective of performers’ origins. Nevertheless, the repertoire also includes NCFM songs by highly popular singers originating from Serbia, such as Dobrivoje Topalović, Predrag Živković Tozovac, Snežana Đurišić, and Nada Topčagić. Songs perceived as “Serbian” are most often those characterized by accordion accompaniment and a steady, even metro-rhythm.

A crucial difference between case studies in Hungary and Türkiye lies the presence of music created after the 1990s and in recent decades. An analysis of the repertoire of Bosniak communities available on YouTube platform (Bošnjak Dünnyası TV, 2023a; Özgüneş, 2024) illustrates the occurrence of the *turbofolk* and so-called *zabavna muzika* (entertainment music) of the musicians, both of whom originated from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. This can be understood by considering the broader contextual framework and the nature of more recent migrations of these communities. First, the Bosniak community includes members who were born in former Yugoslavia, meaning that their families—particularly the second and third generations—maintain direct contact with the country through family members. Second, contact between Bosniaks in Türkiye and present-day Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Montenegro remains direct, given that many family members continue to reside in that region. Serbs in Hungary and other post-Yugoslav communities there have not maintained this type of direct connection with Yugoslavia and, later, with Serbia.

All of these songs, composed both before and after the 1990s, form the basis for celebration, performance, and the creation of new cultural forms among Bosniak communities in Türkiye. In addition to dances typical of the Raška District, such as *rijetko*, *topčinsko*, *topčino kolo*, and *sarajka*, these communities also perform dances widespread in Serbia, such as *užičko kolo* and *čačak*. However, their performance of these Serbian dances is transformed through interventions in musical structures grounded in the NCFM and turbofolk. A salient example is *čačak*, which combines the kinetic structure of the most widespread Serbian dance genre, *kolo u tri*, the most famous *čačak* melody from southeastern Serbia (performed and popularized by Serbian accordionist Radojka Živković), and songs from the NCFM and turbofolk. Thus, the musical component of *čačak* in Türkiye comprises both a Serbian stream—including the *čačak* melody by Radojka Živković and NCFM songs by Serbian singers (e.g., Miroslav Ilić, Snežana Đurišić, Ana Bekuta)—and a Bosnian stream featuring songs performed by singers of Bosnian origin (Halid Bešlić, Hanka Paldum, Neda Ukraden). The choice between these streams depends on the moment and the musicians involved. Consequently, this form of *čačak* is a product of the Bosniak community in Türkiye, drawing on its vital cultural heritage to employ different traditions and practices in the creation of a new one.

Crucial to this article is the fact that, as in the case study in Hungary, the NCFM, together with the *turbofolk* and *zabavna muzika*, has become the foundation of both presentational and participatory activities of the Bosniak community in Izmir, functioning as a symbol that distinguishes them within the minority context. Expressions such as ‘our *sevdalinke*’, and ‘our songs’, are frequently emphasized by informants when discussing their lives in Türkiye. When the chair of the association in Izmir stated, “I have a will to spread our culture here with everyone,” this “our culture” referred to urban folk music and all genres encompassed within it. Thus, urban folk music has become a vital form of cultural heritage for the community, carrying multiple meanings - from minority identification and community cohesion to nostalgia for the homeland.

Returning to the meaning and manifestation of the NCFM among Bosniaks in Türkiye, this case study yields interpretations that differ from those observed among Serbs in Hungary. Bosniaks in Türkiye possess a multilayered identity that intertwines Turkish, post-Yugoslav, and local elements. On the one hand, Turkish identity encompasses citizenship, place of residence, Muslim religion, the change of names from Slavic to Turkish, and the use of the Turkish language in everyday life (Dumnić Vilotijević, 2023: 49). On the other hand, all informants - particularly those of the first and second migrant generations—expressed strong emotional ties and narratives related to their places of origin. Interviews conducted in Istanbul and Izmir reveal a phenomenon of togetherness and cohesion articulated through the narrative of ‘our’ - *naše* - which encompasses and frames ‘our’ homeland, language, music, and dance. The NCFM relates directly to the country of origin (Yugoslavia, Serbia) at the time of migration, as well as to the region itself, while later repertoire accepted within the community is more closely associated with being ‘Bosniak’, with an emphasis on performers originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In both cases, various genres of urban folk music constitute vital and central elements of the cultural heritage of Bosniaks in Türkiye in both presentational and participatory contexts.

Conclusion

The two case studies on the NCFM and displaced communities aim to demonstrate the potential, status and vitality of a musical genre that has often been disregarded as lacking value, dismissed as kitsch, and, as argued here, framed as dissonant heritage. Analysis of the Serbian community in Hungary and the Bosniak community in Türkiye illustrates the shared importance and widespread presence of this genre within these communities and

their social events. In both cases, the NCFM has become a vital cultural heritage that has been transforming and influencing the establishment of distinct diasporic practices. Even more, the NCFM and other urban folk genres are perceived as something 'their', as the markers of their communities that distinguish them from all other communities in minority contexts. At the same time, the two case studies demonstrated different representations of the NCFM, which prevails in the case of Hungary, and to a lesser extent in Türkiye, where later genres are dominant. Further, the path of the establishment of the NCFM was different in these diasporas. In Hungary, it travelled through radio frequency to the people whose image of their homeland had always been imaginary, due to migrations beginning in the 17th century. In contrast, the NCFM arrived in Türkiye with people who migrated in the second half of the 20th century from the country of the NCFM's origin. Consequently, the meanings attributed to the NCFM and homeland itself are different. Lastly, despite both similarities and differences, those case studies confirm that the NCFM genre represents a living and sustainable form of cultural heritage in the diaspora. It plays a significant role in identity politics and minority statutes within those communities. At the same time, a shared thread leads to the argument that the NCFM constitutes a post-Yugoslav legacy and a form of soft power originating from Serbia, representing a living cultural heritage within diasporic discourse.

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Strategic Rituals and Symbolic Power: Henna Nights as Cultural Performance in Novi Pazar

ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the cultural behaviors of the Muslim Bosniak community living in the city of Novi Pazar, Serbia, specifically through the cultural elements observed in ceremonial transition rituals such as henna night celebrations, and the meanings attributed to these elements. In this region, where layers of Ottoman heritage, Bosniak identity, Turkishness, and Islamic identity are interwoven, the study analyzes—through an interpretivist approach and in light of field data—how cultural elements may occupy a strategic position in identity construction.

The research is based on the theory of interpretive anthropology and employs qualitative data collection methods. Field data were gathered through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, and were analyzed using descriptive analysis and thematic coding techniques. This method reinforces the notion that henna night, as a rite of passage, functions not merely as a traditional festivity, but also as a crucial space in the construction of both individual and collective identities.

Additionally, the study engages with the theoretical frameworks of Balkanism and Orientalism to discuss the tension between internal representations and external gazes; it argues that such ceremonies can serve both as local cultural expressions and as strategic re-presentations. The support provided to the Muslim community in Novi Pazar by Türkiye through instruments of cultural diplomacy is evaluated as a significant element in the processes of cultural continuity and identity reinforcement. The article reveals that cultural elements function not only as means for transmitting values and knowledge, but also as strategic components of identity, power, and mechanisms of political representation.

KEYWORDS

Henna nights

Cultural performance

Novi Pazar

Strategic rituals

Symbolic power

Introduction

The city of Ras, the capital of the first Serbian state, underwent significant transformations in settlement and culture following its conquest by the Ottoman Empire in the late 14th century (Aruçi, 2013: 468). By the second half of the 14th century, Ras was renamed Trgovište, and a new fortification, later named Novi Pazar in 1461, was established nearby. Gazi İsa Bey İshakbeyoğlu founded Novi Pazar as a new city in the region between 1459 and 1461, adjacent to an older settlement that had been utilized by Illyrians, Romans, Byzantines, and Serbs, hence its name, Novi Pazar (New Bazaar). During this period, some Turkish and Muslim populations from Anatolia and other Ottoman territories were settled in the region. Additionally, many local Christians converted to Islam for various reasons (Hacısalihoğlu, 2009: 121-126).

Novi Pazar, located within Serbia's borders, lies 280 km south of Belgrade and on a crucial highway connecting Belgrade to the Adriatic via Podgorica (Titograd). A new city was established by Gazi İsa Bey İshakbeyoğlu between 1459-1461 next to an older settlement utilized by Illyrians, Romans, Byzantines, and Serbs. With the advent of Ottoman rule, Novi Pazar experienced rapid growth and development, becoming a hub for both trade and crafts as a result of conquests extending to the northwest Balkans by the early 16th century. Its position on trade routes led to the construction of numerous caravanserais, inns, and hammams (Aruçi, 2013: 468-471). The city's swift progress continued, and it became the cultural capital of the region known as Sandžak within the Ottoman Empire. (Aruçi, 2013: 468-471; Hoca 1986: 395-399).

Novi Pazar, which served as the capital of the Sanjak region during the Ottoman Empire, continues to preserve cultural values associated with Muslim and Ottoman identities. Although contemporary factors such as the acceleration of communication, fashion trends, and ideological transformations have led to changes in both religious and secular cultural practices, the fundamental meanings, along with a sense of belonging and loyalty, continue to be transmitted across generations. In this context, it is particularly important to emphasize the close relationship with Turkish culture and Türkiye. Elements such as kinship ties, shared ancestry, and religious unity are reinforced through television series that reach wide audiences via media channels.

The Muslim minority living in Novi Pazar is able to express its identity through a multi-

layered structure, using descriptors such as Turkishness, Islam, Bosniak identity, and descendants of the Ottoman Empire. It must be noted that these expressions are significantly shaped by historical processes and socio-political dynamics. Particularly after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the articulation of identities has become more pronounced.

It would be appropriate to present several studies from the relevant literature that explain these forms of identity expression. These studies reveal how historically grounded identity elements—such as Ottoman legacy, Islam, Bosniakness, and Turkishness—are reflected in the identity representations of the Muslim minority in contemporary Novi Pazar.

Kapetanović (2020), for instance, examines how Bosniak national identity in Novi Pazar became more accessible and widely embraced following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The study highlights the significance of religion and national symbols in the construction of identity during this transitional period. It emphasizes how the term ‘Muslim,’ which was primarily used as a religious designation during the Yugoslav era, evolved into an ethno-national identity, ‘Bosniak,’ after the state’s collapse and became more broadly adopted.

The research further notes that even today, the region commonly referred to as ‘Sandžak’—characterized by its multi-layered identity narratives—presents a diverse range of self-identifications. Individuals articulate their sense of belonging through terms such as ‘Muslim Bosniak,’ ‘Muslim’ or ‘Muslim from Novi Pazar’ depending on whether they feel more closely aligned with Bosnia or Serbia.

While walking through the streets of Novi Pazar, it becomes evident that women’s headscarves may be considered a visible marker of Serbia’s Muslim minority. They serve not only as an expression of the Muslim presence in the city and the country but also as a significant symbol of Muslim female identity. In Đurović’s (2015: 823-824) study, the headscarf is described as “...a complex cultural marker through which Muslim women negotiate their sense of belonging, moral stance, and social visibility in a society shaped by both Islamic traditions and post-socialist realities.”

Alongside women’s headscarves and clothing, men’s accessories such as prayer beads

(tesbih), skullcaps (takke), and long beards also function as fundamental cultural indicators that materialize a sense of belonging to a Muslim identity.

The city's hookah cafés, street coffeehouses where lemonade and Turkish coffee are served, elaborately embroidered women's kaftans, circumcision capes for children, and bazaars selling fezzes and ornamental staffs all serve as indicators of cultural heritage embedded within the social fabric of the city. Ottoman-era architectural structures, alongside buildings constructed during the Yugoslav period, provide a systematic space in which Muslim and Bosniak identities are continuously reproduced (Dragović et al., 2015).

The everyday life practices of the Muslim community in Novi Pazar appear to reflect a multi-layered structure shaped by the intersection of Islamic tradition, cultural heritage rooted in the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, and local cultural elements characteristic of a Balkan city. It is evident that the sense of identity and belonging has become more pronounced particularly after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Communal iftar gatherings during Ramadan, festive celebrations and home visits during religious holidays, the 'korzo' (evening promenade) where young people and families interact, and the closing of shops citywide during Friday prayers are all references that reinforce this observation.

Most of the architectural structures in Novi Pazar date back to the Ottoman period, with mosques, hammams, and caravanserais shaping the historical texture of the city. Notable examples such as the Altun-Alem Mosque and the Lejlek Mosque serve not only as places of worship but also as venues for cultural events. These buildings reflect the community's historical and cultural heritage. Education and cultural activities are also key components of traditional life. Madrasas and cultural associations ensure that younger generations are raised with religious and cultural values. Furthermore, folk music, handicrafts, and traditional dances are part of the community's efforts to preserve and transmit its identity to future generations.

Although the academic literature on the musical traditions of Muslim minorities in Serbia remains relatively limited, there are several studies that focus specifically on the Sandžak region—particularly the cities of Novi Pazar, Tutin, and Sjenica—as well as on Bosniak, Albanian, and Turkish-origin communities in southern Serbia. The musical culture of the Bosniaks (in Novi Pazar and the broader Sandžak area) encompasses a diverse range of

religious and secular practices, including ilahi choirs (*ilahije*), *mevlid* recitation traditions, traditional *saz* music, and the lyrical genre known as *sevdalinka*. (Sümbüllü & Feyzi, 2022).

One of the significant aspects of cultural memory among the Bosniak communities in the Sandžak region is the continued reverence for Ottoman-era figures through traditional music. In her study, *Sancak'taki Boşnak Şarkılarında Plevne Arslanı* (The Lion of Plevna in Bosniak songs in Sandžak), Dr. Naka Nikšić (2024) explores the representation of Gazi Osman Pasha in the folk songs of the region, including those collected from Novi Pazar. The analysis highlights how historical narratives of heroism are preserved and transmitted across generations through musical forms. These songs, embedded with themes of resistance, loyalty, and faith, serve not only as artistic expressions but also as tools for constructing and reaffirming collective identity. In the context of Novi Pazar, the evocation of such historical figures in oral musical traditions reflects the community's enduring connection to Ottoman heritage and its role in shaping contemporary Bosniak identity.

Under the theme of tradition and cultural reconstruction, I wrote an article titled *Tradition as a Useful Tool: New Patterns of Culture among the Bosniaks in Novi Pazar*, examines the cultural behaviors and musical practices of the Bosniak community in Novi Pazar. The research analyzes how traditional music and dance have been restructured and transmitted to younger generations, particularly through performance groups such as KUD Mladih Novi Pazar and FolklorDaire. These groups function not only as cultural carriers but also as mediators of intergenerational transmission and redefinition of heritage within a contemporary context (Demir Güven, 2023).

In this second article, I aim to analyze the strategic cultural significance of the henna night celebrations—held a few days prior to wedding ceremonies and considered highly important in daily life—based on field observations I conducted in the city of Novi Pazar in 2023. This study is directly connected to my previous article, in which I examined KUD Mladih Novi Pazar and FolklorDaire as cultural performance ensembles and educational institutions. Notably, the members of these groups are the very individuals who organize and perform during the henna night events observed in the field. Therefore, it becomes evident that these ensembles function not only as stage performers but also as active

cultural agents contributing directly to lived ritual practices in everyday social life.

Methodology

This study is grounded in qualitative fieldwork conducted in Novi Pazar, Serbia, during September 2023. Drawing on the foundational tenets of interpretive anthropology, the research seeks to examine the interplay between identity and music as expressed through henna night celebrations—understood here as a form of rite of passage (van Gennep, 1960; Geertz, 1973). Emphasizing the emic perspectives of local actors, the study situates these ritual performances within a broader framework of cultural reproduction and symbolic expression.

The fieldwork conducted between September 1 and 7, 2023, served as the intensive phase of ethnographic immersion, this study is embedded within a broader research framework that extends far beyond a single week of observation. The research is part of the ongoing international project *Exploring the Tracks of Balkan Culture: Serbian–Turkish Connections in Music and Dance from the Ottoman Period until Today (TRackeRS)* (2022–2025), jointly coordinated by the Institute of Musicology SASA and the Istanbul University State Conservatory. Supported by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia and TÜBİTAK, this project has facilitated numerous field visits, scholarly symposia, and archival explorations. Therefore, the empirical insights presented here should not be viewed as the product of a brief field engagement alone, but as part of a multi-year, interdisciplinary research endeavor that integrates continuous ethnographic presence with cultural, musical, and historical investigation. By taking part in events like henna ceremonies, ilahi choir gatherings, and community street festivities, the researcher connected directly with cultural practices. This allowed for the gathering of detailed, contextual data (Spradley, 1980). Following Spradley’s (1980) distinction between descriptive and focused observation, I first wrote general fieldnotes about the overall sequence of the henna ceremonies. Later, I focused on specific symbols, such as the Qur’an, red garments, and the ‘Alaturka corner.’

Ten people from a range of socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds, including teachers, students, and civil society volunteers, were interviewed. Their tales provided an insight into Novi Pazar’s daily customs and cultural life. We conducted semi-

structured interviews using prepared thematic prompts, such as “How has the henna night changed in your lifetime?” and follow-up questions that encouraged participants to express their ideas in their own words, in accordance with the responsive interviewing model put forth by Rubin and Rubin (2012). While traditional thematic coding was not systematically applied, the analysis was grounded in interpretive ethnographic methods. Insights were drawn through immersive observation, informal group discussions, and in-depth interviews conducted as part of the broader fieldwork process. Rather than employing structured coding frameworks or software-assisted content analysis, findings emerged through a reflective process shaped by cultural familiarity, interpretive intuition, and triangulation across different sources. Observational notes, recurring narrative patterns, and contextual cues played a central role in identifying key themes related to identity, performance, and symbolic meaning.

This approach aligns with interpretive traditions in anthropology and cultural studies, where the researcher’s immersion and reflexive engagement serve as analytical tools. Although verbatim excerpts were not included in the article, all qualitative data—collected through focus groups, participant observation, and in-depth interviews—have been archived as part of the TRackeRS project. The analysis presented here reflects aggregated insights and thematic syntheses drawn from this comprehensive dataset. This methodological approach facilitates an understanding of cultural expressions not only through an external, observational lens but also through the embodied experiences and internal reflections of community members themselves.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

As a Turkish academic conducting research in a predominantly Bosniak-Muslim community in Serbia, I remained acutely aware of my dual role as both an insider and outsider. While shared cultural and religious reference points occasionally facilitated rapport and access, I also recognized that my interpretations were inevitably shaped by my positionality—socially, nationally, and academically. At times, I found myself navigating between a desire to empathetically engage with participants’ narratives and a need to critically interrogate the broader cultural and political frameworks informing these practices. Rather than striving for detached neutrality, I adopted a reflexive approach, acknowledging how my identity, assumptions, and prior knowledge influenced

both data collection and interpretation. This reflexivity enriched the ethnographic process, transforming it into a dialogical encounter rather than a unidirectional observation.

Conceptual Framework: Strategic Use of Cultural Elements in Identity, Representation, and Power Dynamics

Cultural elements can be broadly defined as the constellation of values, beliefs, traditions, rituals, artistic expressions, language, and symbols shared within a society (Geertz, 1973). These elements play a central role in the construction of individual and collective identities, as well as in regulating patterns of social interaction (Barth, 1969). When examined through the lens of henna night celebrations in Novi Pazar, these elements reveal themselves not merely as traditions to be preserved but as strategic performances in which symbols of identity and power are actively negotiated.

The attire of the bride-to-be, the symbolic jewelry, and the rituals performed during these events function not only as markers of familial and individual identity but also as indicators of social prestige and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Practices such as the henna ceremony, religious invocations, and the singing of folk songs serve to reproduce and reinforce cultural heritage while deepening communal bonds (Turner, 1969). In this context, cultural expressions are consciously or unconsciously mobilized to articulate identity, assert social position, and ensure cultural continuity (Swidler, 1986).

Throughout my fieldwork, I found myself oscillating between two analytical lenses: am I interpreting these rituals through an orientalist gaze, or should I remain within the framework of Balkanism? This dilemma, rooted in my personal field experience, invites a critical reflection on the ways cultural performances are both perceived and represented.

To ensure conceptual clarity, the terms ‘Strategic Orientalism’ and ‘Strategic Balkanism’ are here defined as culturally embedded practices wherein community actors consciously mobilize symbolic elements—such as language, dress, music, or ritual objects—with the aim of influencing perceptions, asserting identity, or achieving representational visibility. The distinction between strategic and non-strategic use is drawn based on three criteria: (1) participant acknowledgment of intentional cultural display; (2) observable variation in performance depending on audience or context; and

(3) evidence of adaptation, blending, or amplification of cultural symbols to meet political, aesthetic, or identity-driven goals. By contrast, practices that emerge from unreflected cultural reproduction or routine tradition, without conscious modification or explanation by participants, are categorized as non-strategic. These operational definitions allow the theoretical framework to remain analytically rigorous and empirically testable.

Maria Todorova's theory of Balkanism provides a valuable framework for interrogating the ways in which the Balkans have been constructed in Western discourse. Inspired by Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, Balkanism similarly addresses the discursive production of the region as the cultural and political 'Other' of Europe. However, while Orientalism exoticizes and romanticizes its subjects, Balkanism often portrays the region as backward, chaotic, and uncivilized—representations that ultimately legitimize Western hegemonic interventions (Todorova, 2009).

These discourses also shape internal dynamics. Cultural practices that are performed with authenticity by local actors may appear exotic or 'oriental' to external observers. Conversely, symbols of Balkan identity are at times emphasized as part of a broader strategy to align with European Union values and project an 'authentic yet civilized' cultural identity. This duality gives rise to what I describe as Strategic Balkanism—the selective instrumentalization of local symbols in order to fulfill varying political or representational objectives.

Cultural elements, therefore, should not be treated as static and immutable. Rather, culture should be viewed as a repertoire of symbolic tools that actors selectively deploy in response to shifting social, political, and historical contexts (Swidler, 1986). Clifford Geertz (1973) defines culture as a "web of meaning," suggesting that cultural symbols are not only representational but also directive—they shape how individuals understand the world and act within it.

Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital—as the accumulated history of society—manifests itself as a source of social recognition, visibility, and prestige. Cultural knowledge, embodied behaviors, and dispositions enable cultural elements to be transformed into strategic forms of symbolic capital. This process simultaneously refers to the origin of the cultural source and articulates the preservation and public display of

social status (Bourdieu, 1984).

Rituals that accompany rites of passage—such as henna nights, circumcision ceremonies, and wedding celebrations—constitute “liminal moments.” These are not only spaces in which cultural norms are reproduced but also environments that allow for the reconfiguration of social roles and boundaries. The symbols enacted in these contexts transcend everyday meanings and carry intensified significance, revealing the strategic importance of cultural elements. The liminality observed in these ceremonies brings forth a sense of spontaneity and heightened solidarity, expressed through ritual performance (Turner, 1969).

In the case of the Muslim community in Novi Pazar, the role of repetition and embodiment in the formation of identity is evident both in everyday life and in rites of passage. From a performativity perspective, identity is not a fixed essence; rather, it is a dynamic process of becoming—sustained and reinforced through the repeated enactment of signs, forms, and practices (Butler, 1990).

Over the past two decades, Türkiye’s cultural diplomacy can be evaluated within the frameworks of strategic Orientalism and Balkanism. Through institutions such as TİKA, the Yunus Emre Institute, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs, Türkiye has made efforts to revitalize historical and cultural ties, particularly with Muslim communities in the Sandžak region (Ekşi, 2017; Atcı, 2022).

These initiatives have contributed to the revival of local cultural traditions—especially in the context of cultural tourism and soft power projection—while simultaneously leading to the aesthetic reinterpretation and politicization of heritage practices.

On the other hand, although Serbia’s official cultural policies promote multiculturalism in line with European Union harmonization, they tend to adopt a more cautious and regulatory stance regarding the expression of ethnic identities. The cultural activities of Muslim minorities are typically supported under the framework of ‘soft integration’, provided they remain apolitical and merely symbolic in nature. This dynamic enables the visibility of cultural practices, yet produces a dual structure that prevents full subjectivity; within this structure, culture functions both as a tool of empowerment and as a mechanism of control.

Multidimensional manifestations of identity and power; the henna night celebrations in Novi Pazar offer a compelling example of how cultural practices serve not merely as traces of the past, but as complex and strategic performances of identity, power, and representation. These rituals are not limited to the local context, but are embedded within broader processes of meaning-making that intersect with both national and global discourses.

This study critically examines the symbolic use of cultural elements, revealing how such practices are strategically mobilized to foster internal communal cohesion, reinforce social positioning, and achieve international visibility. In this context, the concepts of strategic Balkanism and strategic Orientalism serve as essential analytical tools for understanding how cultural expressions mediate the tensions between self-representation and external expectation—between heritage and hegemony.

Performing Identity and Power: Field Insights into Strategic Cultural Expression

“It used to be a small family event at home. Now people book us months in advance. They want the ‘perfect Ottoman henna night’ they see on Turkish TV shows” (FolklorDaire Ensemble member, personal communication, 3 September 2023).

The following ethnographic findings illustrate how specific cultural elements—ranging from ritualized attire to performative gestures—are strategically mobilized to negotiate identity, representation, and symbolic power within the context of Novi Pazar’s henna night celebrations.

Throughout the fieldwork, it has been particularly noteworthy that participants evaluated their everyday practices as purposeful and meaningful. Religious holidays such as Ramadan and Eid al-Adha are considered significant not only for their religious dimensions but also as key periods for the preservation of identity and the strengthening of social solidarity. The cultural elements exhibited during these events serve as effective strategic tools for defining a sense of belonging, ensuring visibility, and referencing ancestral values.

Islamic education in Novi Pazar—including madrasas and mosque-based lessons—constitutes an active and institutional structure that supports cultural continuity and the reinforcement of religious identity. Furthermore, mosques and cultural centers have

come to be trusted spaces for social regulation, playing central roles in balancing state–society relations and assuming important functions in public life.

Social events such as weddings, circumcision ceremonies, and henna nights are considered essential components of folk culture. These events hold significant meaning and value in terms of traditional music, clothing, and oral history. Despite processes of urban transformation, such rituals remain highly important for identity formation and for securing regional cultural visibility. Elements such as the Qur’an, Ottoman flag, fez, shalwar trousers, ceremonial thrones, drums, and traditional henna songs are used during rites of passage to ‘revive traditional themes’. Another prominent finding of the fieldwork is the emergence of new cultural patterns. These can be observed in two main ways: first, through a form of cultural reproduction reinforced by religious choirs; and second, through the emphasis on Muslim and/or Bosniak cultural identity via choreography, costumes, and dances. As henna night rituals shift from home settings to venues such as hotels and restaurants, new adaptations emerge. Features like the ‘Alaturka corner’ add a new dimension to these ceremonies, showcasing cultural elements in more ostentatious ways within urban life. The ‘Alaturka corner’ refers to a decorated area featuring Oriental-style items, where the bride’s palms are dyed with henna. Additionally, Turkish, Arabic, and Hindi songs are played, while rituals such as painting the bride’s nails and drawing henna designs are performed. As illustrated in Figure 1, the ‘Alaturka corner’ is carefully staged with red fabrics, brass accessories and embroidered textiles that visually condense Ottoman-Islamic heritage into a single ritual spot.



Figure 1. Alaturka Corner: Henna Night Ritual Setup in Novi Pazar. This photo shows a traditional 'Alaturka corner' prepared for a henna night ceremony. The red fabrics, Ottoman-style brass accessories, lace-covered table, and richly embroidered textiles reflect a curated space of symbolic performance. These material elements are intentionally arranged to evoke heritage aesthetics and function as symbolic representations of purity, honor, and cultural continuity in Bosniak Muslim rituals. Folklordaire [@folklordaire]. (n.d.). Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.instagram.com/folklordaire/>

In interviews with members of FolklorDaire Ensemble, a prominent musical-cultural group in Novi Pazar, the henna night ceremony was described as symbolizing the bride's departure from her parents' home and the beginning of a new life. The group's practices still incorporate traditional symbols: red fabrics and garments represent virginity and fertility; henna signifies healing and purity; holding the Qur'an over the bride's head is a religious gesture; showing the bride a mirror symbolizes a wish for a bright future; forming a circle around her with candles relates to fire as a cultural symbol—representing the lighting of a new hearth, symbolizing prosperity and offspring. Music serves multiple functions—though it is central to entertainment, sorrowful songs are performed to make the bride cry during the henna ritual. All these are symbolic indicators of cultural continuity and reproduction. Figure 2 shows how the bride is positioned at the visual center of the ritual, surrounded by members of the folkloric ensemble whose instruments and costumes accentuate the collective, performative nature of the event.



Figure 2. Performative Henna Ritual: Bride and Folkloric Ensemble in Novi Pazar. This image depicts a staged moment during a henna night ceremony in Novi Pazar. The bride, dressed in symbolic red and gold garments, sits at the center of the ritual space, surrounded by members of a folkloric music ensemble. The female performers wear traditional costumes with golden embroidery, and are holding frame drums (def), while the male performers play davul (bass drums). This choreographed setting emphasizes the performative and collective dimensions of identity construction through ritual and music. Folklordaire [@folklordaire]. (n.d.).

Posts[Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved February 4, 2025, from

<https://www.instagram.com/folklordaire/>

When asked why these ceremonies, particularly henna nights, have gained popularity and economic value (now being commercialized with FolklorDaire’s involvement), interviewees explained that the once modest transition ritual has become a more organized and spectacular event. This trend is not merely a response to entertainment needs. First, a socio-economic market has formed. Second, the frequent representation of such rituals in Turkish TV series plays a role in their resurgence.

As rites of passage, these ceremonies refer to Islamic, Ottoman, Anatolian, and Balkan-Turkish identities, offering a symbolic stage for expressing such affiliations. The Muslim minority in Novi Pazar, who define themselves through language, tradition, and belief, can be seen as interhomeland migrants (Oğul, 2019). Their migration experiences in the Balkans and Serbia, along with blood and kinship ties with Türkiye, encourage them to continuously reconstruct their sense of belonging—each henna night becomes an act of cultural reproduction.

Semantic Map of Culture: Clifford Geertz’s (1973) approach, defining culture as a “web of meanings,” suggests that rituals like henna nights in Novi Pazar are not just surface-level

entertainment but sites of deep meaning production. These are spaces where cultural narratives are transmitted through collective memory and blended with individual identity codes. Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of 'habitus' and 'symbolic capital' are also relevant. Clothing, music, and spatial arrangements at henna ceremonies serve as indicators of not only cultural but also class affiliations. In this sense, the ceremony becomes a stage where socio-cultural capital is performed. The act of placing the Qur'an on the bride's head and applying henna to her palms (see Figure 3) materializes the intertwining of religious blessing and gendered expectations for the new household.



Figure 3. As part of a henna night ceremony, women from the FolklorDaire group participate in a special ritual where they place the Qur'an on the bride's face and delicately apply henna to her hands. This symbolic act holds deep cultural and religious significance, representing blessings, protection, and the start of a new chapter in the bride's life. Folklordaire [@folklordaire]. (n.d.). Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from <https://www.instagram.com/folklordaire/>

Cultural Repertoire and Strategic Symbolism: Ann Swidler (1986) views culture not as a set of fixed norms but as a "strategic repertoire." From this perspective, the Muslim Bosniak community in Novi Pazar strategically employs both traditional and modern symbols in henna ceremonies to express their multilayered identities. Examples include placing the Qur'an above the bride's head, the use of red coverings, candlelight rituals, and sorrowful henna songs—all functioning as markers of both religious devotion and cultural resistance. These symbols help regenerate not only personal identity but also collective memory and group belonging. Judith Butler's (1990) 'performative identity' theory reinforces the idea that identity is not static but is re-enacted each time through

such rituals.

Liminality and Social Reconstruction in Rituals: Victor Turner's (1969) concept of 'liminality' explains henna night as a threshold experience—where the bride's social status, roles, and emotional affiliations are symbolically transformed. Turner suggests that liminal spaces temporarily suspend cultural norms, allowing for their renegotiation. In the Novi Pazar case, the ritual reinterprets traditional codes and hybridizes them with contemporary symbols to construct a new cultural narrative. As shown in Figure 4, the 'Alaturka corner' is staged as a stylized Ottoman-inspired domestic interior, with the female presenter positioned at the center, framed by hand-embroidered textiles, kilim carpets, cushions and velvet drapery that visually condense Bosniak Muslim home aesthetics into a single performative space.



Figure 4. Alaturka Corner

Orientalism, Balkanism, and Strategic Performances: Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* and Maria Todorova's (1997) *Balkanism* offer theoretical tools to understand how Bosniak Muslim identity in Novi Pazar is constructed in relation to external perceptions. The staging of 'Alaturka corners', Arabic/Hindi songs, and traditional symbols at henna nights can be interpreted both as expressions of internal belonging and as forms of exoticization. The concept of 'strategic orientalism' reveals how local actors selectively highlight certain cultural features to create specific meanings for both internal and external audiences—essentially marketing cultural capital.

At the same time, henna nights unfold within a complex local political context. Novi Pazar is marked by shifting relations between Bosniak and Serb political actors, competing

Bosniak parties, and ongoing debates over minority rights and regional autonomy. EU integration discourses, which promote multiculturalism and tolerance, coexist with everyday experiences of marginalization and economic precarity. Interethnic coexistence is thus lived as a mixture of pragmatic cooperation, latent tension, and occasional solidarity. These dynamics do not always appear explicitly in ritual speech, yet they form an important backdrop against which henna night performances gain their emotional and political resonance.

Cultural Diplomacy: Media, and Soft Power; in the context of Türkiye's soft power strategies in the Balkans, the transformation of henna night rituals through Turkish TV and popular media illustrates that cultural transmission occurs vertically (state-diaspora) as well as horizontally. Nye's (2004) concept of 'soft power' is relevant here. Türkiye's nostalgic Ottoman imagery disseminated via media supports cultural reproduction among the Muslim community in Novi Pazar (Kobak and Güzgülü, 2024).

Representation, Silence, and the Voice of Subalterns: Gayatri Spivak's (1988) question, "Can the subaltern speak?", invites us to consider henna nights not only as cultural practices but also as platforms for representation and voicing. Silenced communities find in rituals the opportunity to express themselves through symbols. The representation of women's bodies and voices in these ceremonies also opens up space for discussions around gender and power (Đurović, 2015).

Conclusion

This study analyzes the processes of identity construction, representation, and negotiation among the Muslim community of Novi Pazar through their cultural practices—focusing especially on the strategic use of cultural elements in henna night rituals. The findings reveal that these rituals are not merely reproductions of tradition but performative spaces where both individual and collective identities are actively shaped and represented.

As a rite of passage, the henna night becomes a cultural performance, staging historical memory, ethno-religious identity, and social status through visual, auditory, and symbolic means. Traditional garments, music, prayers, and symbolic objects serve not only as aesthetic preferences but also as carriers of social position, belonging, and cultural resistance.

Concepts such as strategic orientalism and strategic balkanism allow us to grasp the internal and external dimensions of cultural representation. While Said (1978) critiques the exoticization of the East, Todorova (1997) emphasizes the Balkan region's liminal identity between East and West—an ambiguity mirrored in Novi Pazar's cultural expressions, caught between Islamic tradition and European aspirations.

The symbols used in henna rituals materialize this cultural-political duality. From Spivak's (1988) subaltern perspective, these rituals represent spaces of voice and resistance. Turner's (1969) liminality explains how these are threshold spaces where identities are renegotiated. Participants not only undergo individual transitions but also collectively answer the question: "Who are we?"

Finally, the political implications of cultural practices cannot be ignored. Türkiye's recent soft power strategy transforms traditional rituals into emotional and cultural bridges. Culture here functions not merely as heritage but as a geopolitical tool and a mechanism for regional hegemony.

In this regard, the study offers not only an ethnographic analysis of henna night rituals in Novi Pazar but also develops an interdisciplinary perspective on how culture, identity, and power interweave. It highlights the multilayered nature of cultural rituals, contributing original insights to regional identity studies at both theoretical and empirical levels.

In conclusion, the henna night rituals in Novi Pazar represent not only a continuity of cultural tradition but also a strategic enactment of identity within an interhomeland framework. While deeply rooted in the Balkans, participants draw symbolic strength from their historical legacy, their cultural closeness to Türkiye, and their religious affiliation—constructing a multilayered sense of self that transcends national borders. As one informant put it: "We are not a minority. With our language, faith, and everyday practices, we belong here. But the things that shape who we are are not only found here—they live in our prayers, in the feelings we have for Türkiye, and in the stories our elders told us." (Emina Brunčević, personal communication, 3 September 2023), these rituals are not just celebrations; they are emotionally charged acts of positioning—through carefully curated cultural elements—that express inner belonging and transnational imagination.

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Theme: *Music and Dance in the Balkans: Intersections of Tradition, Identity, and Innovation*

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The Transformation of Balkan Music and Dance in the Context of Globalization, Modernization, and Digitalization: An Analysis of Aesthetic, Social, and Economic Dimensions

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the transformation of Balkan music and dance through the processes of globalization, modernization, and digitalization, focusing on their aesthetic, social, and economic dimensions. The research seeks to understand how Balkan culture is shaped within these dynamic processes and to develop strategies for ensuring the sustainability of cultural heritage. The primary objective is to analyze the position of Balkan music and dance on the global stage, evaluate the impacts of these processes on authenticity, commercialization, and cultural hybridization, and support the reinterpretation of these art forms in the modern world. In terms of contribution to the literature, the study employs theoretical frameworks such as Homi K. Bhabha's theory of 'cultural hybridization', Arjun Appadurai's 'global cultural flows' approach, and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' to examine Balkan music and dance. By analyzing specific cases such as Goran Bregović's musical career, the Guča Trumpet Festival, and the modernization of folk dances, the research provides a new perspective on understanding the transformation of Balkan music and dance. The study offers valuable insights for academic circles, cultural policymakers, and artists, making a significant contribution to this field by addressing both theoretical and practical dimensions.

KEYWORDS

Authenticity and commercialization

Balkan music and dance

Cultural heritage

Sustainability

Cultural hybridization

Globalization and modernization

Introduction

Balkan music and dance possess a multi-layered structure formed by the convergence of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural elements. However, in the 21st century, the processes of globalization, modernization, and digitalization have transformed these art forms both aesthetically and socially. In this study, modernization refers to the social, cultural, and technological transformation processes through which traditional structures evolve into new, contemporary forms. Specifically, modernization in the context of this research focuses on the reinterpretation of Balkan music and dance through stage aesthetics, performance practices, and institutionalized forms (Giddens, 1994). Digitalization, on the other hand, refers to the integration of cultural products into digital technologies for recording, distribution, and reinterpretation. This includes the role of online platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify in disseminating and reshaping Balkan music and dance (Gere, 2019; Sakalar, 2024). While these transformation processes have contributed to the international recognition of Balkan music and dance, they have also brought challenges such as authenticity and commercialization. In this context, the core research problem centers around understanding how globalization has transformed Balkan music and dance, how traditional forms can be preserved amidst modernization and digitalization, and what the social, aesthetic, and economic impacts of these transformation processes are.

This study is of critical importance in understanding the place of Balkan music and dance in the modern world and ensuring the sustainability of these cultural forms. Aimed at providing guidance for cultural policymakers, artists, and academic circles, this research seeks to analyze the transformation of Balkan music and dance in the processes of globalization, modernization, and digitalization, while examining the aesthetic, social, and economic dimensions of these transformations.

In this research, the theoretical framework is based on Homi K. Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity, Arjun Appadurai's global cultural flows approach, and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. Homi K. Bhabha's cultural hybridity theory has provided a fundamental tool to understand the new and creative forms that emerge through the interaction of different cultures, and in this context, it has been used to explain the aesthetic transformations observed in Goran Bregović's musical career. Arjun Appadurai's global cultural flows approach has clarified how cultural products become

detached from their local contexts and acquire new meanings during their global circulation, and this theory has been specifically applied to analyze the Guča Trumpet Festival. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, on the other hand, has offered a framework to understand the social and economic value of Balkan music and dance in the age of digitalization, and the role of digital platforms in the dissemination of these cultural forms has been analyzed through this perspective. These theoretical approaches have played a critical role in addressing the main research questions and understanding the transformations of Balkan music and dance within the processes of globalization, modernization, and digitalization.

The research is structured within a qualitative framework and conducted using literature review, case analysis, and critical interpretation methods. Specific cases, such as Goran Bregović's music, the international impact of the Guča Trumpet Festival, and the modernization processes of folk dances, are examined in detail by aligning them with the theoretical framework. These cases are analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of the interplay between globalization, modernization, and cultural transformation, offering insights into how traditional Balkan music and dance forms are reinterpreted in contemporary contexts.

Method

This research is designed within a qualitative framework and combines literature review, case study analysis, and critical interpretation methods. To ensure transparency and reproducibility, the methodological process is explained in detail across three main stages: sample selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Sample Selection

The case studies were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on cultural examples that best represent the transformation of Balkan music and dance within the processes of globalization, modernization, and digitalization. The selection criteria were:

1. International recognition and cultural impact (e.g., Goran Bregović as a globally recognized musician who embodies hybridity),
2. Relevance to globalization and commercialization (e.g., the Guča Trumpet Festival as a site of cultural circulation and tourism),

3. Illustration of modernization and digital adaptation (e.g., the transformation of folk dances through digital platforms and contemporary performance contexts),
4. Availability of sufficient academic and empirical data to allow systematic analysis.

Based on these criteria, three representative cases were chosen:

- Goran Bregović's musical career, reflecting the hybridization of traditional and modern elements,
- The Guča Trumpet Festival, exemplifying the globalization and commercialization of Balkan culture,
- The modernization of folk dances, highlighting the adaptation of traditional forms to digital platforms and international stages.

These cases were selected because they are widely discussed in academic literature, provide rich empirical material, and collectively capture the dynamics of cultural transformation in the Balkans.

Data Collection

Data were collected through an extensive literature review and analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Literature searches were conducted in JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar, covering the period between 2000 and 2024, using keywords such as *Balkan music*, *globalization*, *cultural hybridization*, *modernization*, *folk dance*, and *digitalization*. Publications in English, Turkish, and South Slavic languages were included, while non-academic commentaries were excluded.

Primary data sources consisted of audiovisual materials and official documentation from cultural events and digital platforms, including YouTube, Spotify, and festival archives. Secondary sources included books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, conference papers, critical reviews, media coverage, and cultural policy reports. This triangulation of sources ensured the comprehensiveness and reliability of the data.

Data Analysis

The analysis process followed four systematic steps to enhance scientific reproducibility:

1. Data Collection and Organization – All relevant materials were compiled and

categorized according to type (literature, audiovisual, archival) and date.

2. Preliminary Coding – A qualitative content analysis approach was used to identify recurring themes, such as authenticity, commercialization, hybridization, and cultural sustainability.
3. Theoretical Mapping – Each case was examined through the study’s theoretical framework:
 - Bhabha’s *cultural hybridity* → applied to the aesthetic transformations in Goran Bregović’s works,
 - Appadurai’s *global cultural flows* → applied to the Guča Trumpet Festival as a site of global circulation and cultural negotiation,
 - Bourdieu’s *cultural capital* → applied to the modernization of folk dances in the context of digitalization and intergenerational transmission.
4. Comparative Interpretation – The three cases were systematically compared with each other and with the theoretical concepts, to identify commonalities, contrasts, and emerging cultural patterns. The findings were cross-checked with secondary literature to strengthen validity.

By explicitly detailing the data sources, case selection criteria, and analysis steps, this research design ensures that another scholar could replicate the process and reach comparable conclusions. This transparency not only enhances the reliability of the study but also its scientific validity.

Limitations

Although this study focuses on three representative cases (Goran Bregović, the Guča Trumpet Festival, and the modernization of folk dances), this selection inevitably limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope by including additional case studies from other Balkan countries, which would allow a more comprehensive understanding of regional variations. Nevertheless, by explicitly detailing the sampling criteria, data collection, and analysis procedures, this research ensures transparency and provides a methodological framework that can be replicated or expanded by other scholars.

The Role of Globalization in Cultural Interaction

Globalization, as a process that intensifies cross-border interactions of cultures, holds the potential to both preserve and transform local traditions. The Balkan region, with its historically multicultural structure, has been profoundly influenced by these interactions. Particularly after the 1990s, the accelerating pace of globalization has led to a series of transformations that both threaten and revive the traditional forms of Balkan music and dance (Girgin, 2018). In this context, the cultural interactions brought about by globalization in Balkan music and dance should be examined comprehensively, considering both local and global dimensions.

During the process of globalization, Balkan music has secured a prominent position within the category of world music. This category facilitates the integration of traditional music from various regions of the world into the global music industry, thereby helping Balkan music reach a broader audience (Girgin, 2018). For instance, artists such as Goran Bregović and Balkan Beat Box have gained significant international popularity by blending traditional Balkan melodies with modern music genres (Marković, 2013). However, the commercial demands of the global music industry have posed the risk of Balkan music losing its authentic elements. For example, the replacement of local instruments traditionally used in Balkan music with electronic sounds has led to a transformation that calls into question the music's originality. This situation, while enhancing the international recognition of Balkan music, has simultaneously sparked debates regarding the preservation of local identity.

Digitalization, as one of the most significant instruments of globalization, plays a critical role in the cross-border dissemination of Balkan music and dance. Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, along with music streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music, have enabled traditional Balkan music and dance to reach a wider global audience. These platforms, particularly popular among younger generations, offer opportunities to reinterpret Balkan music and dance within a modern context. For instance, videos published on YouTube not only bring traditional music and dance performances to a global audience but also contribute to the reshaping of these performances in terms of aesthetics and technique (Sakalar, 2024). Digitalization is thus regarded as a tool with the potential to both preserve and transform traditional Balkan culture.

During the globalization process, the convergence of different cultures has led to an increase in cultural hybridization within Balkan music and dance. This phenomenon has facilitated the emergence of new styles by blending traditional elements with modern music genres (Gürkan, 2016). For instance, the fusion of electronic music with Balkan melodies has resulted in the creation of new music genres such as Balkan Beat. Similarly, Western dance styles like hip-hop and rap have been combined with traditional Balkan dances, giving rise to new forms of dance. While this hybridization process has introduced Balkan music and dance to a broader audience, it has also increased the risk of detaching these art forms from their traditional contexts. For example, Balkan dance performances showcased at touristic events and international festivals often shift away from their traditional settings, transforming into stage arts. This transformation has weakened the social and ritual dimensions of the dances but has also enhanced their aesthetic appeal, making them more widely attractive (Özaras, 2019).

During the globalization process, Balkan music and dance have become more visible on the global stage through international festivals and cultural diplomacy efforts (Gürkan, 2016). Events such as the Guča Trumpet Festival and the Sziget Festival have played a significant role in promoting Balkan music internationally. These festivals not only facilitate the global recognition of Balkan culture but also serve as tools for cultural diplomacy. However, such events have also led to the reshaping of Balkan music and dance for commercial purposes. For example, in response to touristic expectations, some traditional elements have been simplified or reimagined. While this transformation enhances the global appeal of Balkan music and dance, it also brings the risk of losing their authentic elements.

Globalization and digitalization have increased the interest of younger generations in Balkan music and dance, while reshaping this interest within a modern context. Particularly among youth living in the diaspora, Balkan music and dance are being rediscovered through digital platforms, giving new meaning to this cultural heritage. Although this phenomenon leads to a detachment of Balkan music and dance from their traditional contexts, it also enables the reclamation of these art forms within the modern world. For instance, young artists are producing new works by blending traditional Balkan melodies with hip-hop, electronic music, and other modern genres. Such creative endeavors hold the potential to both preserve and renew Balkan music and dance.

However, there is also the risk of traditional elements being lost within modern forms during this process (Giddens, 1994).

Case Studies

Goran Bregović and Balkan music

Goran Bregović is widely recognized as a pivotal figure in the international recognition of Balkan music, distinguished by his approach that integrates traditional and modern elements. Born in 1950 in Sarajevo, Bregović began his career in Yugoslav rock music but later gained global fame by blending traditional Balkan melodies with contemporary music genres (Marković, 2008). His music exemplifies a 'hybrid' aesthetic that reflects the cultural diversity of the Balkans, serving as a case study for examining the effects of globalization on Balkan music.

Bregović's compositions are characterized by a unique structure that combines traditional Balkan melodies with modern orchestration techniques and diverse musical genres. Prominent influences in his work include Romani (Gypsy) music, Ottoman elements, and Balkan folk tunes. These components are seamlessly integrated with modern genres such as jazz, rock, and classical music, resulting in a style that appeals to a global audience. One of his most renowned works, *Ederlezi*, reinterprets a traditional Romani folk song through modern orchestration, symbolizing the universal allure of Balkan music. Such works illustrate the balance Bregović achieves between local traditions and global music trends in his compositions (Tasić, 2023).

Bregović has also achieved significant international acclaim through his film scores. His compositions for Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* (1988) and *Underground* (1995) played a critical role in establishing his global reputation. The music featured in these films embodies melodic and rhythmic structures that reflect the cultural diversity and complex history of the Balkans. His film scores often serve as tools to enhance the emotional and cultural context of the narratives (Trifković, 2004). For example, the music in *Time of the Gypsies* simultaneously conveys the cultural richness and social marginalization of Romani communities. These works underscore Bregović's role not just as a musician but also as a cultural mediator.

Despite being celebrated as a key figure in the global promotion of Balkan music,

Bregović's works have also been subject to criticism. One major critique involves the alleged loss of authenticity in traditional elements as they are adapted to contemporary contexts (Tasić, 2023). Specifically, some argue that his treatment of Romani music commercializes the genre, neglecting its authentic social and political contexts. While his works, such as *Ederlezi*, aesthetically represent the richness of Romani traditions, they are often tailored for global music markets rather than presented within their original cultural frameworks. Bregović's music has also been employed as a tool for cultural diplomacy, particularly in the post-conflict reconstruction of the Balkans' image. His works emphasize the cultural richness and diversity of the region, serving as a vehicle for representing the Balkans on international platforms. However, critics have argued that his music sometimes romanticizes regional differences and transforms them into commercial commodities, highlighting the dual role of his works as both cultural representations and marketable products (Marković, 2013).

Bregović's live performances offer valuable insight into the global dimension of his music. In his concerts worldwide, he presents an extensive repertoire showcasing various aspects of Balkan music. The large-scale orchestration and elaborate stage designs in these performances have transformed his music into a global entertainment product (Tasić, 2023). By combining traditional Balkan instruments with modern ones, Bregović delivers performances that are both authentic and modern. However, such performances have faced criticism for detaching traditional Balkan music from its local contexts and converting it entirely into a commercial product.

Goran Bregović has made significant contributions to the international recognition of Balkan music, facilitating its reinterpretation within the modern world. His legacy extends beyond that of a musician to encompass roles as a cultural mediator and representative. His music serves as a medium for reflecting the social and cultural diversity of the Balkans and is analyzed both positively and critically. Bregović's works provide a critical reference point for understanding the positioning of Balkan music in the contemporary world. Nevertheless, discussions surrounding authenticity, commercialization, and cultural representation are likely to persist. In the future, Bregović's music is expected to continue playing a significant role in efforts to preserve and promote Balkan culture.

This case demonstrates Bhabha's notion of the 'third space', in which cultural interaction

generates new hybrid forms that are neither purely traditional nor entirely global. By situating Bregović's works within this framework, it becomes possible to critically evaluate how hybridization not only fosters innovation but also raises debates on cultural authenticity and commodification.

Guča Trumpet Festival in Serbia

The Guča Trumpet Festival is a globally renowned music event held in the small Serbian town of Guča. What began as a local folk music competition in 1961 has evolved into a platform for the international promotion of Balkan music, particularly Serbian trumpet music. Reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage and musical traditions, the festival simultaneously serves as a case study for understanding the effects of globalization and tourism on local music (Stamenković et al., 2013). Events, in general, are organized to fulfill collective or individual needs, achieve shared goals as a group or organization, share a common sentiment, and establish a social presence within the community (Ekin, 2011: 3). Cultural festivals, as part of these events, play a crucial role in the cultural production and consumption associated with tourism activities in urban and rural areas, acting as a medium for the cultural representation of destinations. Such events are often considered part of the cultural portfolio of a region, showcasing its cultural wealth and values to both local and international visitors. Festivals that attract tourists provide both economic and cultural benefits, highlighting the unique characteristics of destinations and fostering competition among them. By emphasizing the cultural attractions of a destination, festivals can effectively promote and draw attention to its distinct features (Şengül and Genç, 2016: 79).

Festival-related activities not only strengthen regional values and traditions but also foster community pride and socio-cultural benefits among local populations (Oklobdžija, 2015: 94). The effects of festivals extend beyond the social and cultural realms, influencing the national economy as well (Srikanth and Ram, 2013: 28). Among these effects, festivals contribute to the happiness of the local population and enhance the quality of community life (Delamere, 2001). Moreover, festivals create an environment where people can come together and celebrate, thereby improving the quality of life for both locals and visitors (Shanka and Alamiyo, 2012). The Guča Trumpet Festival, built upon the cultural significance of the trumpet in the Balkans, serves as a prime example of such events. The trumpet, a versatile instrument used in both weddings and funerals in

Serbia and neighboring countries, is a hallmark of Balkan music. Initially organized to bring together regional trumpet bands, the festival has grown into a platform featuring national and international artists. Attracting approximately 500,000 visitors annually, many of whom are international tourists, the festival has transcended its role as a music event to become a tool for tourism and cultural diplomacy (Stamenković et al., 2013).

The Guča Trumpet Festival serves as a focal point for understanding the impact of globalization on Balkan music. While promoting Serbian music and culture globally as a tool for cultural representation, the festival has also undergone transformations influenced by global music trends (Jelena, 2019). It has achieved significant success as a platform for introducing Balkan music to the global stage, contributing to the globalization of Serbian culture and solidifying Balkan music's place within the world music category (<https://www.guca.rs/>). One of the festival's most notable impacts is its contribution to Serbia's tourism sector. Each year, hundreds of thousands of tourists visit Guča, gaining the opportunity to experience both the music and local culture. This influx has generated substantial economic revenue for the region while creating new employment opportunities for the local population.

The global recognition of the Guča Trumpet Festival has facilitated the dissemination of Serbian culture while also transforming the event into a commercial enterprise. Criticism has arisen regarding the simplification of performances to appeal to international audiences, which is argued to weaken the authentic context of the music. For example, the modernization of traditional folk songs during stage performances has led to the cultural heritage being perceived as a 'consumption product'. Additionally, the festival's increasing focus on tourism has resulted in the local community losing control over the event. Some critics argue that the festival has shifted from being a 'local community event' to an 'entertainment show' aimed at international tourists, complicating efforts to preserve its traditional elements (Gligorijevic, 2019).

As a platform where Balkan music interacts with other cultures, the Guča Trumpet Festival reflects processes of cultural hybridization. Some artists participating in the festival combine traditional trumpet music with modern genres such as jazz, funk, and electronic music, creating new musical forms. This demonstrates the adaptability of Balkan music to global music trends. However, the process of cultural hybridization also

raises concerns about the potential loss of traditional elements. In today's world, where cultural hybridization is accelerating due to globalization, it is evident that art cannot remain isolated from this phenomenon but instead evolves alongside it (Selçuk, 2017).

Modernized performances at the festival, particularly among younger generations, often garner more attention than traditional forms. It is argued that regional traditions and local roots are increasingly being lost amidst the rapid pace of cultural hybridization (Burke, 2011). This raises significant debates regarding the future direction of Balkan music.

The evolution of the Guča Festival also illustrates Appadurai's concept of global cultural flows, where music and cultural practices are detached from their local contexts and re-signified within global circuits of tourism and commerce. This perspective highlights both the opportunities created by global visibility and the tensions arising from cultural simplification for mass audiences.

Modernization in folk dances

Folk dances represent a significant form of expression that reflects the cultural identity of a society. Throughout history, communities have utilized dance as a tool to preserve and transmit their traditions. However, the processes of globalization and digitalization in the 21st century have accelerated the modernization of folk dances, leading to various transformations in this traditional art form. Balkan folk dances, in particular, have experienced both aesthetic and social changes, striving to reposition themselves in the modern world. This section examines the transformations folk dances undergo during modernization, exploring the opportunities and challenges that arise in the process.

The modernization of folk dances generally occurs along two main axes: aesthetic and technological transformation. Aesthetic transformation refers to the departure of dances from their traditional forms, acquiring a modern dance language. Technological transformation, on the other hand, involves the use of digital platforms to enable folk dances to reach a broader audience.

In the modernization process, folk dances are being reinterpreted aesthetically and adapted to the performing arts to appeal to a larger audience. During this process, the rhythmic and choreographic elements of traditional folk dances are combined with modern dance techniques, creating a new form of expression. For example, Bulgaria's

traditional *horo* dance has been blended with contemporary dance techniques and showcased on international stages. However, this aesthetic transformation has been criticized by some for causing folk dances to lose their authentic nature. The detachment of dances from their social and ritual contexts during modernization forms the basis of such criticisms. There is a significant connection between traditional dances and choreography, serving purposes such as the preservation, transmission, and reconstruction of cultural heritage (Yılmaz and Elyagutu, 2023). Daniele Ivanova explains this connection as follows: “A choreographer reflects the cultural environment that created them while simultaneously creating a new cultural environment. They are someone who creates dances rooted in ethnographic knowledge. Despite the differences between a choreographer and a dance composer or dance coach, in practice, a choreographer combines both roles and possesses pedagogical skills” (Ivanova-Nyberg, 2013: 3-4). Modernization has enabled folk dances to acquire innovative forms.

The integration of traditional dance elements with modern music and dance styles has led to the emergence of new and creative choreographies. This process supports both the preservation and reinterpretation of folk dances.

Digitalization plays a crucial role in the modernization of folk dances. “So much so that, for better or worse, digital technologies have reached a point where they are no longer just tools, but increasingly become integral to our intensifying culture, taking on active roles in participatory culture” (Gere, 2019: 232). Social media platforms and digital broadcasting tools enable folk dances to reach a wider audience. These platforms provide new opportunities for dancers to showcase their performances and for younger generations to learn folk dances. For instance, the popularity of short videos featuring Balkan folk dances on TikTok has increased young people's interest in these dances. Modernization has made folk dances more accessible and appealing to younger generations. The modernization of traditional dances has made them more attractive to contemporary audiences. Additionally, teaching and sharing folk dances through digital platforms ensures the continuity of this art form. For example, educational videos on YouTube have become a valuable resource for young people to learn folk dances.

The modernization process has contributed to the international recognition of folk dances, turning them into tools of cultural diplomacy. For instance, folk dances recognized

as cultural heritage by UNESCO have gained more opportunities for preservation and dissemination. International dance festivals and competitions have facilitated the entry of folk dances onto the global stage. However, the modernization process has also led to the homogenization of folk dances to align with global trends. This situation risks the loss of the unique characteristics of local dance forms and reduces cultural diversity. Performances at international festivals are often adapted to a common aesthetic framework, threatening the authentic identity of folk dances.

The modernization of folk dances is also shaped by the demands of the tourism industry (Özkan, 2011). Dances redesigned for touristic events often lose their traditional context and become commercial products (Ay, 2019). This weakens the cultural value of folk dances, reducing them to mere economic commodities.

The modernization of folk dances requires balancing traditional and modern elements. In this process, it is essential to preserve the authentic contexts of folk dances while reinterpreting them for the modern world. Field research, digital archives, and programs that teach folk dances are critical for ensuring the sustainability of this art form in the future. Additionally, more effective use of digital platforms is necessary to increase the popularity of folk dances among younger generations. Social media is considered a powerful tool for promoting and teaching folk dances. These platforms bring together both traditional and modern forms of folk dances, ensuring the continuity of this art form.

The modernization of folk dances can further be explained through Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. In digital platforms, these performances serve as a form of symbolic capital, allowing younger generations to engage with tradition while simultaneously negotiating their place within a globalized cultural economy.

The Relationship Between Case Studies and the General Framework: Theoretical Connections

The specific case studies examined in this research (Goran Bregović's musical career, the international impact of the Guča Trumpet Festival, and the modernization process of folk dances) directly contribute to the research problem, objectives, and significance outlined within the general framework. These cases provide concrete and contextual examples for understanding the transformations that Balkan music and dance have undergone in the

processes of globalization, modernization, and digitalization.

Goran Bregović's music serves as a 'microcosm' for understanding the effects of globalization on Balkan music. By bringing traditional Balkan music to the global world music stage, Bregović has appealed to both local and global audiences, reflecting tensions between authenticity and commercialization in this process. His career offers insights into how Balkan music is reshaped on global platforms and how traditional elements can be preserved during modernization. His works can also be linked to Homi Bhabha's theory of 'cultural hybridity'. Bhabha explains how encounters between different cultures result in new and creative forms that transform existing cultural identities (Aşkan, 2021). In this context, Bregović's music creates a 'third space' where Balkan culture is both preserved and reinterpreted, concretizing the effects of globalization on an aesthetic level. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the 'third space' holds a significant place in postcolonial theory. The third space is defined as a site where different cultural or ideological systems meet, blend, and create new meanings (Bhandari, 2022). For instance, Bregović's music demonstrates hybridity by combining traditional Balkan melodies with modern genres to create a new aesthetic, thereby making visible the dynamics of cultural negotiation. However, some critics argue that this hybridization can lead to the commodification and simplification of Balkan culture to suit global markets, which raises concerns about cultural homogenization and exploitation (Tasić, 2023).

This framework can also be applied to the Guča Trumpet Festival. The festival functions as a liminal space where local Serbian traditions and global tourist expectations converge, producing hybrid performances that both celebrate and commodify Balkan trumpet music. International visitors, global media coverage, and the inclusion of diverse musical styles contribute to the creation of a cultural arena in which local identity is renegotiated and redefined. For example, performances that integrate jazz, funk, or electronic music with traditional trumpet ensembles illustrate the emergence of cultural forms that cannot be classified as purely local or global. This supports Bhabha's view that cultural interaction generates new meanings and identities, situating the festival as a living embodiment of the 'third space'. Yet, this hybridity also has a critical dimension: some performances are simplified for tourist consumption, reducing ritual depth and transforming music into a cultural commodity (Gligorijevic, 2019).

The Guča Trumpet Festival also exemplifies Arjun Appadurai's theory of 'global cultural flows', which explores how cultural products lose their local contexts and acquire new meanings during global circulation (Appadurai, 1990). Guča's evolution from a local competition into a globally recognized event reflects the operation of Appadurai's ethnoscaples, mediascaples, and finanscaples. The festival not only circulates music but also facilitates the mobility of musicians, tourists, and cultural capital, recontextualizing Serbian trumpet traditions within tourism economies. This study argues that Guča illustrates Appadurai's notion of deterritorialization, as traditional music is reshaped for international consumption while simultaneously creating new spaces for cultural negotiation. However, this transformation is not without drawbacks. Commercialization has been reported to shift economic benefits away from local communities, challenging the festival's original identity as a community-centered event (Stamenković et al., 2013).

Digitalization reinforces these theoretical insights by expanding the scope of cultural flows. Appadurai's 'mediascaples' and 'technoscaples' can be applied to examine how platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify transform Balkan music and dance into globally circulating cultural commodities. Viral videos, remixes, and algorithm-driven recommendations allow Balkan music to reach audiences far beyond its original cultural setting, offering opportunities for preservation and reinvention. At the same time, these processes risk detaching performances from their social and ritual contexts, underscoring the tension between visibility and authenticity (Sakalar, 2024).

The modernization of folk dances is another critical site of analysis. The fusion of folk dances with contemporary dance techniques and music styles reflects processes of cultural hybridity while also resonating with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital'. Bourdieu argues that cultural practices function as a form of symbolic capital and status (Tan, 2021). In the digital age, performing and sharing folk dances online can serve as a means of accruing cultural capital, especially among younger generations who seek to balance heritage and modernity. This process is clearly evident in the growing number of online tutorials, choreographies, and festival performances that reinterpret folk traditions for global audiences. However, modernization often results in the homogenization of dance forms to meet global aesthetic expectations. Performances created for international festivals or tourism markets may lose their ritual function and become standardized stage productions (Ay, 2019), which risks reducing the diversity

and depth of local traditions.

<i>Case</i>	<i>Strengths (Opportunities)</i>	<i>Challenges (Risks)</i>	<i>Theoretical Link</i>
<i>Goran Bregović</i>	Hybridization of genres; international recognition	Risk of commodification; authenticity debates	Bhabha – <i>Cultural Hybridity</i>
<i>Guča Festival</i>	Cultural diplomacy; tourism revenue; global visibility	Oversimplification; loss of local control	Appadurai – <i>Global Cultural Flows</i>
<i>Modernized Folk Dances</i>	Accessibility via digital platforms; creative choreographies	Homogenization; loss of ritual/social context	Bourdieu – <i>Cultural Capital</i>

Table 1. Comparative overview of case studies on Balkan music and dance

The comparative findings from the case studies are presented in Table 1, which outlines their opportunities, challenges, and theoretical connections. By explicitly connecting the case studies with these theoretical frameworks, this research moves beyond descriptive analysis and offers an interpretative approach that clarifies why and how these transformations occur. The analysis demonstrates that globalization and digitalization not only influence the form and content of Balkan music and dance but also shape their social, economic, and symbolic functions. At the same time, they generate risks such as cultural homogenization, commercialization, and the erosion of local agency. These connections enable the study to make significant contributions to both academic literature and cultural policymakers. From an academic perspective, this research offers a nuanced lens for understanding the place and meaning of Balkan music and dance in the modern world, comprehensively addressing their aesthetic, social, and economic dimensions. For cultural policymakers, the study provides actionable insights that can inform strategies aimed at preserving authenticity while encouraging creative reinterpretation for future generations.

Conclusion

This study comprehensively examined the transformation of Balkan music and dance in the context of globalization, modernization, and digitalization. By focusing on their

aesthetic, social, and economic dimensions, the research demonstrated that these art forms are not only artistic expressions but also carriers of identity, memory, and cultural negotiation. The analysis revealed how Balkan traditions are simultaneously preserved, reinterpreted, and commercialized within global cultural flows.

The findings can be summarized in three overarching results. First, globalization and digitalization have produced hybrid forms that combine traditional and modern elements, thereby expanding the international recognition of Balkan culture. Yet, this hybridization process also generates tensions by accelerating commercialization and risking cultural homogenization. Second, the study confirmed that cultural hybridity opens what Bhabha (1994) defines as a 'third space', a site where traditions are reinterpreted and new meanings are generated. This creative negotiation, however, often raises questions about authenticity and the exploitation of cultural symbols. Third, digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify have become indispensable tools for transmitting Balkan music and dance to younger generations and diaspora communities. While these platforms enhance visibility and intergenerational continuity, they also detach performances from their original ritual and communal settings, altering their social function.

The case studies provided concrete illustrations of these dynamics. Goran Bregović's career reflects both the creative potential of cultural hybridity and the critiques of commodification, serving as a microcosm of Balkan music's global journey. The Guča Trumpet Festival demonstrated how local traditions can be transformed into tools of cultural diplomacy and tourism, while simultaneously facing risks of oversimplification and community disengagement. The modernization of folk dances revealed the dual role of digital technologies: on the one hand, ensuring accessibility, teaching, and global circulation; on the other, contributing to homogenization and the loss of unique local features. Together, these cases underline the opportunities and contradictions inherent in adapting Balkan traditions to a globalized cultural economy.

From an academic perspective, this study makes several contributions. It integrates multiple theoretical frameworks—Bhabha's cultural hybridity, Appadurai's global cultural flows, and Bourdieu's cultural capital—to provide a multidimensional analysis of Balkan cultural transformation. It also bridges descriptive and interpretive approaches

by showing not only what transformations occur, but also why and how they unfold. This theoretical integration enriches the broader literature on cultural globalization and hybridization while offering a fresh perspective on the Balkans as a dynamic cultural region.

The research also opens avenues for future inquiry. Economic analyses of commercialization, for instance, could further clarify how global festivals and digital platforms redistribute cultural capital and financial benefits. Similarly, examining the socio-political functions of folk dances as tools of cultural resistance or solidarity would deepen our understanding of their evolving role. Moreover, exploring the diplomatic dimensions of cultural festivals could illuminate how Balkan traditions are strategically mobilized for soft power on the international stage.

Beyond theoretical contributions, this study offers practical guidance for policymakers, cultural institutions, and practitioners. Strengthening community participation in cultural events, supporting digital archiving initiatives, and developing education programs that transmit folk dances to younger generations are essential measures. Additionally, balancing modernization with the preservation of ritual and social dimensions is key to sustaining authenticity. Policies that encourage collaboration between local communities, governments, and digital platforms could ensure that Balkan cultural heritage remains both globally visible and locally meaningful.

Ultimately, the study argues that the sustainable future of Balkan music and dance depends on achieving a dynamic equilibrium between tradition and innovation. These art forms must remain adaptable enough to resonate with global audiences while retaining the local values, meanings, and practices that define their authenticity. The capacity of Balkan music and dance to thrive in the 21st century lies in their ability to serve simultaneously as symbols of heritage and as evolving, living practices within a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

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Echoes of Identity: The Role of Patriotic Songs in the Soundscape of Resistance during the Macedonian Identity Protests (2017-2023)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of protest songs in the construction of sonic resistance during the Macedonian political crises from 2017 to 2023. Drawing from interdisciplinary frameworks on soundscapes, sonic affect, and collective memory, the study focuses on the emotional and social functions of three key songs—*Ja izlezi Gjurgjo* (Come out, Gjurgjo), *Neshto kje te pitam babo* (I Will Ask You Something, Grandma), and *Zavetna* (Vow)—that mostly shaped the soundscape of the protests. Through qualitative content analysis, the findings reveal that these songs reinforced emotions such as national pride, bravery, resilience, and hope, while invoking historical memory and cultural identity. The results demonstrate how protest soundscapes function as affective environments that mobilize collective emotions, reinforce group solidarity, and sustain resistance movements. This case study highlights the enduring power of patriotic music in defending national identity during periods of contested sovereignty.

KEYWORDS

Protest music
National identity
Soundscape
Sonic affect
Resistance
Cultural memory

Introduction

Democratic protests are often associated with various forms of vocal expression, including political speeches, chanting by protesters, and public demonstrations. Together with sounds produced by different sources such as props (whistles, vuvuzelas, noise generators), various types of drums, musical instruments, shouting, collective chanting, and specific songs, these elements create a unique protest soundscape that can be recognized even from a distance. One can often recognize a protest's political or ideological orientation based solely on its soundscape.

The primary focus of this paper is the analysis of protest songs that is, the songs that shaped the soundscape of protests expressing Macedonian resistance to the contestation of their national identity¹ by external and internal forces between 2017 and 2023. Marked by strong patriotic visual symbols and a distinctive patriotic soundscape, these events, and particularly the role of specific songs, provide a compelling scope for scholarly research on the intersections of sound, music, and protest.

From a methodological standpoint, this article exemplifies the potential for scholars from different academic affiliations and diverse perspectives to collaborate on a topic of shared interest. This study draws upon interdisciplinary approaches from ethnomusicology, sociology, and psychology to analyze the protest soundscape. Using qualitative content analysis, it examines the cultural, social, and emotional impact of selected protest songs that became central to Macedonian resistance movements between 2017 and 2023.

The research method which will include sociological aspect, ethnomusicological analysis of the songs and conceptual content analysis will be used to identify the presence of various concepts, words, and themes in three Macedonian folk songs which are manifestation of the citizens' resistance. These perspectives not only reflect the breadth of the topic but also illuminate the complexity of the issues at hand. The time period under consideration was marked by significant political turmoil, widespread protests, and societal disturbances, all of which had a profound impact on the authors as part of the Macedonian society. Each author engaged with these events either through direct

¹ According to Cvetanova (2022) "National identity is a historically constructed and dynamic category that evolves from a shared ethnocultural foundation—common language, traditions, and collective memory—into a politically recognized entity, wherein the sense of belonging and self-awareness are essential elements for the legitimization of a nation."

participation or as an observer, and their personal experiences became a catalyst for the collaborative effort. The idea to write this article emerged subsequently, following discussions of the authors' individual experiences during the protests and the emotions evoked by witnessing—and, in some cases, being part of—a pivotal and challenging moment in Macedonian history. This article synthesizes the authors' individual research by adhering to the principle that each disciplinary perspective enhances the others, thereby illustrating how diverse scholarly contributions can merge to form a cohesive understanding of complex social phenomena. Moreover, this collaboration embodies, albeit often implicitly, the compromises inherent in interdisciplinary research. (Justice and Hadley, 2015; Serafimovska et al., 2016)

Macedonian Political Context

Even though we live in the 21st century, the age of human rights, the 'Macedonian question' is a current topic of heated political debates.² Namely, the right to self-determination³ of the Macedonian people is often contested. In other words, the distinctiveness of the Macedonian people, their culture and language, as well as the political legitimacy of the Macedonian nation, are being denied. (Cvetanova, 2022) Even prior to gaining independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, the ethno-national distinctiveness of the Macedonian nation and its people had been the subject of contestation by neighboring states. Since independence, these disputes have intensified, manifesting most prominently in two key issues: (1) the name 'Macedonia' and the national flag, both of which Greece considers symbols of Hellenic heritage; and (2) the historical legacy of the 1903 Ilinden Uprising and the Macedonian language, which

² After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the proclamation of the independent Republic of Macedonia on September 8, 1991, a long-standing dispute with the Greek government over the use of the name 'Macedonia' led to two official designations: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), adopted by the United Nations as a temporary reference in 1995, and the Republic of North Macedonia, the name ratified by both parties under the Prespa Agreement in 2019. In this paper, the term 'Macedonia' is used in accordance with Article 7 of the Prespa Agreement. While acknowledging the political significance of the Treaty, we, the authors of this paper, exercise our right to self-determination by using 'Macedonia' as the country's name.

³ The right to self-determination is a cardinal principle in modern international law and commonly regarded as a *jus cogens* rule. The principle of self-determination of peoples is rooted in the liberal-democratic ideas promoted during the French Bourgeois Revolution (Šikova, 2009), and it has been declared a political principle of contemporary international relations with the 1945 Charter of the United Nations. The right to self-determination involves the rights of all peoples to determine freely their political status (freely to choose and develop their own internal political system, as well as to freely decide on their own destiny in the international system), and to pursue freely their economic, social and cultural development without outside interference.

Bulgaria claims as part of its own national and linguistic narrative (Trajanovski, 2009: 15). Within the Macedonian national discourse, these external claims were and still are perceived as direct threats to the legitimacy of the country as a sovereign nation-state and to the recognition of a Macedonian language and identity. These external contestations have elevated the concept of 'national identity' into a politicized and highly charged category within domestic political discourse.⁴ These issues have become significant obstacles to Macedonia's integration into NATO and the European Union. In 2008, Greece vetoed the initiation of NATO accession negotiations despite the country's notable economic and social progress. Although numerous reports highlighted Macedonia's positive reforms, both EU and NATO integration processes were effectively stalled.

Following the change in Macedonian government in 2017, the newly elected Social Democratic government took significant steps to improve regional relations. Among these was the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Cooperation⁵ with Bulgaria in 2017, aimed at fostering regional dialogue and overcoming historical disputes. The following year, in 2018, the Prespa Agreement⁶ with Greece led to the official change of the country's name to North Macedonia⁷, and fulfilled other Greek demands concerning identity-related issues. Following the Prespa treaty and its ratification in both parliaments, Greece lifted the Veto and in March 2020, Republic of North Macedonia became a NATO member state. These agreements, which included parallel mechanisms between Bulgaria and Greece, were essential to resolving long-standing regional tensions. However, in November 2020, Bulgaria vetoed Macedonia's EU accession negotiations, driven by nationalist pressures, thereby rekindling tensions. Bulgaria's 2022 conditions for EU accession included constitutional guarantees for Macedonian Bulgarians, non-recognition of the 'Macedonian language,' and adherence to the 2017 Friendship Treaty

⁴ For further discussion of Macedonian identity politics since the 1990s, see Danforth (1995), Lafazanovski (1999), Brown (2003), Cvetanova (2021), Cvetanova (2022), Mirčevska (2011), Grandits and Brunnbauer (2013), Stefoska (2013), and Sundhaussen (2013). Regarding the role of music in these processes, see Serafimovska (2021), Serafimovska et al. (2016), and Wilson (2014).

⁵ <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/55013/Part/I-55013-08000002804f5d3c.pdf>

⁶ <https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=0800000280544ac1>

⁷ The Prespa Agreement, signed in June 2018, resolved the long-standing 'name issue' between Republic of Macedonia and Greece by renaming the country 'Republic of North Macedonia.' Despite a September 30, 2018 referendum being boycotted and declared invalid due to low turnout, the government proceeded with constitutional amendments in January 2019, formalizing the new name. The agreement also defined the usage of 'Macedonia' and 'Macedonians' universally.

(Yerköy, 2024).

These circumstances ignited considerable debate and protests in Macedonia. The broader issue of Bulgaria's contestation of Macedonian history, language, and national identity remains unresolved. Although the 2017 treaty aimed to improve bilateral relations, depoliticize historical disputes, and promote mutual respect and cooperation, Bulgarian political rhetoric—often perceived as provocative—has fueled public resentment and societal distancing between the two nations. Central to the Treaty was the establishment of a joint historical commission to reconcile contested narratives, particularly regarding figures such as Goce Delchev and events like the Ilinden Uprising, two pillars of the Macedonian struggle for independence and sovereignty. Despite initial optimism, tensions soon emerged over the interpretation of history, Macedonian language and Macedonian national identity. While Bulgaria pushed for recognition of historical figures as part of Bulgarian heritage, Macedonia maintained its distinct national narrative. Bulgaria further conditioned its support for North Macedonia's EU integration on the latter's acceptance of Bulgarians as a constitutional people—an expectation that entailed amending the Macedonian Constitution, recognizing the Macedonian language as a dialect of Bulgarian, and eliminating alleged anti-Bulgarian sentiment from education and media. The 2020 veto stalled Macedonia's EU accession process, sparking internal political turmoil and mass protests. Efforts to break the deadlock culminated with the so-called French proposal (2022), which sought a compromise by making the Good Neighborliness Agreement part of the EU negotiation framework. (Vangelov, 2023) While this proposal would eventually led to the lifting of Bulgaria's veto, it remained highly controversial in Macedonia, where many saw it as an infringement on national identity and sovereignty. The required constitutional amendments became a deeply divisive issue, further complicating Macedonia's European integration process.

From July 2 to July 16, 2022, large-scale demonstrations under the slogan "Ultimatum, No Thanks" were held across the country. These protests expressed widespread opposition to the proposal, which was viewed as detrimental to national interests. Beyond traditional nationalist discourse, the protests also highlighted broad-based ethnic solidarity, with media coverage emphasizing the unity among demonstrators from diverse backgrounds. This framing aimed to underscore the collective nature of the resistance and the importance of protecting Macedonian history, culture, and identity (Yerköy, 2024).

The protests and the strong opposition, combined with VMRO-DPMNE⁸'s parliamentary resistance, ultimately led to the rejection of the proposed constitutional amendments, effectively stalling the country's EU accession process. Following the 2024 parliamentary elections, which resulted in a decisive victory for VMRO-DPMNE, the new government has initiated efforts to renegotiate Republic of North Macedonia's EU accession framework, this time emphasizing the unconditional recognition of Macedonian identity, language, history, and cultural sovereignty as non-negotiable elements of any future European integration.

Soundscapes and Protest

Soundscape is conceived in Raymond Murray Schafer's sense, as "the acoustic manifestation of 'place', in the sense that the sounds give the inhabitants a 'sense of place' and the place's acoustic quality is shaped by the inhabitants' activities and behavior" (Westerkamp et al., 2014). Soundscapes also serve as *lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory—where sonic elements become symbols of historical and political struggles. The weaponization of sound, as examined by scholars (Velasco-Pufleau and Atlani-Duault, 2020), illustrates how sound can function as both an instrument of oppression and resistance.

Music, as both performance and cultural context, provides a particularly fertile ground for the expression and negotiation of multiple emotions and identities. As Rice (2007: 27) suggests, music—as a complex semiotic form comprising melody, rhythm, meter, timbre, texture, and form—offers an ideal medium for symbolizing diverse aspects of identity simultaneously and over time. Catherine Baker (2013: 410) similarly argues that in the hands of nationalist movements and state actors, music has historically served as a powerful instrument for representing national cultural identities to both domestic and international audiences—from the folk revivals of the nineteenth century to contemporary nation-branding initiatives. Music, as a form of objectified culture and an expression embedded within both everyday life and ceremonial practices, functions as a vivid carrier of cultural and collective memory. And cultural memory, as conceptualized by Jan Assmann (1995), is institutionalized, exteriorized, and stored in symbolic forms

⁸ The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, abbreviated as VMRO-DPMNE, is a conservative and the main centre-right to right-wing populist political party.

that are stable and transcendent of specific situations. It situates different historical periods within shared social narratives, linking them through sonic continuity.

Between 2015 and 2023, Macedonia experienced rapid political transformations and societal shifts. During this period, various forms of collective action emerged, often erratic and diverse in their expression. The ‘Colorful Revolution’ of 2016 bore clear similarities to earlier ‘colored revolutions’ in Eastern Europe, reflecting broader regional patterns of civic mobilization (Vankovska, 2020). However, the protests organized between 2017 and 2023 to defend Macedonian identity were distinctively authentic, rooted in a profound and genuine fear of losing the country’s name, identity, language, and culture under the pressures of both external and internal forces.

The music and songs that shaped the soundscape of the Macedonian protests organized in defence of the country’s name and identity illustrate the theoretical claims regarding music’s role in cultural memory. The protests organized to defend the Macedonian name and identity (2017-2023) presented markedly different features, strongly emphasizing traditional Macedonian cultural symbols. These protests emerged as reactions to the Prespa Agreement and the resulting name change, the Bulgarian demands embedded in the so-called French Proposal, and the Macedonian government’s submissive external politics despite widespread public opposition. Their main messages centered on patriotism, coexistence, and the protection of the name ‘Macedonia’ and the Macedonian identity. Politically, they were supported by democrats and pro-EU and pro-NATO factions but were closely aligned with the VMRO-DPMNE, a center-right party claiming continuity with the ideals of the historical Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO). The visual identity of these protests prominently featured the red and yellow national colours and the display of both the official and unofficial Macedonian flags.⁹ The soundscape was shaped by the use of noisemaking tools and props, the rhythmic beating of the *tapan* (traditional double drum), and the singing of the

⁹ The official Macedonian flag was adopted in 1995 following Greek demands to replace the original state flag introduced in 1992. The initial flag of the independent Republic of Macedonia featured the ‘Vergina Sun’—a stylized yellow sun with eight primary and eight secondary rays set against a red background. Although it was removed as a state symbol, the Vergina Sun continued to be informally used by ethnic Macedonians as a symbol of national identity. The Prespa Agreement explicitly prohibited the use of the Vergina Sun, and following the treaty’s ratification, the Macedonian Social Democratic government at that time, undertook efforts to remove all public representations of the symbol. In response, the Vergina Sun evolved into a symbol of resistance, embraced by those opposing the government’s concessions on national identity.

Macedonian national anthem alongside traditional Macedonian folk songs associated with the 1903 Ilinden Uprising. Slogans such as ‘Macedonia’ and ‘Never North – Only Macedonia’¹⁰ dominated these events. The protests mainly took place in front of government buildings or involved marches from the Government to the Parliament in the state capital city of Skopje. Their visual and sonic elements communicated a powerful message of resistance to what was perceived as externally imposed demands undermining Macedonian history and identity. In particular, they criticized the government, led by the Social Democrats and ethnic Albanian political parties at the time, for demonstrating excessive compliance with the requirements of the Prespa Agreement and the French Proposal.

The repertoire of songs performed during the protests followed a carefully structured sequence, reflecting a deliberate effort to reinforce national identity and solidarity. Prior to the official commencement of the demonstrations, as citizens gathered in front of the government building, traditional Macedonian songs from revolutionary periods were broadcast through loudspeakers. Occasionally, the soundscape featured only a *kaval* (traditional long flute) melody (*ezgija*), a musical form deeply rooted in Macedonian cultural heritage. Once a substantial number of participants had assembled, the central spectacle began with the ceremonial unfurling of a large Macedonian flag, almost invariably accompanied by the performance of the revolutionary folk song from the Ilinden Uprising, *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo* (Come Out, Gjurgjo).¹¹ The official opening of each protest was consistently marked by a live performance of the Macedonian national anthem, *Denes nad Makedonija se ragja* (Today Over Macedonia a New Sun is Born),¹² typically delivered by prominent singers who openly supported the resistance movement.

¹⁰ Meaning that the adverb ‘north’ will never be accepted.

¹¹ A prominent and well-known Macedonian folk song from the period of the Ilinden uprising in 1903. <https://pesna.org/song/728>

¹² The anthem *Denes nad Makedonija se ragja* has been the official anthem of the Republic of Macedonia since 1945, originally as part of the Yugoslav federation and later after independence in 1991. Its lyrics draw on the Ilinden Uprising and WWII partisan resistance, both pivotal events in Macedonian history and recalls on the names of the Macedonian prominent heroes from both periods. However, the Treaty of Friendship signed with Bulgaria in 2017 complicated this symbolism, as Bulgaria claimed the Ilinden Uprising as part of its historical narrative. This claim has created tensions, particularly over the anthem’s lyrics. In response to Bulgarian pressure, particularly after Bulgaria’s veto of Macedonia’s EU accession in 2020, the Macedonian government (2016-2024) played the anthem instrumentally on official events in order to avoid a reaction from the Bulgarian politicians. Despite this, during protests and other demonstrations defending Macedonian identity, singing the full anthem with lyrics became a powerful symbol of resistance to Bulgarian demands, reinforcing national pride and sovereignty.

Following the speeches, the musical program continued with the performance of patriotic folk and popular songs, many of which were sung collectively by the gathered crowd. These songs emphasized Macedonian identity, celebrated historical heroes, and reinforced the national cause. Prominent examples included *Zemjo makedonska* (Macedonian Land),¹³ *Edno ime imame* (We Only Have One Name),¹⁴ *Slushaj kaj shumate* (Listen to the Forests Whispering),¹⁵ and *Neshto kje te pitam, babo* (I Will Ask You Something, Grandma).¹⁶ In addition to traditional songs, older popular compositions from the late twentieth century were also incorporated, such as *Zavetna* (The Vow),¹⁷ *Makedonija* (Macedonia),¹⁸ and *Zemjo mila* (My Dear Land),¹⁹ all of which highlighted the uniqueness and enduring beauty of Macedonia.

One of the most persistent and defining elements of the protest soundscape was the slogan “Never North, Only Macedonia,” which was chanted loudly by participants en masse before, during, and after each event. The structured use of music and slogans throughout the protests illustrates how sound was strategically mobilized as a tool of collective memory, emotional expression, and political resistance (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998). Thus, the soundscape of the protests functioned not merely as accompaniment, but as a central medium through which collective identity and resistance were performed and reinforced.

¹³ One of the most interpreted Macedonian patriotic folk songs. <https://pesna.org/song/436>

¹⁴ One of the most popular songs centered on the name ‘Macedonia’ was authored by the prominent Macedonian folk singer Jonče Hristovski (1931-2000). The song strongly emphasizes ‘Macedonia’ as the sole and rightful name of the land and its people. Over time, it became so widely embraced that it has come to be considered as a folk song. Today, it is an inevitable feature at various Macedonian events, including protests, demonstrations, sports matches, weddings, and other public and private gatherings, where it serves as a powerful expression of national pride and identity. <https://pesna.org/song/648>

¹⁵ Macedonian folk song from the Ilinden uprising period (1903). <https://pesna.org/song/490>

¹⁶ Macedonian folk song from the Ilinden uprising period (1903). <https://pesna.org/song/1111>

¹⁷ A popular song written in 1990, lyrics by Georgi Barbarovski and music by Pepi Barbarovski. <https://pesna.org/song/1410>

¹⁸ The song *Makedonija* was first recorded in 1973 by the Yugoslav pop singer Dado Topić in the Serbo-Croatian language. Celebrating the beauty of the Macedonian landscape and the warmth of its sun and people, the song quickly gained recognition as one of the most beloved musical tributes to Macedonia. It was later reinterpreted in the Macedonian language and recorded by numerous Macedonian artists. Among these, the rendition by the Macedonian pop group *Memorija* remains the most prominent and widely celebrated. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrgBp57_rsl

¹⁹ Macedonian pop song composed by the Macedonian composer Jane Kodzabashija in 1977. It features the Macedonian difficult path of independence and struggle through centuries of sufferings. It is also part of the Macedonian cultural memory and through time is interpreted by many Macedonian musicians. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g90_fhEJEHQ

This context was clearly embedded in the protest's soundscape which articulated an authentically Macedonian movement, rooted deeply in national musical traditions. This authentic soundscape left a profound and enduring imprint on Macedonian society, which, despite internal political divisions, consistently demonstrated a strong sense of unity when national and ethnic interests were perceived to be under threat. Building on this observation, the following analysis and discussion will focus exclusively on the songs and musical practices that shaped the soundscape of the protests organized in defense of Macedonian identity. Over time, this soundscape transcended the protests themselves, becoming a familiar and powerful presence at other collective gatherings—such as sports matches, concerts, and major cultural and political events—ultimately emerging as a soundscape of Macedonian resistance.

Song Selection and Analysis

From a sonic perspective, protests rely heavily on sound as an expressive and strategic tool. Chanting, drumming, and slogans amplify emotions and create an affective atmosphere that strengthens group cohesion. Sahera and Cetina (2016) examine how music and performance function as sonic acts of political struggle, reinforcing resistance against oppressive structures. Songs associated with past resistance movements often re-emerge in contemporary protests, connecting present struggles with historical acts of defiance. This continuity reinforces a sense of belonging and strengthens the emotional resolve of protestors.

This study will examine three of the most frequently performed and symbolically significant songs sung during the protests from 2017 to 2023. Those are the songs *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo*, *Neshto kje te pitam, babo* and *Zavetna*. In the context of defending the Macedonian identity their role was crucial in uniting the citizens and express their deepest emotions, from fear of losing their country to sorrow, rage and determination to resist the threats through protests and unity.

Beside the ethnomusicological analysis, the other aspects that are analyzed are: the themes and the meaning of the narratives in the songs; the symbolism that is present in the lyrics of the songs; sonic affect: provoked emotions, feelings, reactions; the cultural impact that songs could/or aspire to have; and the social significance of the lyrics' messages.

The analysis will attempt to answer the following questions regarding researched aspects:

What is the song about?; When it was created?; Are there metaphors, similes, or imagery that create vivid pictures or deeper meaning?; What is the sonic affect?; What kind of emotions, mental states, reactions do the lyrics evoke?; How does it reflect the cultural identity or historical struggles of Macedonian people?; Does the song carry a deeper message or serve as a symbol for movements, protests, or social issues?

The folk songs *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo* and *Neshto kje te pitam babo* are deeply connected with Macedonian patriotism due to their historical and cultural context. Both are associated with the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, a significant event in Macedonian history where revolutionaries, known as '*komiti*', fought against Ottomans. Their ethnomusicological analysis features authentic Macedonian traditional music characteristics observed firstly in the specific uneven rhythm and lyrical and simple melodies. *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo* is in 7/8 (3+2+2) rhythm and lyric melody in minor tonal modus, while *Neshto kje te pitam babo* is in 9/8 (2+3+2+2) rhythm and the melody is in major tonal scale with hymnic style. They are both considered as '*komitski*' songs, originating from the period of Ilinden uprising in 1903. As such, they have a strong cultural and collective memory and are well preserved in the Macedonian traditional music scope as one of the most interpreted songs by various folk singers and musicians. Since the recent political and societal challenges of the Macedonian identity, these songs emerged and were reinterpreted in more modern pop style by the several most prominent Macedonian pop singers among which the most popular version is by the pop music group 'Next time'. Since 2018, the group 'Next time' recorded new, more modern versions of several patriotic folk songs from the Ilinden uprising period. Among them, the songs *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo* and *Neshto kje te pitam babo* (2019) were most popular. Both versions of the songs include modern instruments, but also at least one traditional music instrument, but the melody and the lyrics of the songs, although interpreted in pop style, remain unchanged. Almost 24 hours after the YouTube video of the song *Neshto kje te pitam babo* was released (March 2019), it reached 1 million views. The song became extremely popular among the young Macedonians provoking even bigger feeling of rage and resentment for the political situation and the contested Macedonian identity issue.

The third song, *Zavetna*, is an authored piece first performed in 1990. The lyrics were written by Georgi Barbarovski, while the music was composed by Mile Barbarovski. Musically, *Zavetna* showcases the characteristic 7/8 rhythm (3+2+2) and features a deeply lyrical melody in a minor scale. Since it holds profound emotional and cultural significance for Macedonians, evoking themes of patriotism, resilience, and a connection to the homeland, after nearly three decades, in 2019, it was reinterpreted and recorded by prominent Macedonian opera singer Igor Durlovski and pop singer Andrijana Janevska. This new arrangement achieved significant popularity, and following its release, it entered the repertoire of protest music. In recent years, the song has gained renewed recognition, with numerous versions recorded, including orchestral, choral, and chamber arrangements. Today, *Zavetna* is often regarded as an unofficial anthem of the Macedonian people, symbolizing their enduring spirit and cultural identity (Taušanska, 2022).

The results of the conducted content analysis where the unit of analysis is each song, and the unit of content is a word or phrase that refers to citizens' resistance and the encouragement of patriotism are presented in the following Table.

Name of the song	Themes and meaning	Symbolism/imagery	Actors	Sonic effects; Affective states: provoked emotions, feelings, reactions.	Key elements
Ja izlezi Gjurgjo	The themes revolve around patriotism, resistance, and the struggle for freedom during the Ottoman era originated in 1903 during the Ilinden Uprising and is inspired by real event; The girls are looking at the military formation with pride.	Revolutionaries marching in formation, with banners and weapons, symbolizing unity and the fight against oppression; fight for freedom.	Gjurgja, named as sister; Jordan Piperkata, a notable revolutionary leader; Macedonian revolutionaries -Komiti.	National pride; Bravery; Courage; Admiration;	Call to Action; Irony and Struggle: the term "vergija" (tax) is used ironically, referring to the struggle and fight.

Nesto ke te pitam babo	It highlights the role of revolutionaries in the fight for freedom, referencing historical figures and events; Refers to the Ilinden Uprising in 1903.	Flag of VMRO (red and black) with text on it: “death or freedom” adds a layer of intensity and resolve, symbolizing their unwavering commitment to the cause; Pirin mountain – referring to part of Macedonia, which after the Bucharest Peace Agreement in 1913 belonged to Bulgaria.	Dame Gruev, Goce Delcev and Todor Aleksandrov (revolutionary leaders); Grandmother; Aga.	Honor; National pride; Admiration; Righteousness; Courage; Dedication; Loyalty.	A call for perseverance in resistance until the complete liberation of Macedonia.
Zavetna	Written in the late 20th century, 1987 it captures the enduring spirit of Macedonian identity and the hope for a brighter future.	The lyrics evoke powerful imagery of graves, springs, and timeless endurance, symbolizing the eternal spirit of Macedonia and its people “living water from the underground” that resurfaces no matter how deeply it sinks.	The land of Macedonians.	Deep emotions-related to collective memory; Patriotism; Resilience; Struggle; Immortality; Hope; Suffering; Sadness; Bitterness; Anger.	This song is regarded as an unofficial anthem. It resonates with the collective memory of a nation that has faced historical challenges but remains steadfast; Immortality, eternity.

Table 1. Analyze of the three Macedonian patriotic songs.

	Cultural memory	Social significance
Ja izlezi Gjurgjo	Patriotism; Courage; Determination for freedom; Community; Sense of unity; Reinforcing cultural bonds; Honoring the sacrifices; Sense of historical connection	The song is a symbol of national pride and is often performed at cultural events to honor the legacy of freedom and independence. It is also an unofficial anthem of the ultras group “Komiti” ²⁰ .
Zavetna	Connection to the homeland; Celebration of Macedonian heritage and identity; Macedonia as a symbol of unity and resilience - Macedonia eternal; Betrayal - often present in Macedonian history;	Widely regarded as an anthem, it unites Macedonians across generations and regions, reinforcing their cultural identity.

²⁰ The *Komiti* of Vardar are the ultras group (organized hardcore supporters) of the sport club Vardar from Skopje. *Komiti Vardar* are known for their strong nationalist sentiment, patriotic songs, and dedication not just to the football club but also to Macedonian national identity. Their symbolism often draws from historical Macedonian figures and revolutionary imagery. Besides sport matches, *Komiti* have been involved in broader social and political protests when national interests were perceived to be at stake (for example, during protests over the Prespa Agreement or against external pressures on Macedonian identity).

	Denial of one's own national identity.	
Nesto da te pitam babo	Reflective and nostalgic mood, encouraging listeners to honor the sacrifices of past generations; Deep longing for justice and liberty; Evokes a range of emotions tied to history, identity, and patriotism.	Reminder of the sacrifices made by revolutionaries and encourages the preservation of historical memory.

Table 2. The cultural memory and social significance of the songs.

Discussion

Sonic affect refers to the ways in which sound elicits emotional and bodily responses, often operating at an unconscious level. (Hofman, 2015; Dumnić, 2014) As Anderson (2009) suggests, affective atmospheres emerge through sensory experiences, with sound playing a crucial role in establishing mood and ambiance. Protest chants, music, and environmental sounds function as affective tools that mediate power relations and cultural expressions. The repetition of particular sounds—whether cultural songs, religious chants, or political slogans—reinforces emotional connections to specific spaces and communities. This process of sonic embodiment, where individuals physically and emotionally experience sound, underscores the profound affective power of auditory stimuli. Sound thus serves as a vehicle for encoding social messages and shaping political sentiments. Sonic affect is also deeply tied to power dynamics. Gallagher (2016) emphasizes that sound can be mobilized to assert dominance or resistance. Therefore, sound and affect are integral to shaping social structures and individual experiences of power and resistance.

Another important dimension of the psychological and sociological analysis of the selected songs focused on the question: 'What types of emotions, feelings, mental states, reactions, are reinforced when these songs are heard or sung?' The analysis revealed a consistent pattern of mental representations and emotional responses, including national pride, bravery, courage, admiration, honour, righteousness, dedication, loyalty, patriotism, resilience, struggle, suffering, immortality, and hope. All of these states and emotions are deeply connected to collective memory and are crucial in sustaining a shared sense of identity and historical continuity. These states and emotions, directly tied to the Macedonian collective memory of the long and persistent struggle for independence and sovereignty, create a powerful emotional experience and sonic affect. The mutual affective reactions evoked by these songs reinforce feelings of patriotism and

resilience against the contestation of Macedonian identity.

In this context, music helps concretize identity by anchoring knowledge and memory within communal experience, a process that Assmann (1995) refers to as the “concretion of identity.” The sonic elements present in the three analysed songs, which became emblematic during the protests, fully justified their central role in the created soundscape. They provoked strong affective states, generating affective reactions of patriotism, unity, determination to resist, and lyrical feelings of fear and sadness. Their central message remains a deep love toward Macedonia as a homeland.

Emotions play a vital role in mobilizing individuals in protests and resistance movements. Jasper (1998) categorizes protest emotions into affective emotions (such as solidarity and enthusiasm) and reactive emotions (such as anger and fear). Affective emotions sustain long-term engagement, while reactive emotions often trigger immediate political action. Protest sounds—including chants, music, and the collective noise of demonstrations—become part of a shared emotional and cultural identity. These sonic elements contribute to the formation of collective consciousness, reinforcing solidarity and enhancing the emotion of resistance.

According to the analysis of the influential figures in this context, leaders and revolutionaries emerge as the dominant voices advocating for a unique, independent, and united Macedonia. These individuals have dedicated their efforts to creating a free and autonomous Macedonia, striving to unite people across ethnic and religious lines in pursuit of liberation. They have committed their lives to this cause and are remembered as symbols of resilience and determination.

In addition to these leaders, two important female figures are present in the songs discussed. In *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo*, the character of Gjurgja, a real historical figure, is introduced as a sister, while in *Neshto kje te pitam babo*, the figure is represented as a grandmother. The inclusion of Gjurgja in the song adds a personal and emotional dimension, allowing listeners to connect more deeply with the historical events and the spirit of the revolution.

In Macedonian folk songs, the role of the sister is significant and multifaceted. In this context, the sister is depicted as both protector and caregiver, symbolizing purity and honor. She represents the woman who witnesses the bravery and unity of the Macedonian

'*komiti*,' who serve as protectors of family and nation. Grandmothers, too, play an important and heartfelt role in Macedonian songs. They are often portrayed as symbols of wisdom, tradition, and familial connection, serving as wise elders who impart their knowledge, life experiences, and cultural values. Songs like *Neshto kje te pitam babo* involve direct address to the grandmother, seeking her counsel and insights about life, thus representing her as a figure who connects the past, present, and future. In contrast, the song *Zavetna* does not focus on a single dominant role; rather, it serves as a collective tribute to Macedonian identity and history.

The social and cultural function of the selected songs, as revealed through the analysis, confirms their role in emotional reinforcement. The lyrics of these songs convey clear messages and reinforce elements of collective memory connected to the issue of Macedonian identity. The first song, *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo*, calls people to gather, reminding them that they are not alone and encouraging them to fight for their human rights. It serves as a call for collective action and solidarity. The second song, *Neshto kje te pitam, babo*, evokes the memory of Macedonian heroes, highlighting their determination, bravery, courage, and struggle for Macedonia and the human rights of the Macedonian people. The memory of these heroes, combined with the strong patriotic lyrics and the 9/8 (2+3+2+2) rhythmic structure of the melody, reminds listeners of their ancestors' sacrifices for an independent country, triggering an even greater determination to resist. The third song, *Zavetna*, is more subtle, lyrical, and deeply emotional, expressing a profound connection between the Macedonian people and their land. It was typically played at the end of protests, sung by the crowd in a highly emotional state, often with tears in their eyes. The emotions it evoked were deep love for the homeland and an intense fear of losing it. Social movements rely on emotions to mobilize individuals, strengthen collective identities, and sustain long-term activism. Emotions such as fear, anger, sorrow, and hope are pivotal in shaping the success or failure of resistance movements. As Beban and Hak (2020) argue, emotions function not merely as internal experiences but as powerful social forces that connect individuals and shape political struggles. Understanding the emotional dimensions of activism is essential to analyzing how collective mobilization emerges and persists over time.

In this context, protest songs, strategic silences, and sonic disruptions contribute to a protest soundscape that becomes embedded in collective memory and cultural narratives.

Sonic embodiment extends beyond verbal communication to include non-verbal sonic cues such as rhythm, tempo, and pitch. These elements communicate emotions and social messages that transcend linguistic barriers: for instance, the tempo of a protest chant may convey urgency, while the pitch of a song may evoke nostalgia or hope. Through sonic embodiment, individuals internalize cultural values and historical experiences, shaping perceptions of identity and belonging. Music creates a particular energy—an intangible yet palpable aura—that circulates moods, feelings, and intensities throughout a collective (Gibbs, 2001; cited in Thompson and Biddle, 2012).

The cultural and social function of traditional Macedonian folk songs extends beyond their ethnomusicological features. Their true power lies in their deep embedding within cultural memory and identity formation. The three songs analyzed here—*Ja izlezi Gjurgjo*, *Neshto kje te pitam babo*, and *Zavetna*—invoke powerful events and emotions central to the Macedonian historical narrative and national identity. Performed across diverse contexts—protests, sports events, weddings, and different social gatherings—and by various performers from traditional to popular musicians, these songs consistently generate feelings of patriotism and collective solidarity. Their affective impact remains constant: an expression of unwavering love for the homeland.

Since 2018, along with the slogan “Never North – Only Macedonia,” these songs have constituted a recognizable soundscape of Macedonian resistance to both external and internal threats to the nation’s identity, language, and historical narrative.

Conclusion

The concept of the soundscape, introduced by Schafer (1977), emphasizes how human experiences are deeply intertwined with sonic environments. A soundscape consists of layered sounds—natural, human-made, and technological—that shape psychological well-being and social interactions. Sound and affect are deeply intertwined in shaping emotions, political action, and cultural meaning. By examining sound as affect, we gain deeper insights into the emotional, political, and cultural dimensions of auditory experiences and collective behavior.

Historically, protest music has served as a powerful tool for education, motivation, and the raising of political consciousness. Rather than introducing new arguments, protest

songs foster emotional resonance and social unity by creating shared affective experiences that transcend individual identities. Music's strength lies in its ability to synchronize emotions, movements, and intentions, making it a central mechanism for sustaining collective political action (Margulis, 2014; Turino, 2008).

The analyzed patriotic Macedonian songs have historically played a significant role in motivating protests and social movements, evoking affective state such as pride, unity, hope, courage, and determination. They reinforced cultural identity and shared values, reminding people of past struggles for independence and motivating continued activism. Through powerful symbols and messages, the songs unified participants, fostering a sense of belonging to a larger movement.

These songs are tied to historical events and struggles for freedom. They remind people of past sacrifices and victories, motivating them to continue the fight for justice and equality. The lyrics of songs contain powerful symbols and messages that resonate with protestors. These symbols can unify and mobilize groups, making them feel part of a larger movement. These three songs highlight different dimensions of the human experience—identity, gratitude, and love. Together, they provoke wide range of emotional needs, offering empowerment, introspection, and comfort. By connecting listeners to both their collective and personal histories, these songs promote mental resilience and emotional connection. In essence, while all three songs share themes of patriotism and resilience, their tone, focus, and symbolism vary significantly—one celebrates bravery *Ja izlezi Gjurgjo*, another reflects on history *Neshto kje te pitam babo*, and the last embodies timeless unity *Zavetna*. Each captures a unique aspect of the Macedonian experience but provoke the feeling of unity and pride during national celebration and events, celebrating Macedonian heritage and identity.

The study of sound in cultural transmission also illustrates the adaptability of sonic meaning. Songs originating as folk traditions may later be repurposed as political anthems, reflecting evolving social realities. Similarly, sonic elements of resistance may be commercialized or institutionalized, altering their original affective meanings. As Sahera and Cetina (2016) argue, music and performance serve as sonic acts of political struggle, reinforcing resistance against oppression. Songs associated with historical struggles often re-emerge in contemporary protests, strengthening the sense of belonging

and emotional resilience among participants. This transformation highlights the dynamic role of sonic meaning in shaping collective memory and cultural heritage.

The presented case study highlights the specific role of patriotic music in protests aimed at defending national identity. While scholars agree on the inevitable role of music in protests and shared emotional experiences, the repertoire itself is critical in shaping a recognizable resistance soundscape.

Unlike protests addressing economic, political, or social grievances—where the soundscape may include diverse musical styles and languages—protests driven by patriotism consistently feature a distinct patriotic soundscape rooted in traditional folk songs. These songs are bearers of the collective and cultural memory that can reinforce the homeland emotions. They have been embedded deep in the collective memory, safeguarded, transmitted and kept alive in the contemporary everyday life without any change in their social and cultural function. Consequently, their enduring capacity to evoke collective emotions of patriotism and resistance remains remarkably effective. This case study substantiates this phenomenon and contributes to interdisciplinary research on the role of music in shaping protest soundscapes.

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Theme: *Music and Dance in the Balkans: Intersections of Tradition, Identity, and Innovation*

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Reflections on Dance Identity Migrant Performing Bodies – Identity Guardians

ABSTRACT

In the recent years the theme of migration has received significant attention worldwide becoming a global process. Migration can be categorized as temporary or permanent. This particular study encompasses both modalities that are in intrinsic relationship with social and economic factors. Furthermore, an analysis of migration through the prism of culture, tradition and identity provides ground for investigating transformation of cultural models and their characteristics. The present research is specifically focused on the Macedonian population. To facilitate a more competent insight and comparative analysis two distinct periods, which were characterized by substantial migratory movements, have been observed: the mid -20th century (1930s-1940s) and the early 21st century (2010s-2020s), The selected periods have consequently determined the choice of geographical areas, specifically countries that were "desired" primary destinations during each respective period. To enhance understanding, the analysis was further constricted and focused on two urban centers that hosted or currently host large and significant Macedonian diasporic communities: Belgrade and Sydney. The most significant processes and effects, resulting from the undertaking of Macedonians in these researched environments, have been established through the actions and activities of migrants and the diaspora community. The intangible culture serves as a pivotal category with a specific emphasis on dance. The body, a fundamental vehicle and embodiment of cultural characteristics, is adopted as an analytical unit in this analysis. The investigation of the dancing body is justified by identification of the inextricable link between identity and culture. Based on the obtained findings, the research defines models that reflect all characteristics of the studied groups, their distinguishing forms, as well as their ultimate functions. This approach provides an expanded understanding of Macedonian culture and identity transmission processes within the countries of immigration.

KEYWORDS

Migration
Body
Identity
Diaspora
Macedonian
traditional dances

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Setting Time-Space Coordinates

Migration issues, especially today, are a pivotal topic in the media and are part of the global geo-political dynamics. This issue is complex and can be approached through the lens of diverse scientific disciplines. The article seeks to explore the changes in migration processes by applying the category of intangible culture (more specifically by a particular emphasis on the practice of dance) explicitly related to the Macedonian population. Since the scope of such an inquiry is extremely vast, the study's analysis is limited to two dissimilar periods and two migration destinations.

Time

The temporal scope of this research is defined by two distinct decades: the 1930s-1940s and the 2010s-2020s. These periods are separated by an 80-year interval, a distance chosen to facilitate the observation of long-term research processes and to provide a comparative analysis. The selection of these specific timeframes is initiated by their significant migratory peaks, which enable examine the evolving relationship between culture and identity. Consequently, the comparison between 20th and 21st century migrant activities reveals significant shifts in the nature of migration as a phenomenon. It also enables a deeper exploration of the central research objective: analyzing the concept of culture as a foundation for identity expression and the formation of a sense of belonging.

Space/ Territorial

The spatial dimension, or the destination of migratory movements, constitutes a particularly important parameter of this study. It reflects global trends generally related to political and economic factors. The selection of immigration regions and countries changes across the two periods under investigation. The first period (1930s-1940s) is predominantly characterized by destinations within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and other Balkan nations, such as Romania, with a much low frequency of overseas migration. In contrast, the second period (2010s-2020s) demonstrates a pattern of mass population mobility toward multiple regions, including Western Europe (primarily Germany), North America (the USA and Canada), and Australia. For the purpose of this research, Belgrade and Sydney were chosen as case studies. This selection is not arbitrary but is motivated by two key criteria. The first criterion is the size of the Macedonian migrant population in these cities. During the early 20th century, Belgrade hosted the largest Macedonian

émigré community of any city in this period. Similarly, Sydney has experienced steady growth in its Macedonian community since the early 21st century and now possesses one of the largest in Australia. The second criterion is directly related to the study's focus on performance-based activities, specifically dance. These cities were selected because they have demonstrated consistent and organized activity within the sphere of dance performance, providing a rich environment for research.

The analytical approach of this study is grounded in semiology, a theory with its characteristic category concepts serving as a foundational basis. This semiotic framework is further supplemented by established research in the fields of migration and identity, (which will be elaborated in a subsequent chapter). The research methodology is comparative, and the data sourced from a diverse array of materials, which can be categorized into several groups of material sources. Starting from official reports from international and state institutions, as well as specialized books, articles, documents and reports concerning cultural activities of migrant communities during both periods. The study draws upon private archives, (including materials from the collection of Blazhe Smilevski and the Macedonian Cultural and Artistic Association Ilinden). Further data were gathered from announcements, interviews, and reviews published in both Macedonian and international print media. In addition to this for the research 18 interviews¹ were conducted involving members of the Macedonian community in Sydney, as well as those affiliated with the society that is the focus to this research. The analysis was enriched by observational data from video-documented performances available on various web platforms. I subjected this multifaceted data to analytical processing, which led me to construct two distinct models. These models reflect how the body situates itself within a new existential space. I developed them by closely examining the specific circumstances surrounding the Macedonian population. While rooted in this context, I believe the models hold broader relevance—they can be applied to general migration processes and to the cultural reflections of immigrant groups adapting to new host-country environments. The next stage of my analysis will focus on elaborating this theoretical platform in greater depth.

¹ The study involved interviews with Macedonian emigrants ranging in age from 11 to 77 years. Of the 18 participants, 11 are female and 7 male. Data collection was carried out between February and April 2025, utilizing a combination of written correspondence via email and synchronous communication through digital platforms.

A Theoretical Starting Platform

Browsing through books and articles on the topic of migration, identity and tradition, an insightful essay entitled “The creative confusion of the migrating body” caught my eye. (Cools, 2019). The article deals with the experience of a contemporary choreographer Akram Khan in relation to dance identities; talking about those that are inherited and transmitted trans-generationally, as well as the newly emergent ones. This prompted me to delve into the processes related to migrating bodies. In this article, the analysis will be structured around three fundamental categories: ‘migration,’ ‘body,’ and ‘identity.’

What is migration? Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as follows: “human migration, the permanent change of residence by an individual or group”² or in short “International migration, a specific form of spatial mobility” (Kovács, 2023: 73). Migration, particularly within the European context of the 21st century, is exemplified by the influx of migrants originating from Africa and Asia regions driven by aspirations for enhanced economic life. Negative commentary connotations on these developments were constant, causing protests and critical evaluations of an open border policies. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that “spatial mobility” constituting a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. As the authors Brandstetter, Egert and Hartung (2019) observe the migration process is associated with drastically diverse array of causes and effects. This analysis shall look into economic migrations and the effects they have caused in correlation with dance. Migrants, i.e “the *pechalbari*”³, come into a completely new social and cultural context different from the one they had previously lived. They have established a relationship with their own cultural characteristics and they identify with them. Upon migrating they encounter and interact with new cultural identities, simultaneously presenting and asserting their own. Nowadays, discussions about migration and identity very often inevitably lead to talking about “immigration and ethnicity” (Gleason, 1983: 910). This process may indicate a tenacious preservation of ethnic features such as language, tradition, culture or, less often, permutation and acceptance of cultural and identity features of the new landscape. National cultures strive to frame all existing cultural diversities within the borders of a state.⁴ The idea of ethnicity

² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-migration>

³ *Pecalbari* is Macedonian synonym for migrants. The word means member(s) of a family who temporarily emigrate abroad for economic reasons.

⁴ Regarding intangible cultural heritage and the ways of its treatment, state strategies and results more in Velika Stojkova Serafimovska, Dave Wilson and Ivona Opetčeska Tatarčevska, 2016

encourages integration of various societal layers around common meaningful categories that the group nurtures, molds and enriches, thereby bolstering the sense of unity in relation. This process illustrates unification through collective categories. Today we speak uniformly about Macedonian, Serbian, Turkish, Croatian and other cultures. The primary purpose of this analysis is to examine the construction of Macedonian identity in the context of migration processes from the 19th century to the present day. Yet, these national cultural entities are composed of multitude regional distinct specificities. The medium of storage and transmission of intangible culture heritage resides in the third category in this analysis – the body. The body is far more than a complex mechanism of organs that function in a unique whole; it is also a symbol, sign, metaphor and reflective canvas on which the social model is projected. It is a storehouse of memories, traditions, presentations and practices. Bodies from a particular historical and geographical background are part of the culture they represent, acknowledging the natural transmission of knowledge and understanding between people.

Philip Auslander, commenting on Susan Leigh Foster's views, writes "Who or what is speaking through the body and in what language" (Auslander, 2016: 9). In an effort to engage with this fundamental question, several scholarly works that explicitly center their analytical focus on the dancing body are taken into consideration. Helena Wulff (2005) explores this in *The Irish Dancing Body*, Jens Richard Giesdorf (2013) delves into the topic *Body of the People: East German Dance since 1945*. It prompts a crucial query whether bodies in their movement inscribe themselves in the very language of their ethnic origins? This consecutively gives incentive for a follow-up question of what happens at the moment of transition of the body into a new environment, one that "speaks" a different cultural language? The examples presented herein suggest tendency to preserve one's own cultural idiom. "Traveling and migrating bodies are often bodies in crisis or in unstable conditions, in unfamiliar (infra)-structures and social constellations; (...) As such, they are often bodies with a heightened awareness and with refined tactics for adapting and resisting, trained to leave behind or hold on to customs, ideas" (Brandstetter, Egert and Hartung, 2019: 5). Migrants, *pechalbari* or *gurbet* (*kurbet/kurbét*) workers, as they are often called in the Balkan countries, found diverse strategies to maintain connection closer to their homeland both imaginary and through feelings. The intangible culture they 'carry' in a form of songs, dances and customs represent the most direct and potent link to the homeland. The songs and folk dances

which create the illusion of their home and family 'cured' nostalgia.

Anatol Joukowsky (a contemporary to witness the initial migration wave) is one of the few mid-20th century authors, who alongside his ethnochoreological notes documented the significance of dance for Macedonian migrant workers. Describing the Macedonian folk dances performed by *pechalbari* he notes, “[t]hose people become transported back to their beloved mountains through their dances. Do not watch the steps, rather watch the body, the posture, the eyes” (Joukowsky, 1965: 9). This also determines the status of the migrating body. The phenomenon of the body emitting cultural messages has been explored extensively. In this context only a few authors who treat this issue will be mentioned (Judovitz, 2001; Thomas, 2003; Braidotti, 2011; Pine, Kuhlke, 2013; Zdravkova Djeparoska, 2021). Several authors have considered the human body as a political entity (Foucault, 2012; Fuko, 2005; Brown and Gershon, 2017) The body, apart from the discourse of current policies, can be considered or interpreted more broadly in its social, national, religious and cultural dimensions. As the author Andrée Grau (2011) points out, context and intention conceptualize the body and create culturally and semiotically determined metaphors. The cultural specifics (customs, language, songs, folk dances) that migrants carry with them into the new social context create a simulation of their homeland. Through act of singing and dancing, migrants engage in a symbolic re-creation of the space they have left behind. This phenomenon of cultural code transfer led me to create a visual and graphical representation of the relationships between the foundational elements of this research (Chart 1). It suggests that while (i)migration initiates an inevitable process of interaction with a new environment. The dance body—explored further in the following sections—simultaneously asserts its own cultural identity. This identity is activated through an encounter with the ‘other’ giving rise to a visible and dynamic multicultural dialogue.

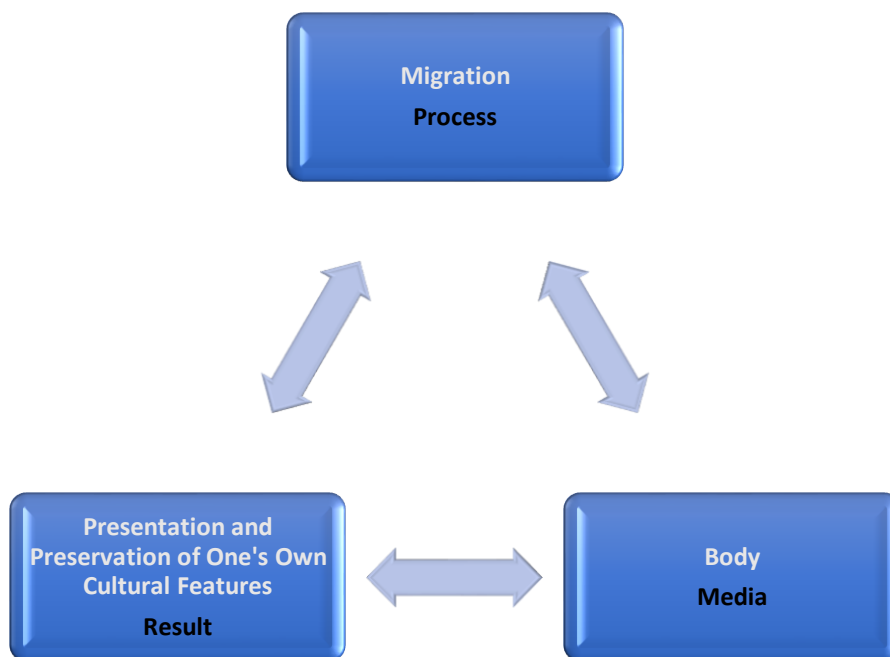


Chart 1

***Pechalbari*, Transfer of Cultural Traditions (Period 1930s-1940s)**

Migration is a phenomenon that occurs massively on the territory of Macedonia, particularly in certain regions of the country. In the first half of the 20th century this migration was of a temporary nature- migrant workers (*pechalbari*) departing forth and returning back to their ancestral places. This theme became an inspiration for Anton Panov to write the play *Pechalbari* [Migrant workers]. It was printed in 1936 and is one of the first plays performed in Macedonian language during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia era. A tragedy by genre, the writer at the very beginning gives a dramatic landscape - the time and location description- "Time of the action: from 1929-1932. It takes place in a village in western Macedonia" (Panov, 1961: 3). In the third act, as the main protagonist Kostadin prepares to depart to pechalba, comes his acquaintance Karaman Atanas.

"Karaman Atanas: (He comes alone, drunk, accompanied by Gypsy musicians) (...) (To the Gypsies). Hey, why are you slumbering! Strike the drum, so God may hear!... Strike the *Teshkoto!*... *Teshkoto!*⁵ (...) (At a cue, a subtle gesture with the handkerchief, the musicians conjure to play the slow sonorous rhythm of *Teshkoto*, Macedonian folk dance. Karaman Atanas is joined by several more male dancers following his individual dance. At a given signal marked with the handkerchief, the players fall silent, the musicians poised in tension. Atanas' eyes fill with tears.)" (ibid: 35)

⁵ *Teshkoto* (The Heavy Dance – in English) Macedonian traditional male dance.

Information about dances that belong to intangible culture (bound by time-specific parameters), obtained from literary sources constitute valuable materials for analysis. It is also the case with Panov's drama; the writer identifies the dance as *Teshkoto* - a man's dance. This detail, on the other hand, provides a very precise location. The custom of seeing the pechalbari off with this particular dance was prevalent in the Reka region (most notably in the villages of Lazaropole and Galuchnik). The inhabitants in this region are known as *Mijaci*. In addition to defining the dance and the location it took place, there is also information concerning the ethnicity of the musicians. These are Roma people who almost without exception followed the performances of *Teshkoto*. Emigrating for economic reasons (*pechalbarstvo*) in the Reka region was a mass phenomenon, a reason why the writer Panov sets his drama in this ethnographic region. The author Gorgji Trajchev (1941) provides information that in Galichnik in 1936 there were 800 houses, while the number of migrant workers was also around 800. Each household had on average one pechalbar. Leposava Spirovska (1971) writes that not solely adult men went to *pechalba*, but sometimes even children as young as ten years old had to depart. Economic migrants most often sought work in Belgrade and Bucharest, finding employment in the service industries as bakers, milkmen, waiters. Some of them even managed to establish their own 'modest businesses.'

Eventually, *pechalba* takes a profound toll and slowly breaks up families - a transition from one existential context to a completely new one. This initiated a creation of groups in which migrants nurtured their own songs and folk dances. Concurrently, in the first half of the 20th century, processes of economic migration happened alongside a parallel movement - a trend of mapping of folklore traditions accompanied by public presentation. These two completely independent processes influenced each other specifically in the affirmation of diverse and peculiar folklore characteristics.

For the first time, tradition underwent transmuting into a 'stage performance,' a practice that implies a completely distinct mode of functioning inherent in the performing arts. Folk dances, songs and customs were integrated into *Miyak* life, part of the tradition associated with specific holidays and life cycles, essential for the community's functioning within its micro social structure. This centuries-old practice of customs and folklore was supplanted by stage performance marked by a stark distinction between performers and audience. Anthropologist Victor Turner (1987; 1989), in several of his works, explains in

detail how performances function in ritual and stage contexts, drawing a critical distinction between the organization of life of pre-industrial and post-industrial societies. In the latter, he observes, the distinction between work and leisure is strongly pronounced. He notes “because any change in status involves a readjustment of the entire scheme” (Turner, 1987: 4). Tradition, consequently, ceases to be an inseparable element of life in the ethnic area and instead becomes disseminated, promoted and presented beyond its boundaries as a cultural commodity. The *pechalbari*, in addition to maintaining their cultural identity within their own community, began to perform in front of a public audience affirming their own authentic cultural idiom on stage. Organized by individuals and organizations, mostly through the efforts of the “Circle of Serbian Sisters”⁶, they realized concert performances documented by several researchers (Janković et al., 1939; Ivančić Dunin and Višinski, 1995; Smilevski 2006). A series of concerts have been recorded throughout Yugoslavia. The Lazaropole group had stage performances in Belgrade, Vršac, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo in 1939. The poster and program for the performance entitled *Lazaropole Evening of Folk Dances and Songs* held in Belgrade on February 6, 1939 reveals the repertoire: folk dances such as: *Gu gu guvche*, *Lesnoto*, *Patruna*, *Teshkoto*, *Pajdushko*, *Chamcheto* and other dances combined with the performance of folk songs. Blazhe Smilevski (2006) presents a detailed account of the performance in Brussels, May 1939, offering extensive documentation including names, activities and photo material. A list of eleven participants is presented, the youngest at the age of 19 and the oldest aged 52. The group was composed of seven dancers, three musicians from the village of Lazaropole, and a designated.

⁶ “Circle of Serbian Sisters” is an organization with cultural, educational and humanitarian activities. More details in Mira Viktorović (2013) .



Figure 1. *Teshkoto*, 1939. Courtesy of Blazhe Smilevski personal collection.

The repertoire of this performance included folk dances and songs that the group also staged at the Yugoslav Festival, comprising folk dances such as *Gu gu guvche*, *Lesnoto* and *Teshkoto*. This practice of staging cultural specificities is not unique to only Macedonia, it was and continues to be a global phenomenon. (Nájera-Ramírez, 2014; Shay, 2021; Ravikumar, 2024)

This processed ten-year span is the key to the transition of a body from a permanent status of maintaining traditional models to a body emerging into a performing stage medium. These ten years have catalyzed exceptional movements in the status of cultural constructs and their discursive presentation within the European cultural context. It is important to emphasize once again that this phenomenon is not an isolated example, only in relation to migrants from Macedonia, it is a global process. However, in this case, it is additionally strengthened by economic factors and the trend of “going on *pechalba*.” The first articulation of national cultural fragments was namely maintained through the bodies of economic migrants. They, ‘becoming embodied exponents of the cultural codes tied’ to a specific Macedonian regions. The bodies subjected to international promotion and verification were integrated into cultural representation, thereby attaining status of

Macedonian (nuanced by regional heterogeneity) identity. The pre-war groups characterized by their concert activities⁷ and the exhibition of their dance and musical features provided the foundation of the national ensemble *Tanec* establishment within socialist Yugoslavia⁸. Many of these first stage folk-dancers were recruited into *Tanec ensemble*. They contributed to the transmission of the folk-dance preserving their original form and choreography as performed in their authentic context. As well they continued shaping its repertoire and its cultural significance. If we try to transfer the previously elaborated process into a graphical format, it will result in a pie-chart shown in Chart 2.

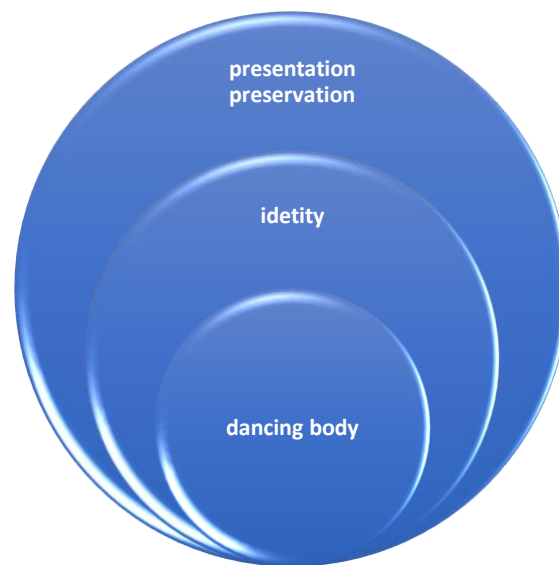


Chart 2

Diaspora Sustaining and Disseminating of Cultural Heritage (Period 2010s-2020s)

Observed across past decades, migration persists with a notable intensity as a phenomenon in the contemporary era. The aspiration for enhanced life prospects has compelled a large number, especially the young population, to undertake permanent emigration; a process linked to the concept of diaspora⁹. The Macedonian diaspora is predominantly situated in European¹⁰ and North American countries, as well as Australia.

⁷ From this period, the groups from Lazaropole, Rashtak (Skopje) and Gevgelija stand out.

⁸ The ensemble of folk dances and songs *Tanec* was founded in 1949 to preserve and present Macedonian traditional music and dance on stage. In Yugoslavia, alongside *Tanec*, the ensembles *Kolo* in Serbia (established in 1948) and *Lado* in Croatia (established in 1949) were also formed.

⁹ The term diaspora is “populations, such as members of an ethnic or religious group, that originated from the same place but dispersed to different locations. The word ‘diaspora’ comes from the ancient Greek *dia speiro*, meaning “to sow over” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/diaspora-social-science>)

¹⁰ Very indicative data can be found in report of International Organization for Migration. Number of Macedonian citizens in European countries increase from 229,366 in 2010 to 299,506 individuals in 2020, representing an augmentation of approximately 70,000 people (https://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2023/MP_profil_2021_mk.pdf)

Emigration in Australia commenced in the late 19th century, initially with a rather small number of emigrants. Substantial immigration waves ensued in the latter half of the 20th century. According to statistical data derived from the 2021 census,¹¹ the population was categorized into two principal groups. The first comprised individuals born in Macedonia who subsequently settled in Australia, numbering slightly under 50,000. The second group approximately 110,000 declared Macedonian origin, despite being born in Australia. Commenting on the figures from the 2011 census, the authors Ben-Moshe, Pyke and Kirpitchenko (2016) in their article *Diaspora Politics and Australian-Macedonian Relations* note that the accurate size of the Macedonian diaspora community is underestimated. Emigrants from overseas countries were deprived of the opportunity to visit their homeland as frequent as those residing in Europe, thereby an imperative to preserve tradition through diverse activities is accentuated. Australia holds particular significance not only due to the number of emigrant population, but also on the account of its proactive multicultural policy framework. Dona Kolar-Panov analyses the conditions of the Macedonian and Croatian diasporas on the territory of Western Australia and their cultural contexts, especially after disintegration processes in Yugoslavia. She emphasizes “[m]eanwhile, the Macedonian community in Australia has to confront a difficult task of claiming its cultural space inside Australian multiculturalism and is facing a challenging task of creating an Australian-Macedonian cultural identity while avoiding regression to ethno-nationalism” (Kolar-Panov, 1997: 78). Her observation aligns with the increasingly prominent concept of transculturalism. This framework addresses the phenomenon of multigenerational connections between immigrants and their host country. In this context, “a dual allegiance to host and origin countries” (Scully, 2012: 196) occurs, especially among representatives of the second or third generation of immigrants. Valuable insights on this topic are provided by researchers who have studied the Macedonian population in Australia. Their work offers a deeper understanding of migration experiences, cultural adaptation, and the transformation of ethnic identity within the diaspora (Hill, 1989; Najdovski, 1997; Jakubowicz, 1995; Ben-Moshe, Pyke, Kirpitchenko 2016).

Examining processes of migration and conditions in the diaspora in the 21st century, this research will be focused on a specific regional entity functioning as a cultural carrier. As

¹¹ www.abs.gov.au

a research sample, Sydney with approximately 11,500 declared Macedonians, the second-largest city in Australia in terms of Macedonian population density, will be focus of exploration. Macedonians have established various organizations, clubs and associations. Macedonians representing different generations with permanent residence in Sydney were interviewed, describing their relationship to Macedonian culture. The Macedonian Cultural and Artistic Association *Ilinden* serves as a representative case for this research. According to its official website, the society was founded by a collective of local enthusiasts 59 years ago, on November 26, 1966.¹² The forthcoming year, will mark the celebration of the society's 60th anniversary - a significant milestone. Further evidence confirming the society's enduring relevance and popularity is the establishment of its sister group, *MKUD Ilinden* Western Sydney. His activities have been noted by the Macedonian Agency for Emigration, as well as by several Macedonian and Australian electronic and print media.



Figure 2. Dance ensemble *Ilinden*. Courtesy of Macedonian Cultural and Artistic Association *Ilinden* collection

¹² <https://www.ilinden.com.au/>

Of particular interest to the study was the current choreographer of the company, Christopher Karafilovski, who has held this position since 2007. As choreographer, he shapes not only the artistic program but also the overarching vision of the company's work. The primary mission of the association is cultivation of Macedonian culture. "Beyond preserving our folk dances, Ilinden fosters a sense of community, providing a space for Macedonians to connect, celebrate, and share their cultural identity. We are a place where language, customs, and traditions are cherished and passed on to future generations, ensuring that our cultural legacy remains vibrant and strong" (notes Karafilovski, Christopher, personal communication, 2025, March 18-25). The organisation currently comprises approximately 250 core members, with an additional hundred members in *Ilinden* Western Sydney. The organization structure includes several tiers categorized by age and proficiency, as well as a representative performance group. Alongside their regular practice programs, they maintain elite performance group composed of dancers who exemplify remarkable skill and artistic excellence. The ansamble repertoire includes iconic folk-dances such as *Dracevka*, *Malesevsko*, *Radovishki Sobor*, *Ohridski Igri*, *Belmorski Biser*, *Pijanec*, *Kumanovka*, *Egejka* and many other Macedonian dances. The association has staged numerous performances at festivals and diverse cultural events the Canberra Multicultural Festival, Woodford Folk Festival, Sydney Dance Esteddforde, and the NSW Premiers Dinner etc. Furthermore, guest appearances in Macedonia were recorded during the 1970s, 1980s, 2005, and 2008. A planned tour in 2020 was cancelled due to the global pandemic outbreak.

Migration, compared to the beginning of the 20th century (the time of Panov's *Pechalbari*), has undergone drastic transformations. It is no longer temporary, but is characterized by permanent emigration or migration of all family members. The reason is not only caused by the economic factor, but also by the opportunities offered by the host country (in terms of education, health, legal system, career advancement, etc.). Today we are talking about a diaspora characterized by multi-generational continuity within the new homeland. A figure that exceeds 110,000 residents of Macedonian origin born in Australia confirms this assertion. Cultural ties are not direct connections to the homeland, but indirectly transmitted through parental influence as cultural and identity idioms. These identity features evolve quite naturally, particularly within multicultural societies. In the aforementioned research, the authors highlight the participation of young population activities of these collectives, which function as nuclei for nurturing Macedonian culture

and language. “Those under 40 were more likely to be involved in sporting and social organisations, at 62 per cent and 65 per cent respectively, compared with involvement rates of 37 per cent and 34 per cent respectively for those over 40” (Ben-Moshe, Pyke, Kirpitchenko, 2016: 61). As was emphasized in the interview:

The initial spark of interest in Macedonian folk dance among younger generations often originates from parental encouragement, families eager to pass down their cultural heritage. However, we acknowledge the increasing challenges posed by assimilation of younger generations into Australian culture. Maintaining a strong connection to our roots requires ongoing effort and creative strategies to engage young people in a world where diverse cultural influences are prevalent. We strive to make our programs relevant and appealing, ensuring that the beauty and significance of Macedonian folklore resonate with today’s youth. (Karafilovski, Christopher, personal communication, 2025, March 18-25)

The younger generation constitutes a crucial link for the continuation and preservation of traditions. They serve as guardians and perpetuators of tradition. This contemporary example from Australian society, illustrates how the body studies and accumulates tradition and identity markers (primarily transmitted through music and dance). Their bodies embody the tradition, bringing it to life via their performative presence and contributing to its sustainability and continuity.

In conclusion, the body in the diaspora serves as a guardian of tradition. Nevertheless, while younger population operates within different social and cultural context, they accumulate and embody the Macedonian identity through their (performative) bodies. Their bodies become vessels of cultural specifics of Macedonian culture. As shown in Chart 3, bodies act as a repository for accumulation and maintenance of identity characteristics. The model associated with the first period (Chart 2) showed a body that was a medium for presentation and promotion, a body that originally had known and ‘carried’ dance practices. The second model shows a function related to adoption and preservation of tradition. This performing body is a transmitter of cultural identity traits (including intangible culture) serving as a medium for their continuation. These are frequently learned and adopted by the second or third generation of migrants. Such practice is particularly significant for perserving and highlighting identity-based ethnic characteristics against the background of the multicultural context of Australian society.

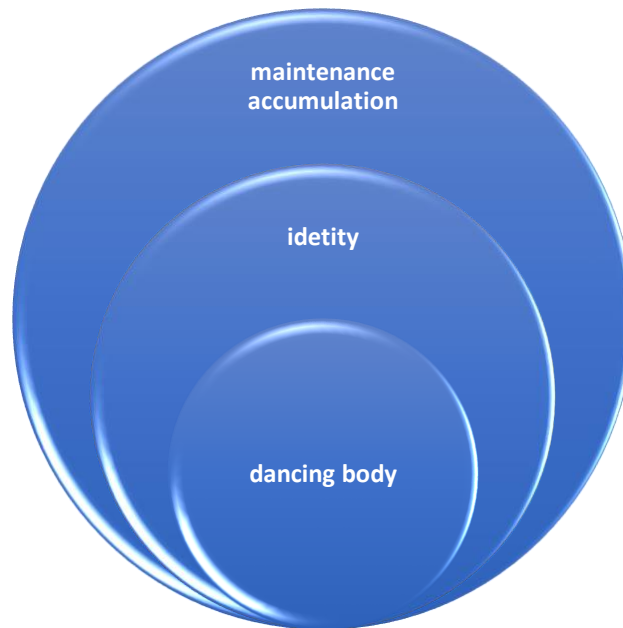


Chart 3

Conclusion

The study highlights the dynamic interplay between corporeal performance, collective memory, and emphasizing identity in multinational contexts. It traces evolution across historical and geographic boundaries. It reveals how embodied practices, particularly dance, serve not only as expressions of cultural continuity but also as adaptive responses to displacement and diaspora. Layla Zami introduces the concept of PerforMemory. She observes the dance body as a vault of memory linked to diaspora, tradition, and related conceptual categories. “PerforMemory foregrounds corporeality as a mode of production and transmission of cultural memory” (Zami, 2020: 29) writes the author. My primary goal in studying Macedonian migration was to analyze the transmission not only of cultural memory, but also specific cultural models across different historical periods. The analysis reveals, the evolutionary transition in the function of the fundamental bodily element when placed in different temporal-spatial contexts shaped by migration.

The body represents a matrix that accumulates, transmits and constructs identity (personal, family, cultural, religious, ethnic, etc.) In the example of migrant workers from the 30s-40s of the 20th century, a transition towards a new function - the staged presentation and promotion of the dance body - that did not exist before, has been observed. This emergent position of the body contributed to the affirmation of cultural identity within a broader European frames. The dance body conversely in contemporary

conditions and trends of the 21st century, especially within communities exhibiting multi-generational ties to their adopted 'homeland,' brought a completely new status to the body. The bodies first need to adopt and accumulate, and then embody the Macedonian dance tradition thereby integrating into the multicultural mosaic of Australia. Consequently, the dance manifests clearly expressed characteristics and uniqueness in its cultural and identity format.

"The body is a home" claims Layla Zami (2020: 133). The concept of "the body as a home" signifies the process of connecting with the location/place that each of us feels as home. It is a movement through space, time, but also memory. By performing the folk-dance, the performer localizes his presence regardless of where he actually is. He returns to Macedonia through his steps, his rhythm and his emotion.¹³

The migrant dance body that was observed exhibits divergent function in both examples. However, what they have in common is that they create an imaginary space of home by body practice. In reference to the research out of 1083 respondents, the following findings had been obtained: "An overwhelming majority of 86.5 per cent in the survey described themselves as being either "very close" or "close" in their feelings towards Macedonia" (Ben-Moshe, Pyke, Kirpitchenko, 2016: 60). Cultural features play a crucial role in shaping matrices of belonging. Each of us pretty easily relates and identifies with the music and dance from our birthplace, from our childhood, from family gatherings and from our home. It helps us establish relationships of belonging of what our homeland signifies to us even when we are far from our birth place.

From all that has been presented, one may conclude that, it is evident that the dance body functions as culturally inscribed medium through which notions of home, identity, and belonging are embodied and transmitted across diasporic temporalities and spatialities.

¹³ In this context, I highlight several excerpts from the interviews that were conducted. In response to the question about the significance of Macedonian dance and music in their lives, they answered. "Being so far away our culture unites us here. Nothing more important than understanding who you are. Preserving and passing it on to your children. Dancing oro is probably the easiest way to enjoy our culture" (J.K., female, age 51); "Each step of the dance brought me closer to home, as if I had never left Macedonia" (E.J., female, age 43); "When I dance, I feel that I am little more connected to my people. More specifically, I'm connected to my ancestors, who would have danced to the same melodies and rhythms"(M.D, male, age 56).

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Theme: *Music and Dance in the Balkans: Intersections of Tradition, Identity, and Innovation*

Research Article

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Bioinformatics analyses of evolution in the tune families of similar folk songs from Macedonia

ABSTRACT

The comparative study of songs allows for deeper insights in the evolution of music. The ethnomusicological studies of folk songs from Macedonia provide a few examples of complex tune families and their respective song variants. This study uses data from 7 ethnomusicological studies about song variants, together with more variants from other publications, combining 60 melodies of Macedonian folk songs which share tune families and melodic similarities. One of the song examples is a Turkish folk song which shares a tune family with a Macedonian song.

The bioinformatics analysis of phylogeny and evolution confirms and expands the cited studies' results, showing similarity between various melodies shared by the same song and shared by different songs, as well as between tune families. The results offer a potential glimpse of the evolution and diversity of similar melodies in folk songs. The most conserved appear to be the ritual folk songs of the village Bituše, while more diversity and 'genetic sharing' appears in the various other songs, of which the pastoral types provide the most frequent and diverse examples. We analyze examples of songs sharing tune families, as well as tune families' similarities, publishing the most complete variant collection of two famous Macedonian folk songs that share a tune family – the song about *Šar Planina* and *Devojčinja guguvčinja*.

KEYWORDS

Bioinformatics
Ethnomusicology
Evolution
Folk song variants
Macedonian folk music
Song phylogeny
Tune family

Introduction

Folk songs variants have been a topic of interest to collectors, researchers and performers for a long time (Poladian, 1942). Studies in ethnomusicology have been interested in comparative analyses of song similarities using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Song variants and their similar melodies are at the core of the concept of a 'tune family' defined by Bayard (1950). Variants have been studied with manual alignment of melodies, such as for the examples of tune families for British-American folklore (Bayard, 1954); Russian folk songs and church chants (Banin, 1973; Rudneva, 1973; Vladyshevskaya, 1978); and Macedonian ritual folk songs (Ziegler, 1982). Computational methods for measuring song similarities and song classification have been in use in ethnomusicology since its early days (Bronson, 1949). Various formats of song representations and codings have been used for studies of melodic variation, such as mathematical and graphical models (Bronson, 1959; Scherrer, 1971; Linin, 1971).

A tune family is a group of melodies showing basic interrelation by means of constant melodic correspondence, and presumably owing their mutual likeness to descent from a single air that has assumed multiple forms through processes of variation, imitation, and assimilation. (Bayard, 1950: 33)

The definition of a 'tune family' uses a conception of musical similarity that links it with genealogical paradigms, suggesting an interpretation of music using evolution and genetics. A song may be interpreted as genetic information, amenable to evolutionary processes of mutation (insertion, deletion, substitution), recombination and selection. The evolutionary and genealogical aspects of songs are not as strict as they are in biology, yet they can be observed, particularly in folk music. These include: the existence of similar and related songs and tune families; the existence of ancestors of some songs; variety in musical content that mutates and recombines under forces of evolutionary selection, as it is performed and passed through generations.

Music similarity also plays a key role in the fields of Computational Musicology and Music Information Retrieval (MIR), where quantitative methods are used to measure similarity in various digital formats of music representation (Kranenburg et al., 2010). Recently, bioinformatics string sequence alignment algorithms have been used successfully for finding similar melodies, thus developing an operational concept of a tune family (Kranenburg et al., 2011). These methods work on a symbolic representation of the

music, with results suggesting they're more successful than other methods at song classification in tune families, particularly for a large corpus with growing numbers of examples, such as that of the Dutch folk songs (Kranenburg et al., 2013). Sequence alignment algorithms have been used for finding similar songs in a corpus, such as that of Iberian folk music (Carvalho et al., 2021), for detecting highly related melodies in a corpus of British and of Japanese songs (Savage et al., 2022) and analyzing and comparing the micro-evolutionary trends in both musical folklores. Custom modified sequence alignment algorithms have been used for detecting cross-corpus melodic similarity and enriching tune family classifications, in 4 corpora of Dutch, German and Irish folk songs (Kranenburg and Kearns, 2023). Multiple sequence alignment algorithms have been used for a couple of tasks by Bountouridis (2017) in researching music similarity on melodic sequences from two annotated data sets and defining various method pipelines for a data-driven approach to MIR, using known bioinformatics tools and analyses.

Phylogenetics methods have been used to study the similarity and evolution of various music pieces using many music encodings and representations, such as classical music (Windram et al., 2014) and Gregorian chants (Hajič et al., 2023). Bioinformatics and phylogenetics methods have been also used successfully for classification of melodies in tune families for British and Japanese folk songs (Savage; Atkinson, 2015) and Macedonian and Russian folk songs and church chants (Spiroski et al., 2024), identifying relationships between tune families and genres, based on similar symbolic melodic content. However, these and other studies principally look at types of examples with similar music and melodies, like songs that have a single and distinct tune family, which can be seen as examples of ancestry with vertical transmission of the musical information (song genes).

As this study shows, bioinformatics and phylogenetics methods hold promise for studying the real-world complexity and evolution of melodies, particularly for collections of diverse folk song variants, songs which have several different tune families or different songs that share tune families. This study uses data from folk songs from Macedonia exhibiting such diversity of vertical and horizontal transmission of musical information, which have already been studied and some of their complexities and relationships have been pointed out or investigated. The quantitative results of this study cross-validate the qualitative results from the reference studies with computational methods, building a

broader phylogenetic map of the melodic similarities of the songs and tune families.

Methods

The role of sequence alignment algorithms has been fundamental for the development of genetics and bioinformatics, as it allows for the comparison of genetic and protein codes, represented symbolically as strings using a 4 (or 20) letter alphabet (i.e. {'A','C','G','T'}). Sequence alignment algorithms are a type of edit distance algorithm for string similarity, optimized to work on very long strings and for finding fuzzy and impartial string matches. The numerical values of the distance depend on the algorithm's parameters and other assumptions, allowing for the same string alignment to have different distance values. The main parameters are the Gap Opening Penalty (GOP) and Gap Extension Penalty (GEP), which penalize opening a gap in the alignment, and adding new gaps, respectively. These parameters help find and rank similarities despite the differences in genes due to evolutionary changes, such as from mutation (insertion, deletion, substitution) and crossover.

The calculated sequence distance is the basis for formal studies of evolution and phylogeny, with methods for (re)constructing evolutionary trees and visualizing species relationships. The success of these methods for classification in biology is in studying genealogy and genetic relationships (cladistics), but they're useful for comparisons of similarities on the basis of any generic shared features (phenetics). Phylogenetics methods have been successfully applied in other fields, including linguistics, folklore and MIR.

By calculating a distance matrix of the sequences studied, it can be used with various phylogenetics methods for visualizing the sequence similarities as evolutionary trees, with the tree branches representing evolutionary paths and their lengths evolutionary distances between the tree leaves (sequences or melodies). There are many ways for constructing the trees (graphs) and these reflect the assumptions of the methods. Methods closer to cladistics, like UPGMA dendograms, assume ancestry and visualize genealogical relations and history. Methods closer to phenetics, like neighbour joining nets, cluster by shared properties and visualize a topology of similarities without assuming ancestry (Lesk, 2010).

For studying melodic sequences, a combination of several phylogenetics methods is ideal, to bring in the perspectives of each method on the similarities and clusters found, as the evolution of melodies doesn't obey such strong rules as those of molecular biology. The various methods will usually produce a similar (or exact) trend of clustering for the most related examples, while each method may produce different cluster assignments for outliers and less related members close to the cluster borders. These differences provide interesting information about potential musicological relationships worth further study. The phylogenetic results and clustering should be reviewed by checking the melodic sequences and their alignments and distances. Most importantly, the results should be studied by ethnomusicologists to validate their musical significance and meaning.

This paper follows the methodology, software implementations and algorithm parameters used for the bioinformatics methods in: Savage (2015; 2022), Spiroski et al. (2024). These are based on the R programming language and libraries with scientifically verified bioinformatics method implementations, like Biostrings (R Core Team, 2021; Pagès et al., 2024). Three phylogenetics methods are used in this study, a 'NeighbourNet' (Schliep et al., 2017), used by Savage et al. (2015), and 'UPGMA dendograms' and 'neighbour joining nets' (Saitou; Nei, 1987), used by Spiroski et al. (2024), part of the ape-package in R (Paradis; Schliep, 2019). The global sequence alignment algorithm by (Needleman; Wunsch, 1970) is used with the following values for the GOP and GEP parameters:

GOP=12, GEP=6.

Pre-processing data steps

All of the melodies used in this study end in the G tonic, or are transposed to G finalis if needed, in agreement with Krohn's methodology. The melodies were coded in letter form (or *letterized*, to coin a phrase), using the alphabet {C,d,D,e,E,F,g,G,a,A,b,B} to represent the notes in the musical scale. The letterized melodies are in the Supplementary data (Appendix 1, Table 1). Most melodies used were monophonic, with only a few harmonized examples, like No. 17, 50, 51, which are marked in the Supplementary data. The harmonized examples were coded in letter form in two letter sequences, following two melodic movements, however this study features only one melody in letter form in the data set and results (see footnote 3, 8, and 9 at Appendix 1, Table 1).

The whole melodic line of every song's melody is converted to letter form, except for the small melodic ornaments (this is particularly evident in example number 32). The notes connected with an arc are represented with all the individual tones/letters, even when they represent a continuous tone. This is most evident in the examples No. 15 and 16, which are certainly the same melody, referenced to the same author, yet are represented with minuscule differences in the note and letter sequences in No. 15. These differences in the sheet music records in the publications are factual and are distinguished by the algorithms, even though they represent the same melody.

The pause marks also have been ignored when creating the letter sequences of the songs' melodies. Additionally, from the letter sequence it is impossible to determine the rhythm, meter, duration of tones, dynamics in the melody, which octave the specific tone is in, whether the melodic interval (DG, for example) is a fourth up or a fifth down. The song's text and other meta-data (like the song's origin, date, singer, etc.) are not included either. For a better understanding of the melodic features of the songs, the transcriptions of each example are included as Supplementary Data in Appendix 2. A small number of songs are from various folk song collections (Badeva, 2002; Bicevski, 2001; Vasiljević, 1953; Dimčevski, 1986; Žeželj-Kaličanin, 1998; Janković, 1939; Karakaš, 1995; Stoin, 1930; Hadži-manov, 1953, Češmedžiev, 1945), while the main set are from ethnomusicological studies and books, as referenced further in the text.

Data

The studies and collections of Macedonian folk songs have shown many examples of variants in their texts and melodies (Vasiljević, 1953; Firfov, 1953; Firfov et al., 1962; Hadžimanov, 1964; Janevska, 2024). Even though many song variants have been published, only a few comparative studies with melodic variants were found in the ethnomusicological literature (Džimrevski, 1973; Bicevski, 1976; Ziegler, 1982; Olevska, 1986; Veličkovska, 2002; Stojkova Serafimovska, 2020; Tončeva, 2021). Only one of the studies, done by Ziegler (1982), uses alignment of the melodies to show their relatedness, or group them as a *glas* – the most similar concept to a 'tune family' found in the Macedonian and Balkan folklore. The other studies only publish and comment on the melodies of several variants of a folk song.

This study combines the data (melodies of folk song variants) from these ethnomusicological studies and variants from other publications, and analyses them using bioinformatics and phylogenetics algorithms, successfully confirming and expanding the results of the reference studies. The results in this study exemplify the real diversity of folk song variants and the evolutionary aspects of diverse folk songs, which combine several tune families and share them with other songs.

In this study we examine 60 variants of folk songs from Macedonia, classified in at least 4 major tune families (and subfamilies – Table 1). These are based on 5 main textual themes from lyrical songs, as well as the different ritual songs texts, which share tune families.

Songs info	Number of: Tune families – Melodic variants
1 song(s) about Čelnik Peyo	3 tune (sub)families – 8 variants
2 songs with 1 shared tune family (MK+TU)	1 tune family – 1+1 variants
2 songs with 1 shared tune family (Devo + Šar)	1 tune family – 12+17 variants
* ritual songs from Bituše + external – 2 authors	2 tune (sub)families – 6+11 & 4 variants

Table 1. List of number of songs, tune families and variants used in this study

We present the data about the individual songs and tune families using a phylogenetic UPGMA dendrogram (see Figure 1). The dendrogram has the examples ‘labeled’ with a ‘naming convention of 4 entries’: 1) their ID number; 2) their short 4 letter ID name shown in bold in Table 1; 3) the year of publication/collection; 4) other data to identify the example, like the publication author or collector, language, example index number, etc.

The first data set features 8 melodies (No. 1-8, see Appendix), of 3 melodic types (tune families) as identified by Bicevski (1976), associated with many textual variations on a similar pastoral song theme, found as *Čelnik Peyo*, *Večerale sto ovčari*, etc. The 1st melodic type is featured with 4 melodies, the 2nd with 3 melodies and the 3rd with 1 melody.

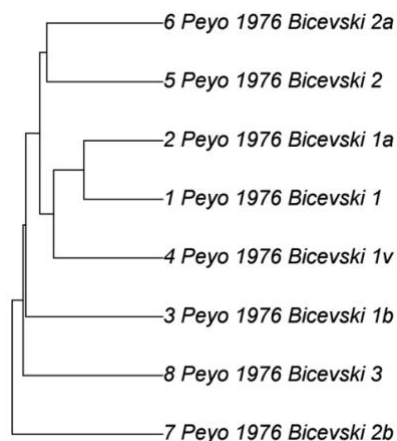


Figure 1. UPGMA dendrogram. Pastoral songs (No. 1-8) of 3 melodic types (tune families), related to the shepherd *Čelnik Peyo* (Bicevski, 1976)

The UPGMA dendrogram of this data set on Figure 1, produces melody clusterings which mostly match with the melody types by Bicevski. The 1st type has 3 out of 4 melodies clustered together, with the 4th next in the neighborhood. The 2nd type has 2 out of 3 melodies clustered together, with the 3rd type being quite different and clustering furthest from all the other melodies. This fits with the musicological data, as examples No. 1-6 have the same tone sequence, whereas examples No. 7-8 have a different one. Example No. 3 stands out of the type 1 cluster, in agreement with its longer melodic line and its meter.

The study by Olevska (1986), while analyzing differences in notating metro-rhythmical structure and song meter, identifies several folk songs variations published by different authors and includes her versions of the scores for the melodies of already published variants of a single song – *Devojčinja guguvčinja* (No. 13-15).

The study of Veličkovska (2002), compares two textually and linguistically different, but melodically similar songs, each featured with only one variant. One is a Macedonian folk song sung in Macedonian language, *Sevdalino maloje mome* (No. 9). The other is a Turkish folk song from Macedonia, sung in Turkish language, *Şar dağından kalkan Kazlar* (No. 10). Veličkovska states that these songs, as melodic formulas, are popular both among the Macedonian and the Turkish people. While these are melodic variants of a tune family, because they're only two examples, they need to be grouped with more examples to be able to be meaningfully analyzed with phylogenetics methods and are presented combined with other tune families.

The next data set combines the 2 studies by Olevska/Veličkovska with variants of the song *Devojčinja guguvčinja* from other publications (No. 9-22). The 1st study (1986) features 4 melodies of *Devojčinja guguvčinja* (No. 12-15) and the 2nd study (2002) features 2 melodies (No. 9-10) (1 Macedonian, 1 Turkish). We include two versions of one melody, the original (No. 16) and its re-notated score (No. 15), as examples of the algorithms' treatise of slight differences in the written record, which produce the exact same melody. The phylogenetic trees revealed two pairs of exact melodies, No. 17 and 18, and No. 19 and 21 (see Figure 2).

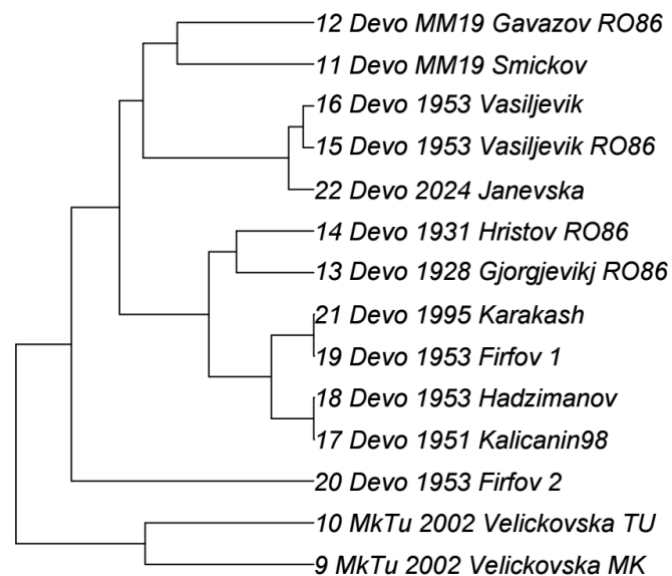


Figure 2. UPGMA dendrogram. Melodic variants of the song *Devojčinja guguvčinja* (No. 11-22) from different sources and two songs (No. 9, 10) which are variants of one melody with two totally different texts – Macedonian and Turkish (Veličkovska, 2002)

Ziegler's study of the melodic formula of the ritual folk songs of the Mijak village Bituše uses 7 aligned melodies, selected from her own studies and from a study by B. Džimrevski (Džimrevski, 1973) about songs from the same village (No. 23-28, 36). Džimrevski provides 11 melodies from Bituše (No. 29-39) and 4 examples of similar songs and melodies from other publications (No. 40-43), useful for framing a broader folklore scope of the songs from Bituše. Our study combines the melodies from both authors' publications, as all of them are slightly different and there was only one duplicate (No. 36; melody #8 from Džimrevski, #7 from Ziegler).

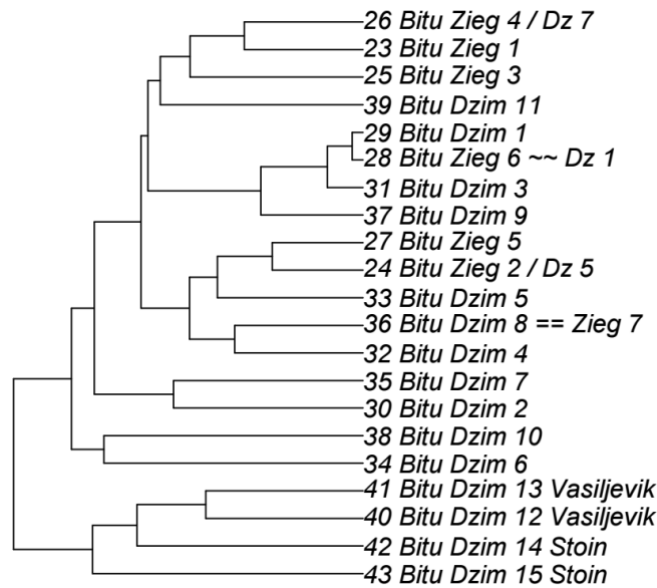


Figure 3. UPGMA dendrogram. Ritual songs, mostly from the village **Bituše**, Mijak Region (No. 23-28 found at Ziegler, 1982; No. 29-43 found at Džimrevski, 1973)

The similarity of melodies that Ziegler noted as close to melodies from Džimrevski can be tested with the phylogenetic clustering results. Two of three melodies noted as similar are clustered together (No. 24 and 33; No. 28 and 29), while one clusters differently from Ziegler's similarity reference (No. 26 is not near No. 35). These results have been confirmed with musicological analyses. These kinds of variations in the data help to ascertain the phylogeny of the various songs and are particularly useful for getting a more detailed picture and graphic representation of the potential relations between songs' melodies and their grouping into tune families and broader similarities.

The biggest group of melodies are of the ritual folk songs from Bituše, even though they are more numerous than any other tune family, they are consistently the most similar and most conserved, in agreement with Ziegler's analysis that they follow a melodic formula/*glas*.

Both the studies of Olevska (1982) and Bicevski (1976) mention the relatedness and similarity of their published melodies to those of the famous Macedonian folk song about the mountain Šar Planina falling / trapping three shepherds. The similarity of the melodies of the song about *Šar Planina* and *Devojčinja guguvčinja* have also been mentioned in one collection (Crnušanov, 1989), with comments that *Šar Planina* is likely the older song.

This study features 17 variants of the song about *Šar Planina*, combining those published in the 2 studies about it (Stojkova Serafimovska, 2020; Tončeva, 2021) and others in other publications. The studies of the variants of this song have revealed that it has evolved from a simpler, village type of song (represented by example No. 45 published in the 19th century), to a more complex, mixed village-town type (like examples No. 44, 49, etc.). The phylogenetic analysis confirms this, with the older example clustering separate and distant from the main cluster of melodies, with only one remotely similar variant, example No. 53. The other tune family has clusters with more members and more closely related melodies, confirming the studies' views that these are the living, reproducing, mutating variant types. Of these, the larger and more diverse sub-family contains the main examples from the region of Gora in Šar Planina (like 52, 60), affirming these variants genetic relatedness.

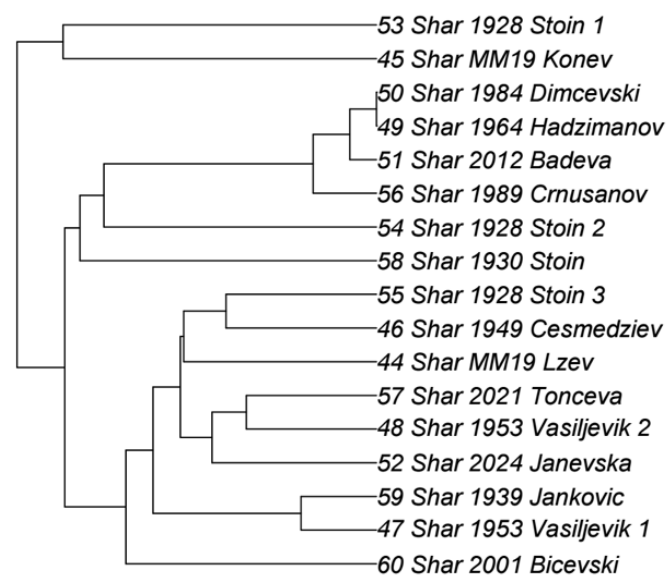


Figure 4. UPGMA d. Variants of the song about *Šar Planina* (No. 44-60) from different sources

Results

The results confirm the referenced ethnomusicological studies overall and expand them. We present three combinations of corpuses of melodies, to improve insights into tune families. We present these results using both an UPGMA dendrogram and a neighbour joining net for the first combinations, to highlight differences in the phylogenetic methods. The final combination of all melodies is presented additionally with a NeighbourNet network, which provides more detailed information about the similarities in its visualization.

First, follows the combined corpus of the first 3 studies of Bicevski and Olevska/Veličkovska (No. 1-22). The results show 3 main branches, corresponding well with the songs variants and studies. Most of the variants from Bicevski form one branch consistent with a tune family for the melody type, with three melodies (No. 3, 7, 8) clustering closer to the other two tune families. The two songs (No. 9-10) by Veličkovska form their own branch, consistently clustering their variations as a tune family, in this data set clustered close to the examples No. 7-8. The examples No. 3 and 20 cluster away from the main clusters, which fits with their melodic characteristics as most distant examples.

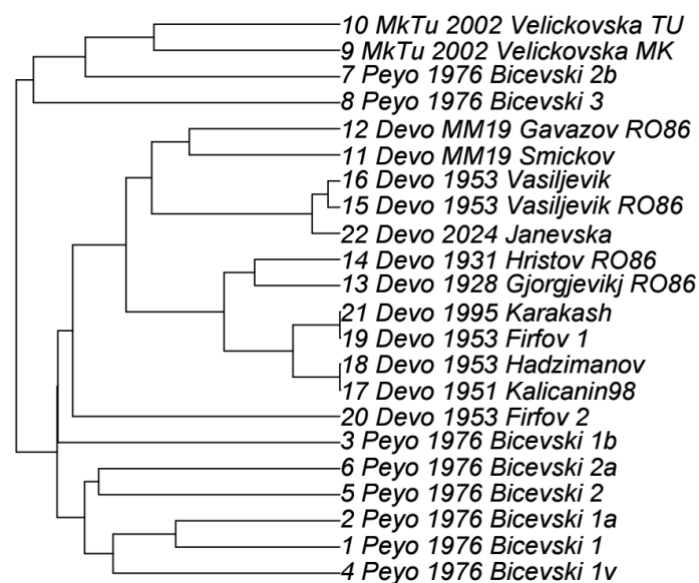


Figure 5. UPGMA dendrogram. Macedonian pastoral songs (No. 1-8), Turkish and Macedonian version of one melody (No. 9-10) and variants of the song *Devojčinja, guguvčinja* (No. 11-22)

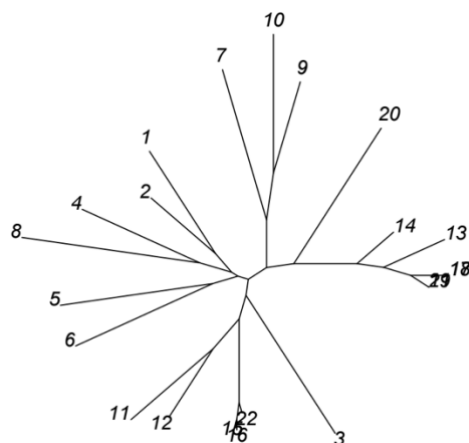


Figure 6. Neighbour joining net. Macedonian pastoral songs (No. 1-8), Turkish and Macedonian version of one melody (No. 9-10) and variants of the song *Devojčinja, guguvčinja* (No. 11-22)

Next, follow the combined corpus of the studies of Ziegler and Džimrevski, together with the variants of the song about *Šar Planina*. The melodies from Bituše are clustered close together, most of them (14 melodies) under one big branch with 3 major sub-branches, neighbouring with one more branch of 3 melodies (see Figure 8). The branches reflect the similarities between melodies identified by Ziegler.

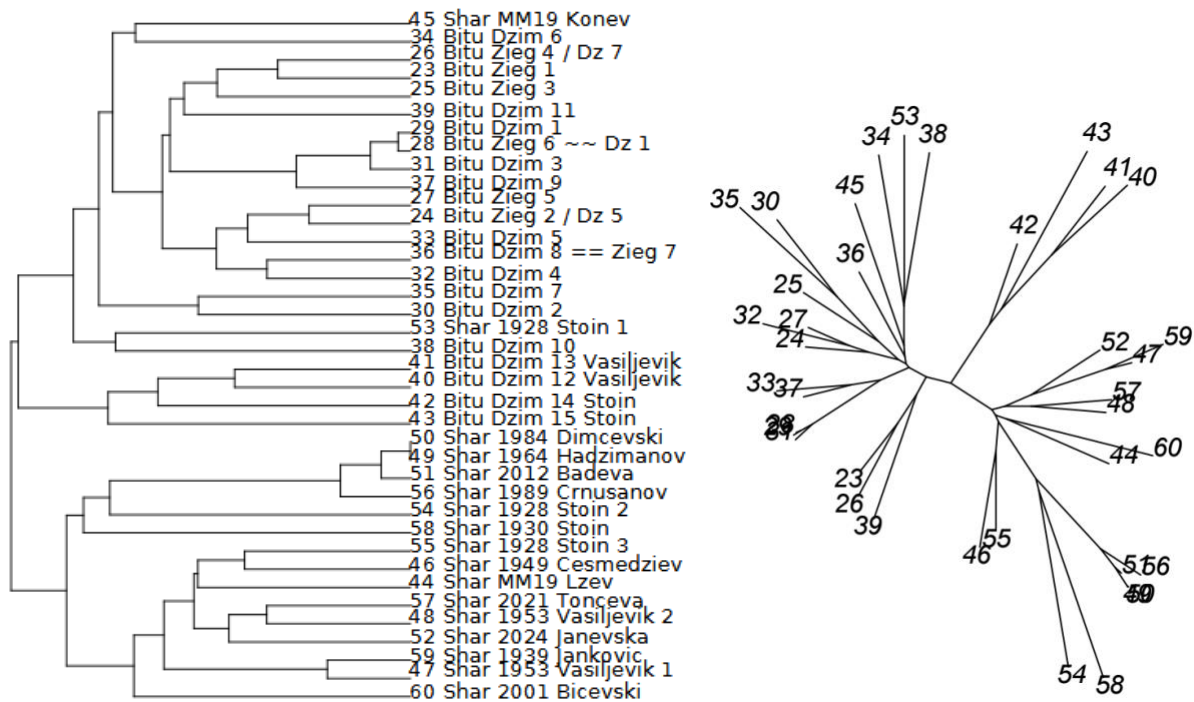


Figure 7 (UPGMA d.) and 8 (N.j.n.). Ritual songs (No. 23-43 found at Ziegler, 1982; Džimrevski, 1973) and the variants of the song about *Šar Planina* from different sources (No. 44-60)

A separate branch is formed by the 4 similar melodies given by Džimrevski, published by other authors (No. 40-43), accurately grouping them together as separate and like a tune family themselves. Most of the variants of the song about *Šar Planina* form their own branch, with melodies (No. 45, 53) clustering together with the examples from Bituše. This fits their similarities and accurately links the older and simpler variants of the song with the accordingly simpler ritual folk song melodies.

Next, we combine the two songs that share a tune family, *Devojčinja guguvčinja* and the song about *Šar Planina*. The results suggest that there is one main cluster with most of the variants, which is further divided in two clusters, one of very similar melodies with 3 exactly same melodies (No. 17 and 18; 19 and 21; 49 and 50), and another cluster of more distant and divergent melodies. Outside lie a couple of smaller distant clusters, of which the farthest clustered is No. 45, the one already studied example of an evolutionary older,

less popular variant. Only the UPGMA dendrogram is able to depict the exact melody matches in a readable manner, the other two phylogenetic trees (networks) overlap these examples' branches and need manual work to make the tree more readable.

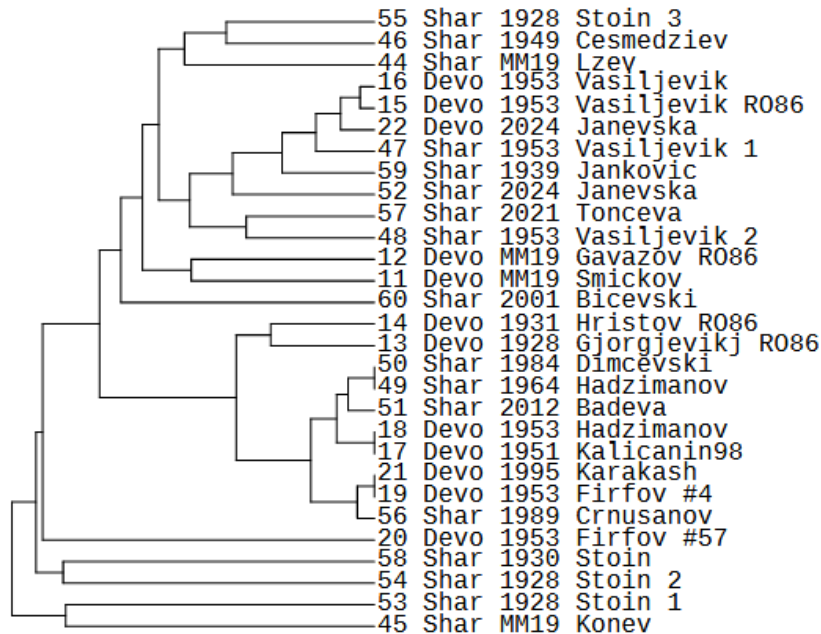


Figure 9. UPGMA dendrogram. Variants of two songs that share a tune family: 1) variants of the song *Devojčinja, guguvčinja* (No. 11-22); and 2) variants of the song about *Šar Planina* (No. 44-60)

Finally, when we combine all the 60 melodies together, the emerging picture shows that several songs share similar melodies. Most notably, two sub-branches carry together most of the melodies from the song about *Šar Planina* and *Devojčinja, guguvčinja*. There are only 3 variants of the song about *Šar Planina* (No. 45, 53, 58) that cluster with other tune families and is in accordance with previous studies and seems musicologically fitting, as the ritual and pastoral folk songs represent a simpler, more conserved types of folk songs. This is also evident in the fact that all the ritual songs from Bituše are grouped in one cluster and the closest are the pastoral songs, in all the phylogenetic trees.

The phylogenetic trees in Figures 11 and 12 represent the same general trend, similar to that on Figure 10. However, there are a few noticeable differences in clustering between some of the phylogenetic trees, most of which may be said to be due to the way the algorithms handle the most distant examples and outliers, which often shift groupings based on the other examples in the corpus and the algorithm workings. This is expectable, as the grouping on the trees are relative, shaped by the populations' content comparisons.

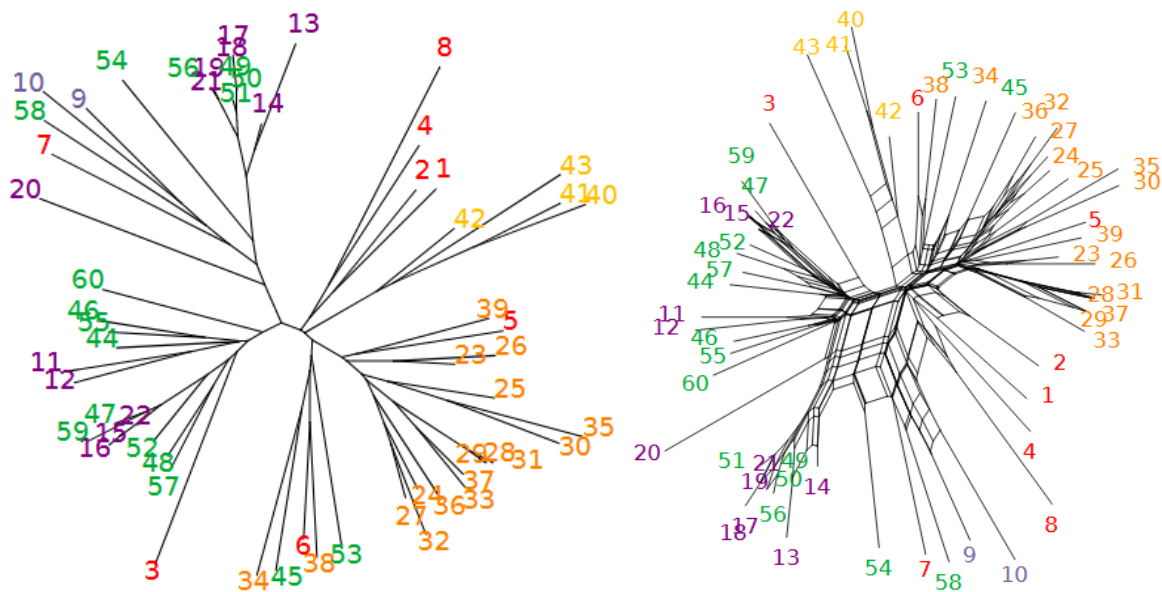


Figure 11. (Neighbour joining net) and 12 (neighbour-net network). All 60 melodies – **Red** – songs about *Čelnik Peyo* (1-8); **Indigo** – MK and TU version (9, 10); **Purple** – variants of the song *Devojčinja guguvčinja* (11-22); **Orange** – ritual songs from Bituše (23-39); **Gold** – ritual songs (40-43); **Green** – variants from the song about *Šar Planina* (44-60).

Discussion

The results from the previous sections present several phylogenetic models used on combinations of the data used, all of which validate each others' main trends of clustering. These phylogenetic trends are in line with the known song relationships in the literature, confirming the ability of the algorithms to produce meaningful results using melodic data. All the published tune families have been algorithmically recognized, with clusters containing most or all the family variants. Most of the groupings and relationships which we have manually investigated have musicological significance, or at least some logic for the links with its nearest neighbours (adjacent within or out of their native cluster). We've briefly mentioned a few musicological results, however these are left for a future paper.

The phylogenetic trees can produce a useful 'map of similarities' for investigating melodic variants, which can help quickly understand the diversity and relations in the variants. They can help guide ethnomusicological or folklore case studies, as well as organize the ordering of melodies in a folk song corpus with automatic classification into tune families.

Our approach allows to perform a comparative review of the phylogenetic methods used, their benefits and shortcomings. The methods can be compared with various criteria, mostly based on comparing their outputs, of which the most trivial is the readability. However, as the number of examples grows, this becomes essential. For this, the UPGMA dendrogram is much better for presenting minuscule variations or exact matches, whereas the net visualizations overlap these kinds of similarities making them unreadable. The net approaches are much better for big collections with diverse contents, making the diversity much easier to recognize, as well as spot the outlier results and cluster relocations. All of the phylogenetic trees sometimes produce unique results to them, which might be a source of more interesting information in the analysis and is worth studying in detail.

Overall, the results suggest a trend of evolution of the songs and tune families, with the tune family of *Peyo* containing the most varied evolutionary snapshots which link it with all the tune families. Similarly, the two joint tune families offer clusters which link to both the simpler and the more complex melodic examples, indicating their evolutionary movements.

Conclusion

Bioinformatics analyses are able to account for the diversity in folk song melodies. It can be used to verify melodic comparisons and find novel melodic similarities. Our results quantitatively verify the similarities between the melodies published in each study and we expand the known cases of shared similarities between song, variants and tune families. The clusters found are consistent with regard to the changes in the data sets, except a few distant examples. This is particularly interesting in the case of the shared tune families, as it confirms that the bioinformatics and phylogenetics algorithms can be a useful tool for analyzing complex and diverse melodic contents and elucidating evolutionary forces in songs and collections.

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Appendix 1.

Table 1. Titles of the songs, sources, letterization and tone sequences

No.	Title of the song	Source	Letterization	Tone sequences
1.	Vsi ovčari večeraja	Bicevski, 1976, 1	CDDDCbDCbAGAGGCDbAbGbAbAGGGG	G-A-b-C-D
2.	Mi jisteral Pejo na planina	Bicevski, 1976, 1a	CDDCbCDCCbAGFGGGGAbbbAGGFAGAbAGFGGG	F-G-A-b-C-D
3.	Večerale sto jovčari	Bicevski, 1976, 16	DDbCCCCCDBbbAGACGGGGGGGGCCCbCAAACAAbGGGCDDDCbCAAAbGGGGGFAACCAAAbGAAAGGGGGG	F-G-A-b-C-D
4.	Večerale sto ovčari	Bicevski, 1976, 1B	GCDbCDbDCbCAGGDbCABAGFAbCAGG	F-G-A-b-C-D
5.	Večeraju sto jovčara	Bicevski, 1976, 2	FGGAbAGFAAAbCbAGGFbAGGG	F-G-A-b-C
6.	Se sobrale ovčarite	Bicevski, 1976, 2a	FFGGFGAbAAGFCbAbAGFGAbAAG	F-G-A-b-C
7.	Večerale sto jovčara	Bicevski, 1976, 26	FFaGGaGFaGGGaCBCBaGaaBaGGaGGG	F-G-a-B-C
8.	E bre, Velko, čoban Velko	Bicevski, 1976, 3	BCDEFEDCDBCDBABAGGGGACBDBBAABABGGABABGG	G-A-B-C-D-E-F
9.	Sevdalino maloj mome	Veličkovska, 2002	FGGGBCDDDCBaaFGGGBCDDCCBaaGCCBgaBaGGGFaaaGCbGbaGGG FGGGGG	F-G-a-B-C-D
10.	Šar Dağından kalkar kazlar	Veličkovska, 2002	FGGGBCDDCCBaGCCBaaGGGaGaBaaGGGGGGGGCBaaGGGaaGaBaBaGGGGGGFGGGaBaGFGGGGGFGGGaBaGFGGGGG	F-G-a-B-C-D
11.	Devojčinja gugučinja	Smičkov, in MM19 ¹ , 1962	bbAAGGCCCCbbAAGCCbbAAGGCCCCbbAAG	G-A-b-C
12.	Devojčinja gugučinja ²	Gavazov, MM19 at Veličkovska, 1986	bACGGCCCDcbACGGCCbACGGCCDCbACGG	G-A-b-C-D
13.	Devojčinja, gugučinja	Ćorĝević, at Veličkovska, 1986	bCbabGCCCCbCbabaCCbCbabGaaaCbCbabG	G-a-b-C
14.	Devojčinja, gugučinja	Hristov, at Veličkovska, 1986	bCbaggCCCCbCbaggCCbCbaggGaaaCbCbaggGG	G-a-b-C
15.	Devojčinja, gugučinja	Vasiljević, at Veličkovska, 1986	bAbCAGGGCCCCbAbCAGGCCbAbCAGAAAbAbCAGG	G-A-b-C
16.	Devojčinja, gugučinja	Vasiljević, 1953	bAbCAGCCCCbAbCAGGCCbAbCAGAAAbAbCAGG	G-A-b-C

¹ MM19 is an abbreviation of *Macedonian melographers from the end of the 19th century*, from the following publication reference: Firfov, Živko; Simonovski, Metodija and Pajtondžiev, Gančo (Eds.). (1962). *Makedonskite melografi od krajot na XIX vek (Macedonian melographers from the end of the 19th century)*. Skopje: Institut za folklor, odel za narodna muzika i koreografija.

² The sign of repetition is included when creating the letterization of the melodic line in this song.

17.	Momičinja, gugutčinja ³	Žeželj-Kaličanin, 1951	1.bbaGCCCCbbaGCCbbaGaaaCbbaG – melody from the 3 rd scale degree 2.BBAGCCCCBBGGCCBBAGAAACBBAG – melody from the root of the scale	1. G-a-b-C 2. G-A-B-C
18.	Devojčinja, gugutčinja	Hadžimanov, 1953	bbaGCCCCbbaGCCbbaGaaaCbb aG	G-a-b-C
19.	Devojčinja, gugutčinja	Firfov, 1953, No. 4	bbaGGCCCCbbGabCCbbaGGaaa CbbaGG	G-a-b-C
20.	Devojčinja, gugutčinja ⁴	Firfov, 1953, No. 57	eeeeFeDCCCbCDDCbCCDbCba GaGabbCbCCDbCbaGaGG	G-a-b-C-D-e-F
21.	Devojčinja, gugutčinja	Karakaš, 1995	bbaGGCCCCbbGabCCbbaGGaaa CbbaGG	G-a-b-C
22.	Devojčinja, guguvčinja	Janevska, 2024	bAbCAGGGCCCCbAbCAGGCCb AbCAGGGAAACbAbCAGGGG	G-A-b-C
23.	Song from Bituše ⁵ , Z 14, 15	(Ziegler in MF ⁶ XV, 29-30, 1982)	bAbAGFGAbAbAGAGGGAbAbA GGG	F-G-A-b
24.	Song from Bituše, Z 11 / Dž 5	(Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)	GGFbAbAGFbAGGGbAGFbAbA GFGGG	F-G-A-b
25.	Song from Bituše, Z 23	(Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)	GAbAbAbAGAGGFGAbAbbAGF GGG	F-G-A-b
26.	Song from Bituše, Z 19-22 / Dž 7	(Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)	GAbAbAGFGbbAbAGFGFGbAb AGFAGGG	F-G-A-b
27.	Song from Bituše, Z 24 / Dž 4	(Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)	FGGFbAbAGAGGGFGGFbAbAG AGGG	F-G-A-b
28.	Song from Bituše, Dž 1	(Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)	GFbAGFGGGFbAGFGGGAbbAG FG	F-G-A-b
29.	Kinisale mii, Biljaro, 1	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	GFbAGFGGGFbAGFGGGAbbA GFG	F-G-A-b
30.	Perunike ubava devojkjo, 2	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	GFbAbAFGFFbAGAAAGFGFbaG FGaGFG	F-G-a-A-b
31.	Zajde me sonce, 3	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	GFbAGFGGGFbAGFGDGGAbb AAGFGG	F-G-A-b-D
32.	Daj more Ćurĝe, 4 ⁷	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	FGFFbAbAGFGGGFFGFbAbAG FAGG	E ¹ -F-G-[a]-A-b
33.	Slagaj biljke, jod planina, 5	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	FGGFbAbAGFbGFbAGGGGGGF bAFGFbAGFGGG	F-G-A-b

³ Because this example is harmonized, two possible melodic lines have been letterized, those of the tonic and of the third degree of the scale. The letterization from the third degree has been transposed to the standardized G tonic, and this melodic line was chosen for the analysis in this study.

⁴ The sign of repetition is ignored when creating the letterization of the melodic line in this song.

⁵ Bituše is a village in Macedonia, from the Mijak Region in the far west of the country.

⁶ This is an abbreviation from the title of the journal *Makedonski folklor* (MF) [*Macedonian folklore*].

⁷ The music ornaments were ignored during the notating of the melody (as was the standard for all melodies). It's important to note that incorporating ornaments will alter the tone sequence. The pink letters were derived from the ornaments, but in this situation, they have not been included in the letterization.

34.	Ne beri bilki, Rado nevesto, 6	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	FbbGGFGFbGGGAbbGGGFbGG GFbGGGAbbGG	F-G-A-b
35.	Koga na čas, goro, se promeni, 7	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	FGFbAGAbAGFaGGFGaGabaGF GbaGFGaGFG	F-G-a-A-b
36.	Livadana zelenejet, 8, Zieg. 7	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	FFGFbAGAGFGGGFbAAGFAGG G	F-G-A-b
37.	Čija lelka na nišalka, 9	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	GGFbAGFGGFbAGFGGGFbAFG bAGFGG	F-G-A-b
38.	Nišalo se maloju mome, 10	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	ACCCAbbAGFGFFGAbAACCCA bAGFbGAbAGG	F-G-A-b-C
39.	Od Dobje Ljube vikaše, 11	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	bACbAGAFGCbAbAGFGGAbAb AAGFbAAGGAFGG	F-G-A-b-C
40.	Oj dodole, mili bože, 12	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	bAFGbAFG	F-G-A-b
41.	Oj dodole, mili bože, 13	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	bAAGAbAAG	G-A-b
42.	Dai, bože, džd, 14	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	bAGGGCCbAAGGGG	G-A-b-C
43.	Dai, bože, džd, 15	(Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)	BAAGGCBAAGG	G-A-B-C
44.	Potfatila Šar Planina	L'žev in MM19, 1962	bCbAAGGGACCbAbAGAbDCbA bAGGGACCbAbAAGG	G-A-b-C-D
45.	Padna, panda Šar planina	Konev in MM19, 1962	FFGGFbAFAbbAGGFbAGFAbbA GAbbAFG	F-G-A-b
46.	Rasturi se Šar Planina	Češmedžiev, 2017 (collected ~1949)	bAbGGGCCCCCbAGAbCCbAbG GGFFFbbAbGGG	F-G-A-b-C-D
47.	Se navali Šar Planina	Vasiljević, 1953	bAbCbGGCCCbDCbAbCAGGCCb AbCAGGAAACbAbCAGG	G-A-b-C-D
48.	Padnala mi Šar Planina	Vasiljević, 1953	bAbAAGGGGCCCbAbAAGGGG AAACbAbAAGGGGGG	G-A-b-C
49.	Rasturi se Šar planina	Hadžimanov, 1964	bbaGGCCCCbbaGCCbbaGGaaaC bbaGG	G-a-b-C
50.	Raspukala se Šar Planina ⁸	Dimčevski, 1986	1.bbaGGCCCCbbaGCCbbaGGaa aCbbaGG – the highest melodic line (from the 3 rd scale degree) 2.BBAGCCCCBBAGCBAGBBA GGAAACBBAGG – melody from the root of the scale	1. G-a-b-C 2. G-A-B-C
51.	Raspukala Šar Planina ⁹	Badeva, 2012	1.bbaGGCCCCbbaGCCbbaGGG aaaCbbaGGG – the highest melodic line (from the 3 rd degree)	1. G-a-b-C

⁸ The same procedure was used to create the letterization of this song, which is also harmonized like No. 17. The third degree letterization, which has also been adapted to the standardized G tonic, has been chosen for the analysis. The instrumental part at the beginning of the song is ignored.

⁹ In this example, the two melodic lines that are letterized are from the root of the scale and from the 3rd degree of the scale, such as the previous examples (No. 17 and No. 50). Both melodic lines are transposed to G finalis in their letterization, and also the third degree letterization has been chosen for analysis in this paper.

			2.BBAGGGCCCCBBAGCCBBAG GGAAACBBAGGG – melody from the root of the scale	2. G-A-B-C
52.	Potpadnala Šar Planina	Janevska, 2024	bAFGGGCCCCbAFGGCCbAbCA GGGGFFAAAbAbCAGGGGG	F-G-A-b-C
53.	Sobori se Šar planina	Stoin 1928, 1 at Tončeva, 2021	CCCbDCCbbAGAbbAGFGFGAbb bGGFeFDCCbbAGAbbbAAGGG G	G-A-b-C-D-e- F-G
54.	Poklopila se Šar planina	Stoin 1928, 2, at Tončeva, 2021	BCBaGGCCCCDCBCDDDBCbaG GCCCCBCbaGGFGaBCBaGG	F-G-a-B-C-D
55.	Padnala je Šar planina	Stoin 1928, 3, at Tončeva, 2021	bAAAGGGCCCCCbAGAbbbCAb bAGGGFbAbCbCAGGG	F-G-A-b-C-D
56.	Razturi se Šar Planina	Crnušanov, 1989	bbaGGCCCCbbGabCCbbbaGGaa aaCbbaGG	G-a-b-C
57.	Potpanala Šar planina	Tončeva 2016 at Tončeva, 2021	bACAGGGGCCCCbAGFGAbCCb ACAGGGGAAACbbACAGGGG	F-G-A-b-C
58.	Pusta da e Šar Planina	Stoin, 1930	CBBaaGGGGDDDDCbBaaGaBBB DCCCDbaGaaCBaaaGGGGFaaa CBaaaGGGG	F-G-a-B-C-D
59.	Zapali se Šar Planina	Janković, 1939	bbCAFCCCCbCbAbCAGGACCbA bCAFGAACbAbCAG	F-G-A-b-C
60.	Se jobori Šar Planina	Bicevski, 2001	bAbAGGGFDDDCbDCDCbCD CCAbAbAGGGAACDCbAbAGGG	F-G-A-b-C-D

Appendix 2. Transcriptions of the songs for the paper

1. Вси овчари вечераја [Vsi ovčari večeraja] (Bicevski, 1976, 1)

BR. 1
ВСИ ОВЧАРИ ВЕЧЕРАЈА
Прилеп М.М. XIX
бр. 163

Вси ов- ча- ри, ле- ле, ве- че - ра - ја,
Же- лен Пе - јо, не ве - че - ра.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Вси овчари вечераја'. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The second staff has a bass clef and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The title 'ВСИ ОВЧАРИ ВЕЧЕРАЈА' is centered at the top, with 'BR. 1' above it. On the right side, there is a stamp that reads 'Прилеп М.М. XIX бр. 163'.

2. Ми јистерал Пејо на планина [Mi jisteral Pejo na planina] (Bicevski, 1976, 1a)

BR. 1^a
МИ ЈИСТЕРАЛ ПЕЈО НА ПЛАНИНА
Скопјеско

сва: $\frac{6}{8} = 96$

ми јис-те - рал Пе - јо на пла - ни - на,
ми јис-те - рал ста - до на пла - ни - на.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Ми јистерал Пејо на планина'. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The second staff has a bass clef and a 6/8 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The title 'МИ ЈИСТЕРАЛ ПЕЈО НА ПЛАНИНА' is centered at the top, with 'BR. 1^a' above it and 'Скопјеско' on the right. On the left side, there is a stamp that reads 'сва: $\frac{6}{8} = 96$ '.

3. Вечерале сто јовчари [Večerale sto jovčari] (Bicevski, 1976, 16)

BR. 16
ВЕЧЕРАЛЕ СТО ЈОВЧАРИ
Демирхисарско

сва: $\frac{6}{8} = 440$

Ај - де, ве - че - ра - ле, цај - нум, сто јов - ча - ри,
ве - че - ра - ле сто јов - ча - ри, а - ман,
Жел - ник пе - јо
жел-ник пе - јо не ве - че - ра,

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Вечерале сто јовчари'. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The second staff has a bass clef and a 6/8 time signature. The third and fourth staves have a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The title 'ВЕЧЕРАЛЕ СТО ЈОВЧАРИ' is centered at the top, with 'BR. 16' above it and 'Демирхисарско' on the right. On the left side, there is a stamp that reads 'сва: $\frac{6}{8} = 440$ '.

4. Вечерале сто овчари [Večerale sto ovčari] (Bicevski, 1976, 1в)

BR.1^B
Вечерале сто овчари
Демирхисарско

ска: $\text{♩} = 100$

ве - че - ра - ле сто ов - ча - ри,
Чел-ник Не - јо не ве - че - ра.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for the song 'Вечерале сто овчари'. It features two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is marked as 'ска: ♩ = 100'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The title 'Вечерале сто овчари' and the location 'Демирхисарско' are at the top. The number 'BR.1^B' is also present.

5. Вечерају сто јовчара [Večeraју sto jovčara] (Bicevski, 1976, 2)

BR.2
ВЕЧЕРАЈУ СТО ЈОВЧАРА
Штип

ска: $\text{♩} = 100$

ве - че - ра - ју сто јов - ча - ра,
ве - че - ра - ју, ле - ле, сто јов - ча - ра,

Detailed description: This is a musical score for the song 'Вечерају сто јовчара'. It features two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is marked as 'ска: ♩ = 100'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The title 'ВЕЧЕРАЈУ СТО ЈОВЧАРА' and the location 'Штип' are at the top. The number 'BR.2' is also present.

6. Се собрале овчарите [Se sobrale ovčarite] (Bicevski, 1976, 2a)

СЕ СОБРАЛЕ ОВЧАРИТЕ
Демирхисарско

ска: $\text{♩} = 84$

Се со - бра - ле ов - ча - ри - те,
се со - бра - ле за ле - че - ра.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for the song 'Се собрале овчарите'. It features two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is marked as 'ска: ♩ = 84'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The title 'СЕ СОБРАЛЕ ОВЧАРИТЕ' and the location 'Демирхисарско' are at the top.

7. Вечерале сто јовчара [Večerale sto jovčara] (Bicevski, 1976, 26)

БР. 2⁶

сва: 130 ВЕЧЕРАЛЕ СТО ОВЧАРИ Охридско

Музички нотни запис за песму 'Вечерале сто јовчара'. Нотни запис је на два реда. Први ред садржи мелодичку линију и текст 'Ве-че-ра-ле сто јов-ча-ри,'. Други ред садржи мелодичку линију и текст 'сто јов-че-ри сто ко-за-ри.'.

Ве-че-ра-ле сто јов-ча-ри,
сто јов-че-ри сто ко-за-ри.

8. Е бре, Велко, чобан Велко [E bre, Velko, čoban Velko] (Bicevski, 1976, 3)

БР. 3

сва: 78V Е БРЕ ВЕЛКО ЧОБАН ВЕЛКО Струмичко

Музички нотни запис за песму 'Е бре, Велко, чобан Велко'. Нотни запис је на два реда. Први ред садржи мелодичку линију и текст 'Е бре Вел-ко чо-бан Вел-ко,'. Други ред садржи мелодичку линију и текст 'је си вр-зи, чо-бан Вел-ко, ти це-те-те, ко по-ми-нет, чо-бан Вел-ко, си ро-мо-си.'

Е бре Вел-ко чо-бан Вел-ко,
је си вр-зи, чо-бан Вел-ко, ти це-те-те,
ко по-ми-нет, чо-бан Вел-ко, си ро-мо-си.

9. Севдалино малој моме [Sevdalino maloј моме] (Veličkovska, 2002)

♩ = 224

Музички нотни запис за песму 'Севдалино малој моме'. Нотни запис је на три реда. Први ред садржи мелодичку линију и текст 'Сев-да-ли-но ма-лој мо-ме, Сев-де, Сев-да-ли-но'. Други ред садржи мелодичку линију и текст 'ма-лој мо-ме, а што си се сев-ди-'. Трећи ред садржи мелодичку линију и текст 'са-ло, а што си се сев-ди-са-ло.'

Сев-да-ли-но ма-лој мо-ме, Сев-де, Сев-да-ли-но
ма-лој мо-ме, а што си се сев-ди-
са-ло, а што си се сев-ди-са-ло.

10. Šar Dağından kalkar kazlar (Veličkowska, 2002)

338

Daire

8

10

16

22

22

Şar Da-ğın-dan kal - kar kaz - lar al ya - nak - lı
 be - yaz kız - lar al ya-nak - lı be - yaz kız - lar
 eđ le se-mem, al - da na - mam beş bu yer-ler -
 de du - ra - mam Var-đar o - va - sı, Var-đar o - va -
 sı ka - zı - na - me - dum, ra - ki ya - ra - sı.

11. Девојчиња гугучиња [Devojčinja gugučinja] (Smičkov in MM19, 1962)

328

с''

Де - вој - чи - ња, де - вој - чи - ња гу - гу - чи -
 ња, ле-ле, де - вој - чи - ња, де-вој-чи-ња гу - гу - чи - ња.

Девојчиња гугучиња, (леле),
 пат чинете да поминам, (ајде),
 ништо зијан не ви чинам, (леле),
 раце ми се во џебои, (ајде),
 џебој ми се полни рамни, (леле),
 полни рамни леблебии, (ајде),
 леблебии, суво грозје, (леле).

12. Девојчиња гугучиња [Devojčinja gugučinja] (Gavazov, MM19 at Veličkovska, 1986)

67



Де - вој - чи - ња, де - вој - чи - ња гу - гу - чи - ња, ле - ле, ња.

Девојчиња гугучиња,
пат чинете да поминам,
да поминам, да разминам
међу двете убавите;
нишчо завал не ви чинам.
Раце ми се ју цебои,
цебои ми се полни рамни,
полни рамни леблебии,
леблебии, суво грозје.

Од Прилеп.

13. Девојчиња, гугутчиња [Devojčinja, gugutčinja] (Gorđević at Veličkovska, 1986)

II. Мелографирал В. Горђевић



Де - вој - чи - ња, де - вој - чи - ња гу - гут - чи - ња, кај - кај,



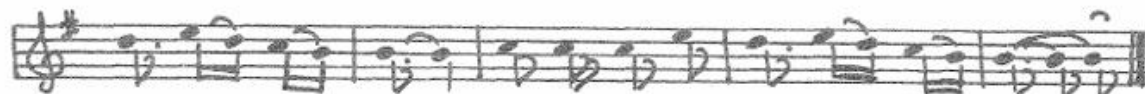
де - вој - чи - ња, де - вој - чи - ња гу - гут - чи - ња.

14. Девојчиња, гугутчиња [Devojčinja, gugutčinja] (Hristov at Veličkovska, 1986)

III. Мелографирал Д. Христов



Де - вој - чи - ња, де - вој - чи - ња гу - гут - чи - ња, ај - де,



де - вој - чи - ња, де - вој - чи - ња гу - гут - чи - ња.

15. Девојчиња, гугувчиња [Devojčinja, guguvčinja] (Vasiljević at Veličkovska, 1986)

IV. Мелографирал М. Васиљевић

Де-вој-чи-ња, де-вој-чи-ња гу-губ-чи-ња, ај-де,
 де-вој-чи-ња, де-вој-чиња гу-губ-чи-ња.

16. Девојчиња, гугувчиња [Devojčinja, guguvčinja] (Vasiljević, 1953)

$\text{♩} = 280 (\text{♩} = 10)$ **218** **КИЧЕВО**

ДЕ - ВОЈ - ЧИ - ЊА, ДЕ - ВОЈ - ЧИ - ЊА
 ГУ - ГУВ - ЧИ - ЊА, АЈ - ДЕ, ДЕ - ВОЈ - ЧИ - ЊА,
 ДЕ - ВОЈ - ЧИ - ЊА, ГУ - ГУВ - ЧИ - ЊА.

17. Момичиња, гугучиња [Momičinja, gugučinja] (Kaličanin, 1951)

Allegro moderato

Мо-ми-чи-ња мо-ми-чи-ња гу-гу-чи-

Мо-ми-чи-ња

ња хај, хај мо-ми-чи-ња мо-ми-чи-ња гу-гу-чи-ња

Мо-ми-чи-ња

18. Девојчиња, гугутчиња [Devojčinja, gugutčinja] (Hadži-Manov, 1953)

ДЕВОЈЧИЊА ГУГУТЧИЊА

Брзо

Де - вој - чи - ња , де - вој - чи - ња гу - гут - чи - ња , а - ман ,

ПАТ ПРА - ве - те , ПАТ ПРА - ве - те ДА ПО - МИ - НАМ .

Девојчиња,
 Девојчиња, гугутчиња, аман,
 Пат правете,
 Пат правете да поминам.

Ништо лошо
 Ништо лошо не ви правам, аман,
 Раце ми се,
 Раце ми се во џебови.

~ 80 ~

19. Девојчиња, гугутчиња [Devojčinja, gugutčinja] (Firfov, 1953, No. 4)

4

Г. ВЕЛЕС

Де-вој-чи - ња, де-вој-чи-ња гу-гут-чи - ња, хај, хај

де-вој-чи - ња, де-вој-чи-ња гу-гут-чи - ња

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. $\frac{A}{4+8+2}$ $\frac{A^v}{4+8}$

Девојчиња, девојчиња гугутчиња, хај, хај,
 пат правете, пат правете да поминам,
 да поминам, да поминам, да заминам
 меѓу двете, меѓу двете најубавите.

20. Девојчиња, гугучиња [Devojčinja, gugučinja] (Firfov, 1953, No. 57)

57

МАРИОВО

Девој-чи - ња гу - гу - чи - ња,

ка-ко сте ми на - ре - де - ни, ај - де,

та - ка сте ми на рет ми - ни.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. $\frac{A}{8+2}$ $\frac{B}{8}$

Девојчиња момчиња,
 како сте ми наредени, ајде,
 како сте ми наредени

21. Девојчиња, гугутчиња [Devojčinja, gugutčinja] (Karaklaš, 1995)

297. ДЕВОЈЧИЊА, ГУГУТЧИЊА

♩ = 260

Де - вој - чи - ња де - вој - чи - ња гу - гут - чи - ња хај, хај,
 де - вој - чи - ња де - вој - чи - ња гу - гут - чи - ња.

Девојчиња, девојчиња, гугутчиња, хај, хај,
 пат правете, пат правете да поминам,
 да поминам, да поминам, да заминам
 меѓу двете, меѓу двете најубавите.
 Ништо лошо, ништо лошо не ви правам,
 раце ми се, раце ми се во цебови,

цебој ми се, цебој ми се п'лни рамни,
 п'лни рамни, рамни леблебија,
 негде годер, негде годер суво грозје,
 леблебија, леблебија за девојчиња,
 суво грозје, суво грозје за дечиња.

Каракаш. Боанко. Антологија на македонски народни песни. Скопје: Дета. 1995

22. Девојчиња, гугувчиња [Devojčinja, guguvčinja] (Janevska, 2024)

76. Девојчиња гугувчиња

♩ = 308

Де - вој - чи - ња де-вој-чи-ња гу - гув - чи - ња хај хај
 де - вој - чи - ња де-вој-чи-ња гу - гув - чи - ња.

Девојчиња, девојчиња гугувчиња, хај, хај,
 Девојчиња, девојчиња гугувчиња.

Пушчите ме, пушчите ме да помина, хај, хај.
 Нишчо лошо, нишчо лошо не ви чина, хај, хај.
 Роце ми се, роце ми се во цебои, хај, хај.
 Цебој ми се, цебој ми се полни равни, хај, хај.
 Полни равни, полни равни с' леблебие, хај, хај.
 Негде годе, негде годе суво грозје, хај, хај.
 А из ними, а из ними – шарен шеќер, хај, хај.

Тирана 24.10.2014 година. Пее Митре Стојан Шутку, Голо Брдо. Снимила, дешифрирала и мелографираа:
 Андријана Јаневска. Лирска песна. Ороводна. Се пее на собор.

23. Song from Bituše, Z 14, 15 (Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)

Comparative melody table of Bituš Folk songs of the village Bituše

1. In Susanne Ziegler
Westberlin

Z 14, 15

Textform: A (a+b)
Melos: 10 (5+5) → (7+4)

24. Song from Bituše, Z 11 / Dž 5 (Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)

Z 11 / Dž 5

Textform: A (a+R) / A (a+R)
Melos: 10 (5+5) / 10 (5+5)

25. Song from Bituše, Z 23 (Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)

Z 23

Textform: A (a+b)
Melos: 10 (5+5) → (3+7)

26. Song from Bituše, Z 19-22 / Dž 7 (Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)

Z 19, 20, 21, 22 / Dž 7

Textform: A (a+b) → A (a+b+a)
Melos: 10 (5+5) → 15 (5+5+5)

27. Song from Bituše, Z 24 / Dž 4 (Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)

Z 24 / Dž 4

Textform: A (a+b) → A (a+b)

28. Song from Bituše, Dž 1 (Ziegler in MF XV, 29-30, 1982)

Dž 1

Textform: A (a+b) → A (a+b)

29. Кинисале ми, Билјаро, 1 [Kinisale mi, Biljaro, 1] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

Rubato

Ки - ни - се - ле ми, Бил - ја - ро

1

мо - ме, (и) двес - те де - вој - ка

Кинисале ми, Билјаро моме,
двесте девојки,
двесте девојки, Билјаро моме,
триста невести.
Една девојка, Билјаро моме,
билје не брала,

билје не брала, Билјаро моме,
сув пелин брала.
— Не гази цвеќе, Стале јовчаре,
токо бери го!
— Да го бера, Цвето девојко,
кој ка го носет!

30. Перунике убава, 2 [Perunike ubava, 2] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

Rubato

(и!) Пе - ру - ни - ке, у - ба - ва

2

де - вој - ко, пе - ру - ни - ке

Перунике, убава девојко,
твко пејеш — далеку се чујет,
чул те јовчар с'девета планина,
слегол долу во рамни ливаде,
си оставил стадо небројано;
чул терзија шарена олаја,
слегол долу во рамни ливаде,
слегол долу—тебе да послуша,
си јоставил јелек недошнен.

31. Зајде ме сонце, 3 [Zajde me sonce, 3] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

3

(и) Зај - де ме сон - це, мр - ле ле
 мај - ко, (и) во врв пле - ни - на

Зајде ме сонце, *мале ле мајко,*
 по врв планина,
 едно ме зајде —
 друго м'огреја:
 тује планина,
 јовчар со јовци,
 и тој ми рече:
 — Добор ти вечер!
 И тогај се сетив —
 дали је вечер.
 Стигнав си с'коња
 дома да ида.

32. Дај море, Ѓурѓе, 4 [Daj more, Ğurĝe, 4] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

ритмичка усогласеност со мелоритамот на песната.

4

(и) Дај мр - ре гур - ѓе, млад гур - фе,
 Дај, мо - ре гур - фе, млад гур - фе

— Дај, море Ѓурѓе, млад Ѓурѓе,
 да кој ти рече да доеш?
 — Мене ми рече Велигден,
 Велигден сосве Ѓурѓовден —
 со шума и трева пред него,
 со солунците по него.
 Путило ми је, развило —
 све Солун града покрило.

33. Слагај биљке, јод планина, 5 [Slogaj biljke, jod planina, 5] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

♩ = 216

Сла - гај, биа - ке, јод сла - чи - на.

Бид - ја - ро, и Бид - ја - ро Бид - ја - ро

— Слагај, биљке, јод планина, *Билјаро, Билјаро, Билјаро,*
 те викаше свекрва ти, Билјаро,
 Билјаро, Билјаро,
 ти плачеше мошко дете, Билјаро,
 Билјаро, Билјаро,

— Кажете је на свекрва, Билјаро,
 Билјаро, Билјаро,
 ко ке вејет силен ветор, Билјаро,
 Билјаро, Билјаро,
 да го качет на оревог, Билјаро,
 Билјаро, Билјаро,
 да се љуџат мошко дете, Билјаро,
 Билјаро, Билјаро,

34. Не бери билки, Радо невесто, 6 [Ne beri bilki, Rado nevesto, 6] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

(ш) Не бе - ри бил - ки, Ра - до не - вес - то.

(ш) под зелен ја - вор, но ја - вор ч - мот

245

Ра - до не - вес - то, (ш) на - до сло - вој - чо

Не бери билки, *Радо невесто,*
 под зелен јавор,
 на јавор имат
 пиле славејче —
 песна ти пејет:
 „Јоди си дома,

35. Кога на час, горо, се промени, 7 [Koga na čas, goro, se promeni, 7] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

Rubato

(x) Ко - на час, го - ро,

се про - ме - е - ни, ко - га ко - го

— Кога на час, горо, се промени,
кога на час со цветови,
со цветови, горо, со цвеќиња?
— Од сонце је цвеќе распутено,
од ветор је гора разлистана,
од роса је трава порастена.

36. Ливадана зеленејет [Livadana zelenejet], Z 7, Dž 8 (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

Dž 8

Violon A (a-b) → A (a-b-a)
Viola B (c-d) → B (c-d-e)

37. Чија лелка на нишалка, 9 [Čija lelka na nišalka, 9] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

c c a ♩ = 100

Чи - ја зел - ка че - ни - ка - ка,

Гур - ге ле, Гур - ге ле, Гур - ге - ле

— Чија лелка на нишалка, Гурге леј, Гурге ле, Гурге ле?
— Чија да је — таткова је.
— Каде да је одметнеме?
— У Бишковци — рамни дворје,
а Трајчеви — бела риза,
Трајчеице — бел каленкар,
а Јовчева — гуљ невеста.

38. Нишало се малој моме, 10 [Nišalo se maloј моме, 10] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

$\text{♩} = 80$

Ни - ша - ле се ма - лој мо - ме, Ѓур - ге ле мој.

10

ке - де да го пре - мет - не - ме. Ѓур - ге ле мој

— Нишало се малој моме, Ѓурге ле мој,
коде да го одметнеме?
— Во Битуше — лепо село, 2
лепо село — рамни двори. 2

39. Од Добје Љубе викаше, 11 [Od Dobje Ljube vikaše] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

Rubato ($\text{♩} = 120$)

Од Доб-је лу - бе ња - ка - ше, ле - ле:

11

- Крот - кум кв - еј - ге доа за - ма

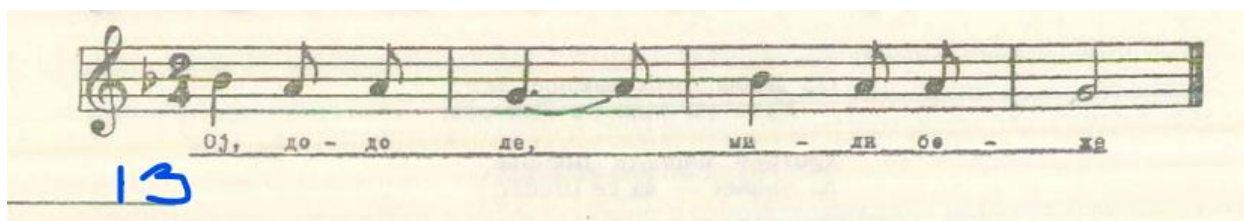
Од Добје Љубе викаше, леле:
— Кроткум нишајте Достана,
кроткум нишајте Достана,
да паднет — ка се отепат.
Ил' је јозливо јожето,
ил' је шуплива ветката,
ил' је шуплива ветката
ил' је камливо местото.

40. Ој додоле, мили боже, 12 [Oј dodole, mili bože, 12] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)

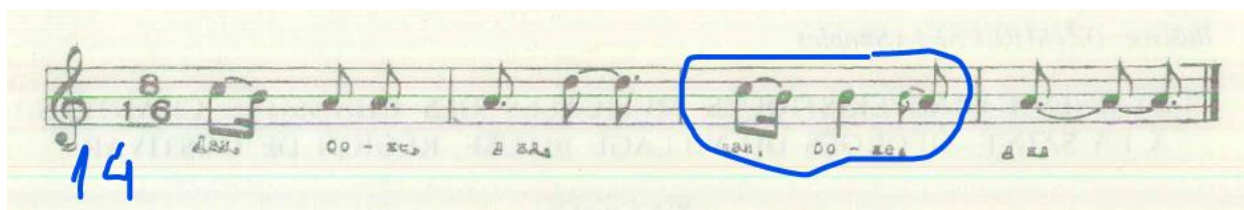
Ој - до - до - ле, ми - ли бо - же

12

41. Ој додоле, мили боже, 13 [Oj dodole, mili bože] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)



42. Даи, боже, джд, 14 [Dai, bože, džd, 14] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)



43. Даи, боже, джд, 15 [Dai, bože, džd, 15] (Džimrevski in MF VI 12, 1973)



44. Потфатила Шар Планина [Potfatila Šar Planina] (L'žev in MM19, 1962)



Потфатила Шар Планина
 три јовчари, Шар Планина.
 Пр'вњот јовчар му се моле:
 — Пушчи мене, Шар Планино,
 имам кој мен да ме жаља,
 жена имам да ме жаља.
 Јодговори Шар Планина:
 — Жена жаља три месеци.

45. Падна, падна Шар планина [Padna, panda Šar planina] (Konev in MM19, 1962)

218

БАВНО

с'' Пад-на, пад-на — Шар Пла - ни - на, пад - на, пад - на

Шар Пла - ни - на, де мо - ме де, ај - ле ду - шо, бре!

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature (C). The melody starts on a C-clef (soprano clef) with a note on C5. The lyrics are written below the notes. The second staff continues the melody with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics continue below. There are some musical markings like 'с'' and '3' above notes.

Падна, падна Шар Планина,
та притисна три овчара.
Први овчар бога моли:
— Дигни се, дигни, Шар Планино,
имам мајка, ќе ме жали!
Втори овчар бога моли:
— Имам сестра, ќе ме жали.
Трети овчар бога моли:
— Имам жена, ќе ме жали.
Мајка жали дур' довека,
сестра жали до негдека,
жена жали до пладнина.

46. Растури се Шар Планина [Rasturi se Šar Planina] (Češmedžiev, 1949)

143. РАСТУРИ СЕ ШАР ПЛАНИНА

♩ = 152

Рас - ту - ри - се, рас - ту - ри се

Шар пла - ни - на, ај - ле, рас - ту - ри - се,

рас - ту - ри се Шар - пла - ни - на.

1. Растури се, растури се, Шар Планина,
ајде, растури се, растури се, Шар Планина.
2. Ги потфати (2) три овчари,
3. први овчар и се моли:
4. — Пушти мене, Шар Планино!

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of four staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature (C). The tempo marking is '♩ = 152'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff continues the melody. There are some musical markings like '4' and '8' above notes.

47. Се навали Шар Планина [Se navali Šar Planina] (Vasiljević, 1953)

$\text{♩} = 208$ 146^a КичЕВО

СЕ НА - ВА - ЛИ, СЕ НА - ВА - ЛИ

ШАР ПЛЯ - НИ - НА, ЯЗ - ДЕ, СЕ НА - ВА -

ЛИ, СЕ НА - ВА - ЛИ ШАР ПЛЯ - НИ - НА

48. Паднала ми Шар Планина [Padnala mi Šar Planina] (Vasiljević, 1953)

$\text{♩} = 200$ 146^b ЛАЗАРОПОЉЕ

ПА - ДНА - ЛЯ МИ,

ПА - ДНА - ЛЯ МИ ШАР ПЛЯ - НИ - НА,

ПАД - НА - ЛЯ МИ ШАР ПЛЯ - НИ - НА,

49. Растури се Шар планина [Rasturi se Šar planina] (Hadžimanov, 1964)

РАСТУРИ СЕ ШАР ПЛАНИНА

Брзо

Рас - ту - ри се. рас-ту-ри се Шар пла-ни-на. ајде, ми пот-фа-
на ми пот-фа-на три ов-ча - ра.

50. Распукала Шар Планина [Raspukala Šar Planina] (Dimčevski, 1986)

РАСПУКАЛА ШАР ПЛАНИНА

moderato ♩ = 224

Рас-пу-ка - ла, рас-пу-ка-ла Шар пла-ни - на, ај - де,
рас-пу-ка-ла,
рас-пу-ка - ла, рас-пу-ка-ла Шар пла-ни - на.

I
Распукала, распукала Шар Планина, ајде
распукала, распукала Шар Планина.
Ми поклопи, ми поклопи три овчара, ајде
ми поклопи, ми поклопи три овчара.

II
Први овчар, први овчар њ се моли, ајде
пушти мене, пушти мене Шар Планино.
Имам жена, имам жена што ме жали, ајде
имам жена, имам жена што ме жали.

III
Втори овчар, втори овчар њ се моли, ајде
пушти мене, пушти мене Шар Планино.
Имам сестра, имам сестра што ме жали, ајде
имам сестра што ме жали.

IV
Трети овчар трети овчар њ се моли, ајде
пушти мене, пушти мене Шар Планино.
Имам мајка, имам мајка што ме жали, ајде
имам мајка што ме жали.

V
Жена жали, жена жали, ден до пладне, ајде
сестра жали, сестра жали дур' е дома.
Мајка жали, мајка жали дур' до гроба, ајде
мајка жали, мајка жали дво' до гроба.

51. Распукала Шар Планина [Raspukala Šar Planina] (Badeva, 2012)

“Распукала Шар планина“

Рас - пу - ка - ла рас - пу - ка - ла Шар пла - ни - на ај - де
6
рас - пу - ка - ла рас - пу - ка - ла Шар пла - ни - на

Распукала, распукала, Шар Планина, ајде
Распукала, распукала, Шар Планина,
Ми поклопи, ми поклопи три овчари, ајде
ми поклопи три овчари, ми поклопи три овчари

Први овчар, први овчар и се моли, ајде
пушти мене, пушти мене Шар Планино
имам жена, имам жена што ме жали, ајде
имам жена, имам жена што ме жали

Втори овчар, втори овчар и се моли,
пушти мене, пушти мене Шар Планино
имам сестра, имам сестра што ме жали, ајде

52. Потпаднала Шар Планина [Potpadnala Šar Planina] (Janevska, 2024)

61. Потпаднала Шар Планина

♩ = 280
Пот - пад - на - ла пот - пад - на - ла Шар Пла - ни - на хај хај
6
пот пад - на - ла пот - пад - на - ла Шар Пла - ни - на

Потпаднала, потпаднала Шар Планина, хај хај,
потпаднала, потпаднала Шар Планина.

53. Собори се Шар планина [Sobori se Šar planina] (Stoin 1928, 1, at Tončeva 2021)

Нотен пример 9

Това може да е основание за допускане за съществуването на различни регионални варианти на песента. Могат да се посочат примери и от Северозападна България, публикувани от В. Стоин – например „Собори се Шар планина” от с. Василовци, Ломско (Стоин 1928: 736, № 2770) в амбитус октава и в метрум 8/8.

М. М. ♩ = 320

Со- бѡ- ри се Шар плѡ- ни- не, дѣ й- гие, дѣ,

со- бѡ- ри се Шар плѡ- ни- на, ай- де мо- ме, де.

54. Поклопила Шар планина [Poklopila Šar planina] (Stoin 1928, 2, at Tončeva 2021)

Друг пример – „Поклопила Шар планина” от с. Долно Церовене, Ломско (Стоин 1928: 736, № 2769), е с хроматичен звукоред (който може да се разглежда като долния тетрахорд на макам хиджас) и в 5/8:

М. М. ♩ = 180

По - кло - пи - ла, по - кло - пи - ла Шар пла - ни -

на, по - кло - пи - ла, по - кло - пи - ла


Шар пла - ни - на, хай - де мо - ри, Шар пла - ни - на.

Нотен пример 11


Поклопила, поклопила Шар планина,
поклопила, поклопила Шар планина, хайде мори, Шар планина.

55. Паднала ѝе Шар планина [Padnala je Šar planina] (Stoin 1928, 3, at Tončeva 2021)


В Северозападна Българија В. Стоин записва и вариант, близък до утвѣрдилата се мелодија на песента (метрумът е 8-временен, а не 7-временен) – „Паднала ѝе Шар планина” от с. Средогрив, Белоградчишко (Стоин 1928: 735, № 2768)

М. М.  = 34

Па - дна - ла ѝе, па - дна - ла ѝе Шар пла - ни -



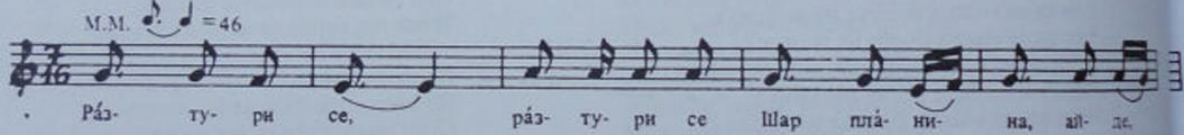
на, па - дна - ла ѝе, па - дна - ла ѝе



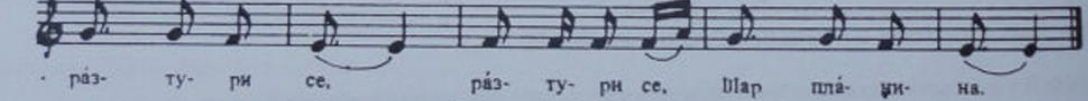
Шар пла - ни - на.

56. Разтури се Шар Планина [Razturi se Šar Planina] (Crnušanov, 1989)

678. РАЗТУРИ СЕ ШАР ПЛАНИНА

М. М.  = 46

Раз- ту- ри се, раз- ту- ри се Шар пла- ни- на, ай- де.



раз- ту- ри се, раз- ту- ри се, Шар пла- ни- на.

Разтури се¹ Шар планина, айде²,
 Ми подфати три овчари.
 Първи овчар ѝ се моли.³
 – Пуци мене, Шар планино,
 Имам жена, що ме жали!
 – Жена жали до гробища. –
 Втори овчар ѝ се моли:

– Пуци мене, Шар планино,
 Имам сестра, що ме жали!
 – Сестра жали, дур' да с'омажи. –
 Трети овчар ѝ се моли:
 – Пуци мене, Шар планино,
 Имам майка, що ме жали!
 – Майка жали дур' е жива.⁴

57. Потпанала Шар планина [Potpanala Šar planina] (Tončeva, 2016 [2021])
(Тончева 2016: 282–283, №115).

M. M. ♩ = 304

Пот - па - на - ла пот-па - на - ла Шар пла - ни -
на, ай ай, пот - фа - ти - ла пот-фа - ти - ла
три ов - ча - ри.

58. Пуста да е Шаръ Планина [Pusta da e Šar Planina] (Stoin, 1930)

Шаръ планина.
106.

Бързичко

Пу- ста да е, пу- ста да е Шаръ пла-ни- на,
хай- ле де, пус- та да е,
пус- та да е Шаръ пла-ни- на

Пуста да е 2) Шаръ планина,
Че притисна 2) деветъ стада,
Даветъ стада 2) съ три овчари.

59. Запали се Шар Планина [Zapalii se Šar Planina] (Janković, 1939)

86. Запали се Шар-Планина

Раштак
(Скопска Црна Гора)

М. М. ♩ = 120

За - па - ли се, за - па - ли се,
Шар Пла - ни - на, хај, хај, за - па - ли
се, за - па - ли се Шар - Пла - ни на.

Запали се, запали се Шар-Планина, хај, хај!
Ми подвати, ми подвати три овчара, хај, хај!
Три овчара, три овчара, триста овци, хај, хај!
Прв' се овчар, прв' се овчар, милно моли: хај, хај!
„Пусти мене, пусти мене, Шар-Планино, хај, хај!
Имам мајка, имам мајка, што ме жали!“ хај, хај!
Други овчар, други овчар милно моли: хај, хај!
„Пусти мене, пусти мене, Шар-Планино, хај, хај!
Имам сестра, имам сестра што ме жали!“ хај, хај!
Трећи овчар, трећи овчар милно моли: хај, хај!
„Пусти мене, пусти мене, Шар-Планино, хај, хај!
Имам љуба, имам љуба, што ме жали!“ хај, хај!
— „Љуба жали, љуба жали дан до пладне, хај, хај!
Сестра жали, сестра жали шес недели, хај, хај!
Мајка жали, мајка жали, дур до века!“ хај, хај!

Figure 2. Song No. 86, *Zapalii se Šar Planina* (Shar Mountain is on fire). Janković, Lj. and Janković, D. *Narodne igre*. [Folk Dances], III, Beograd. 1939, 286.

60. Се јобори Шар Планина [Se jobori Šar Planina] (Bicevski, 2001)

234.

сеа: ♩ = 184

Се је - бе - ри, се је - бе - ри
Шар Пла - ни - на, да - нам, се је - бе -
ри, се је - бе - ри Шар Пла - ни - на,

Се јобори Шар Планина,
ми потфати тројца брака,
тројца брака три јунаци.
Први вика: Пуштај мене,
пуштај мене пут да јодам.
Имам мајка да ме жали.
Мајка жали дур до века.
Други вика: Пуштај мене,

пуштај мене пут да одим,
имам сестра да ме жали,
сестра жали дур с' омужи.
Трећи вика: Пуштај мене,
пуштај мене пут да одим,
имам жена да ме жали,
жена жали ден до пладно.

Figure 3. Song No. 234. “Narodnata pesna na Goranite” (Folk song of the Gorani). Bicevski, Trpko (editor). 2001. *Macedonian Folk Creation. Folk Songs. Book 15*: 183. Skopje: Institute of Folklore “Marko Cepenkov”.

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Methodological Issues in Transnational Music Archive Research: The Case of Bulgarian Music Archives¹

ABSTRACT

Music archives emerged in the late 19th century with the development of sound recording technologies and have since faced a variety of challenges throughout their historical trajectory. From the establishment of the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv in 1899 and the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv in 1900 to the present day, nearly all music archives have struggled with numerous technical, political, and institutional problems. While early challenges centered on the preservation and storage of phonograph recordings, over time these were replaced by issues such as inadequate cataloging systems, lack of standardization, limited accessibility of archival materials, shortage of qualified personnel, unsuitable physical conditions for archival preservation, and difficulties in digitization processes.

This study examines methodological challenges within music archives, focusing on the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Bulgarian National Radio. It interrogates ethnomusicological research issues across key themes: access policies, cataloging systems, digitization, source reliability, and material preservation. Grounded in field experience, the research provides a spatial analysis of archival practices while investigating political barriers and the technical limitations of digital transformation. The findings suggest that, particularly in countries like Bulgaria, the methodological challenges faced by music archives are not solely technical in nature but are deeply intertwined with political, institutional, and cultural factors.

KEYWORDS

Bulgarian Turks

Music archive

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies

Bulgarian National Radio

Access to archives

¹ This article is based on data from the master's thesis prepared by Selin Sağiroğlu under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Abdullah Akat.

Introduction

The emergence and development of music archives have played a pivotal role in shaping the discipline of ethnomusicology. With the advent of sound recording technologies in the late 19th century, the establishment of the first music archives brought with it the idea of documenting and preserving traditional music from all over the world. In this context, music archives evolved from being mere storage spaces for audio recordings into institutional structures where cultural memory is preserved, research is conducted, and scholarly work is carried out.

As music archives developed into institutional entities, their function expanded beyond storage to encompass the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. Accordingly, music archives have taken on critical responsibilities such as the systematic cataloging, preservation, and accessibility of written and audio materials that constitute a society's musical memory. However, in fulfilling these responsibilities-particularly in cross-border and transnational contexts they continue to face a range of political, institutional, and technical challenges. Despite technological advancements and institutional efforts, music archives still encounter significant methodological issues today. Moreover, within ethnomusicology, the question of what constitutes a primary historical source remains an unresolved and debated issue.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the significance of music archives in ethnomusicological research has steadily increased. During this period, important initiatives were undertaken to support the development and standardization of music archives, particularly with the establishment of institutions such as the ICTMD (International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance), IASA (International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives), and SEM (Society for Ethnomusicology). There are differing perspectives regarding which types of materials historical written sources or early sound recordings are preferred in ethnomusicological research. However, it is first necessary to clarify what ethnomusicology is. On its official website, SEM defines ethnomusicology under three main pillars in the section titled "What is Ethnomusicology?" These are:

1. Approaching music from a global perspective, regardless of its origin, style, or genre;

2. Understanding music as a social practice that is, viewing music as a human activity shaped by cultural context;
3. Conducting ethnographic fieldwork (which includes participating in and observing the music under study, gaining competence as a performer or theorist in another musical tradition, and engaging in historical research) (as cited in McCollum and Hebert, 2014: 1-2).

However, Jonathan McCollum and David G. Hebert have critiqued this definition, arguing that SEM implicitly emphasizes ethnomusicology as “the default ethnomusicological method for the study of contemporary musical practices through ethnographic approaches,” thereby implying that historical research is a less significant component of the discipline. In doing so, they raise a crucial question: “What about musical practices of the past?” (McCollum and Hebert, 2014: 1-2). In addition to these definitions, Bruno Nettl emphasizes that the value and contribution of ethnomusicology are fundamentally shaped within the framework of historical events (1983: 11). Timothy Rice similarly underscores the importance of historical data in understanding music within ethnomusicology, posing the question: “How do people historically construct, socially maintain, and individually create and experience music?” (1987: 473). According to this perspective, historical sources essential for comprehending historical processes play a crucial role in examining and understanding the cultural background of a community, and in studying music within its cultural context in an accurate and meaningful way. Traditionally, historical research has been largely based on written documents. However, within the discipline of ethnomusicology, the status and authority of historical sources that were once regarded as primary have become increasingly contested.

According to Lechleitner, sound recordings are considered relatively recent sources compared to manuscripts, images, and other historical materials. As such, they are often not regarded as fully reliable, unlike their older counterparts. However, for ethnomusicologists, sound recordings can fall within the category of primary sources (2010: 31). Based on this perspective, audio materials should serve as foundational sources for ethnomusicological research. Nevertheless, it is still common in current studies to prioritize written sources as primary, despite the development and widespread availability of sound recording technologies. As a result, historical research today continues to rely predominantly on written documents, maintaining its precedence even

after the emergence of audio recording. For this reason, the reliability and interpretability of written and aural sources remain highly contested issues within ethnomusicology.

The two institutional archives at the center of this study, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) and the Turkish Language Department of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), house significant collections of Turkish music materials (written and audio materials) in Bulgaria. These archives present considerable obstacles for both the preservation and transmission of historical sound recordings belonging to the Turkish minority, and for researchers who seek to access and study them. Issues related to access, cataloging, digitization, and the intergenerational transmission of folk songs are particularly pressing. The structural and technical problems observed in Bulgarian music archives become especially evident when considering the condition of Turkish music sources. A large portion of the materials in these archives is based on field recordings made between the 1950s and the 1990s, reflecting the socio-political climate of that period.

One of the primary functions of music archives is the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. However, in transnational archival research, scholars frequently encounter methodological challenges such as access policies, cataloguing systems, and digitization processes. In socially and politically closed societies like Bulgaria, the insufficient representation of the Turkish minority's cultural heritage in archives raises serious concerns regarding the preservation of these materials. This study addresses these issues through an examination of two major music archives in Bulgaria: the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) and the Turkish Language Department of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR). Focusing on original cataloguing efforts, the research investigates Turkish music sources held in these institutions, drawing on findings obtained through historical, comparative, and ethnographic methods. By combining archival research with field observations, the study contextualizes these musical materials within their historical and social frameworks and highlights their broader cultural significance.

Bulgarian Turks

Located in the Balkans and often described as a gateway to Europe, Bulgaria has long served as a cultural crossroads where numerous ethnic groups have coexisted. Some

sources indicate that Turkish migration to the region began as early as the 6th century (İnalçık, 2005: 20), while others emphasize more widespread settlement starting in the 16th century. These migrations led Turks to settle across a broad area including present-day Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Hungary.

Şimşir notes that although the Ottoman Empire established dominance in the Balkans in the 14th century, Turkish cultural influence was evident earlier, particularly from the 11th century onward. The expansion of the Seljuk Empire and the subsequent Mongol invasions in the 13th century accelerated the migration of Turkic groups from Anatolia to the Balkans. However, the most extensive diffusion of Turkish culture occurred during the Ottoman period, which began in the late 14th century and lasted until the early 20th century (2012: 10-11). This era saw significant cultural interaction between Ottoman rulers and local populations, resulting in a synthesis of Turkish and Balkan traditions. Bulgaria, which remained under Ottoman rule longer than any other Balkan country, is widely regarded as the region most deeply shaped by Turkish presence (Turan and İbrahimgül, as cited in Yalçın, 2009: 557).

Among the Balkan countries, Bulgaria holds strategic significance for Turks, both because it has historically hosted a dense Turkish population and because it served as a crucial passageway for Turkic peoples migrating from Central Asia into Europe. Furthermore, due to its geographical proximity to the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria has long been known as a significant settlement area for Turks (Hacısalıhoğlu, M. and Hacısalıhoğlu, N. 2012: 11). In many regions across Bulgaria, Turkish place names remain common, and these areas are still referred to by those names today.

The Turkish population of Bulgaria, which has existed in the region for centuries, was referred to in the 19th century as the Turks of the Danube and Edirne provinces. The Danube Province extended from the Danube River to the Balkan Mountains, while the Edirne Province stretched from the Balkan Mountains to the Sea of Marmara. The term “Turks of Bulgaria” began to be used following the establishment of the Bulgarian state over these territories (Şimşir, 2012: 25). Turks predominantly settled in areas such as Deliorman, Gerlova, Tuzluk, Aydos, and the Eastern Rhodopes (Acaroğlu, 2006: VII). Bulgarian legal historian Stefan S. Bobchev attributes the widespread presence of Turkish place names across the country to early Turkish migration from Anatolia (Bobcev, 1988:

703-712). Similarly, archaeologist Vasil Mikov observes that although centuries of Ottoman rule did not change Bulgaria's ethnographic structure, Turkish place names remained intact, stating that "there is not a single corner or remote area without a Turkish-derived place name" (Mikov 1943, as cited in Acaroğlu, 2006: VII).

Historical Development of Music Archives and Application Policies in Archives

An archive is a space where systematic storage takes place. In such environments, cultural heritage is preserved securely and used actively for research and historical writing. For musicians, however, the archive is more than just a source of information and inspiration it also functions as a tool of cultural policy (Lundberg, 2019: 189). Music archives play a critical role in preserving the cultural heritage of societies and transmitting it to future generations. The process that began with the development of sound recording technologies in the late 19th century has gained a new dimension today through digital transformation. Discussing this historical trajectory and the methodological issues it brings is essential for understanding the current state of music archives.

The emergence of music archives began with Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877, which made it possible to record and replay sound. The establishment of the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv in 1899 and the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv in 1900 marked the start of systematic music archiving and the collection of audio materials now considered essential to musicology (Akat, 2015: 41). These institutions set early standards for the preservation and cataloging of materials, especially in ethnomusicology. Among them, the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv played a leading role in recording, preserving, and managing audiovisual data. Its core mission is to ensure the long-term preservation of recordings and to provide access to these materials for both scholars and the general public (Thram, 2014: 314-318).

The institutional development of music archives can be traced through three key phases. The first phase (1900-1945) corresponds to the period in which comparative musicology gained prominence and foundational archival standards were established. During this time, systematic efforts were made especially in Europe to collect and preserve phonograph recordings. The second phase (1945-1990) was characterized by the strengthening of institutional structures and the development of international standards. This period saw the establishment of key organizations such as the ICTMD (1948), IASA

(1969), and SEM (1955). The third phase (1990-present) is defined by the process of digital transformation, representing one of the most challenging periods in the history of music archives.

Today, music archives face four fundamental challenges. The first is the issue of digitizing and preserving materials in obsolete formats. Preserving a wide range of media from phonograph cylinders and vinyl records to magnetic tapes and digital recordings under appropriate conditions and ensuring format conversion involves significant technical difficulties. The second challenge is the standardization of cataloging systems. The fact that each archive tends to develop its own cataloging methodology hinders international access and data sharing. The third issue concerns access policies. Particularly in transnational research, researchers often encounter serious obstacles in accessing archival materials. Finally, there is the problem of sustainability, which encompasses a broad range of issues from financial constraints to staffing shortages. In particular, the condition of archives in developing countries and the persistent inequalities in the protection of cultural heritage remain critical issues yet to be adequately addressed.

Efforts toward international collaboration and standardization continue in order to address these challenges. The technical standards developed by the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), UNESCO's "Memory of the World" program, and various digitization initiatives (UNESCO, 2021) can be considered important steps toward overcoming the difficulties faced by music archives. According to IASA's archival philosophy, the primary responsibility of a music archive is to ensure sustainable access to its collections. This responsibility is structured around three core principles:

1. **Physical Preservation:** The storage and protection of physical materials (analog or digital) that carry sound and audiovisual recordings under optimal conditions.
2. **Technological Sustainability:** The ongoing maintenance and updating of the technological infrastructure (playback equipment, software, spare parts, etc.) required to access archival materials.
3. **Format Migration:** The transfer of original recordings into modern and sustainable formats while they are still accessible. Preserving audio and visual quality during this process is essential.

IASA provides detailed guidelines to implement these principles effectively. In particular, digital data management has become one of the most crucial aspects of contemporary archiving. While technological advances enable higher-quality transfers of analog recordings using modern equipment, video materials often require more complex workflows (IASA, 2017: 5).

In his article, Anthony Seeger emphasizes that in order for sound and audiovisual recordings to survive into the future, the public must take ownership of their music. He also criticizes the tendency among many ethnomusicologists to avoid engaging with archives through listening and reading, arguing that archives suffer from an image problem. According to Seeger, archives are often associated with “dark, lifeless places guarded by monsters.” He describes the state of archives as follows:

In fact, most archives are in the basement because our collections are so heavy they would fall right through the floor on a higher level; the rooms are dark to protect the materials; and your monsters are often colleagues caught in a web of rights and obligations over which they have little control. (1996: 88-89)

The future of music archives depends largely on the development of digital technologies and the ability of institutions to adapt accordingly. Innovations such as cloud-based storage, AI-supported cataloging, and open access policies present both challenges and opportunities. Yet, despite these advances, the core mission of archives to preserve and transmit cultural heritage remains unchanged. Meticulous preservation is essential for ensuring that recordings become accessible for research and dissemination. Audio and visual materials will continue to be vital resources for future musicological studies. As Seeger (1996: 89) notes, substantial improvements are needed to fully realize the potential of archives. Although he highlighted these issues decades ago, many institutions still lack effective strategies for backup, digitization, access, and long-term preservation.

One of the major ongoing issues in the field of archiving is sustainability. As a topic that has garnered significant attention in recent years, sustainability is frequently discussed within the framework of applied ethnomusicology. Applied ethnomusicology can be defined as an approach that not only analyzes musical expression, but also interrogates how music functions within social, cultural, and political contexts aiming to transform this knowledge into practical social benefit (Titon, 2010: 1). According to Dan Lundberg,

applied ethnomusicology involves the extension of research activities beyond academic circles and their engagement with society at large. Within the scope of applied ethnomusicology, music archives can be conceptualized as identity projects aimed at fostering continuity and sustainability (Lundberg, 2019: 189).

In recent years, applied ethnomusicology has become increasingly prominent within the field of ethnomusicology. This subfield emphasizes the active involvement of ethnomusicologists in the communities they study, promoting the idea that researchers should not be limited to producing musical data but should also engage directly with the communities they work with, bearing a sense of social responsibility. In this context, Pettan (2008) illustrates how applied ethnomusicology can go beyond academic knowledge production in studies involving minority communities, contributing to the preservation and recognition of their cultural identities. He argues that applied ethnomusicology can play a significant role in empowering such communities.

Archives are not merely institutions that document the past; they are also instruments of sensory and political regulation. As Charles Hirschkind noted in his study on cassette sermons in Egypt, certain sounds are censored not only because of their content, but also due to their public impact and the moral sensibilities they invoke. These kinds of sensory-political interventions resemble the mechanisms that determine which works are catalogued or excluded in music archives (Hirschkind, 2006: 111-123).

The focus of this study is the identification of Turkish music sources in Bulgarian music archives, and also emphasizing the urgent need for creation of an original cataloguing in order to ensure the proper examination of all archival materials. In addition, the study highlights the limited scope of research conducted within music archives. The challenges of transnational archival research become particularly pronounced in regions such as the Balkans, where historical and political aspects are sensitive. The fieldwork carried out in Bulgarian music archives specifically at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) and the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) reveals not only technical difficulties but also social, political, and cultural barriers that significantly impact the research process.

Music Archives Containing Turkish Music Resources in Bulgaria

As a significant part of the Balkans, Bulgaria has historically served as a cultural crossroads and home to various civilizations. One of the most remarkable elements of this multicultural landscape is undoubtedly Turkish culture and music. For the Turkish community in Bulgaria, music has played a critical role in ensuring cultural continuity, preserving a sense of identity, and expressing social concerns. As it was mentioned before, the most extensive collections of this musical heritage that have survived to the present day are preserved in two key institutions in Sofia: the Music Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) and the Turkish Language Broadcasting Department of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR).

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) was established in 1947 as the Institute of Art Studies, with the aim of promoting and supporting scholarly research in music theory and history, musical folklore, musicology, theater, and related disciplines in Bulgaria. The institution facilitates research in various fields such as history, music, and culture within both regional and global contexts, and provides a framework for studies concerning cultural heritage and national identity.²

Known as the oldest institutional archive in Bulgaria, BAS holds a wide range of written, auditory, and visual historical sources across many fields. It preserves the folkloric traditions of Bulgaria as well as the cultural products of all ethnic groups that have lived in the country. As a result of archival research conducted at BAS, the earliest written record catalogued was identified as the folk song *A Bre Kızı Bulgar Kızı*, collected in 1934 from the village of Blatska in the Nevrokop region. This folk song was performed by Murat Halilov and survives in the BAS archive solely in the form of musical notation (Sağiroğlu, 2024: 37). Ivanka Vlaeva also notes that the oldest document labeled ‘in Turkish’ in the BAS music archive dates back to 1934, and reports that the transcription of this song was carried out by Ivan Kyulev in the village of Blatska, now part of the Gotse Delchev region. Moreover, in her discussion of Kyulev’s field notes, Vlaeva emphasizes the similarities among the folk songs collected from the same area, noting that such similarities are more

² For detailed information see Bulgarian Academy of Sciences https://www.bas.bg/?page_id=24495&lang=en

commonly observed in regions where diverse communities have historically coexisted (2006: 36).

It has been determined that the vast majority of the Turkish folk songs preserved in the archive date from the 1950s and later. Among these recordings, gramophone records predating 1954 can be found, while reel-to-reel tapes and cassettes dominate the post-1954 materials. A significant portion of these recordings originates from the Rhodope Mountains and northeastern regions of Bulgaria.

Turkish Broadcasts Department of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR)

The Turkish Language Service of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) began broadcasting in 1946 and has been producing programs that shed light on the cultural, literary, and musical life of the Turkish community in Bulgaria for over 77 years. The department currently operates with a staff of four, one of whom is responsible for local folk songs from the Balkans, while the remaining three archivists focus on the pop and rock repertoire. The BNR music archive holds approximately five thousand recordings of songs associated with the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, often referred to as a 'golden treasure.' These recordings, along with the stories of the performers, are featured in radio broadcasts.

The archive was formed not only through field recordings by musicologists and folklorists but also via cassette tapes and vinyl records sent by Turkish labor migrants in Germany. However, a comprehensive cataloging system for these materials is still lacking. Existing content is classified only under general categories such as children's music, instrumental works, folk, pop-rock, religious music, and film/television soundtracks. According to radio staff, the digital system has crashed three times, causing the loss of numerous interviews, programs, and recordings. In the absence of a proper backup system, re-digitization efforts have been launched. Following these incidents, 3,200 reel-to-reel tapes were re-digitized. These tapes, stored in a warehouse outside Sofia, suffered significant damage due to poor storage conditions, including exposure to rain and flooding. Although their titles remain in the archive's records, parts of their content have been permanently lost (Şevkiye Çakır, personal communication, December 3, 2022).

A total of 4,888 recordings have been identified in the Turkish Language Service of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), although interviews conducted with staff revealed that

a portion of these recordings is currently unusable. The precise nature and extent of the lost data remain unknown. Since the digitization process was carried out by Bulgarian technicians, occasional spelling errors have been observed in the titles of folk songs; these mistakes are corrected by the music editors of BNR.

In earlier period, artists recording at the radio station typically performed folk songs from their own regions. During the 1970s, Sofia Radio broadcast Turkish-language programs three times a day, featuring only folk songs collected from local performers. As the radio station retains full copyright over these recordings, access to copies of these songs is highly restricted (Şevkiye Çakır, personal communication, December 3, 2022).

Methodological Issues in Transnational Archival Studies

Transnational music archives are institutional structures that document and preserve multicultural musical heritage that transcend national borders. However, these archives are not merely spaces that safeguard musical memory; they are also contested terrains shaped by power relations, national identity politics, and mechanisms of access to knowledge. In this context, research conducted within transnational archives must be approached not only from a musicological perspective but also with careful attention to ethical, political, and methodological concerns.

Music archives not only ensure the preservation of cultural heritage but also function as active institutions that shape musical imaginaries of the past, present, and future. Lundberg approaches music archiving not merely as a preservation practice, but as an applied field that plays a role in the reconstruction of cultural identities, the orientation of musical discourses, and the production of ideological representations. This perspective necessitates a theoretical and practical rethinking of the function of music archives. In the specific context of this study, the access problems encountered in Bulgarian music archives that house sources of Turkish music reveal that archives are not passive repositories of data; rather, the decisions about which musical materials are selected and preserved are determined by cultural, political, and aesthetic preferences. This directly aligns with the ideological filtering processes discussed in detail by Lundberg. He defines music archives as part of “identity projects.” Therefore, in archives, the question is not only what is preserved, but also who is represented and for what purpose (Lundberg, 2019: 204).

Collections structured to construct national identity materialize public memory while simultaneously reconstructing it within a specific ideological framework. Similarly, the limited documentation of Turkish music in Bulgaria serves as a concrete example of how the cultural representations of minority groups have been historically marginalized. Archival practice always involves acts of selection, and such selections are often guided by the aesthetic and political priorities of dominant cultures. This reality allows us to understand music archives not only as sites of memory but also as centers of power relations. Music that is absent from the archive is not merely invisible it is pushed toward erasure. Therefore, the archivist should be seen not only as a documentarian but also as an advocate and protector of the sources they choose to preserve.

Comparative Analysis of Archives from a Methodological Perspective: Access Policies and Restrictions

When considering music archives in Bulgaria, specifically those of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) and the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), it becomes evident that transnational researchers face significant challenges in accessing these archives due to various institutional policies and practical restrictions. Although both institutions hold valuable materials and recordings related to the musical culture of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, there are notable shortcomings in archival conditions and researchers' access to materials. At the institute, archival materials are generally stored in a depot-like environment, and direct access to these materials is strictly limited. Documents may only be examined to the extent that the archivist allows, and researchers can only access the materials through the mediation of designated staff members. Moreover, detailed examination of the documents is usually prohibited, and the listening of folk song recordings is often restricted to just five seconds. This poses a significant barrier, especially for foreign researchers. Access to the BAS archive requires personal connections, prior permissions, and institutional guidance. While the official functioning of archival policies remains ambiguous, in practice, the structure is largely closed to public access: researchers may view the requested documents or recordings only to the extent deemed appropriate by the archive staff.

The most fundamental issue encountered in music archives in Bulgaria is restricted access. The fact that certain documents are designated for internal use only or are not made available to researchers directly affects the depth and scope of scholarly inquiry. In

particular, the exclusion of historical sound recordings related to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria from public access for political reasons indicates a systematic institutional suppression of cultural memory.

The music archive of the Turkish Broadcast Department of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) appears to be relatively more accessible; however, it is not without its limitations. Interviews conducted at the archive revealed that Turkish folk songs were lost due to three system crashes, during which all digitized data was erased (Şevkiye Çakır, personal communication, December 3, 2022). In particular, for foreign researchers to conduct long-term projects at the BNR archive, they must obtain special permission and an extended time frame from the institution. In summary, while access to the BAS archive is structurally restricted and bureaucratic, access to the BNR archive is comparatively more open, though long-term research remains difficult to carry out there as well.

Cataloguing Systems and Standardization

The cataloguing systems used in music archives in Bulgaria differ from international standards and pose additional challenges for transnational researchers due to differences in language and alphabet. Historical music materials in the archives of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) and the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) are only partially catalogued; documents related specifically to the musical heritage of minority groups in the country remain largely unclassified. For instance, no specific cataloguing has been carried out for the sound recordings and musical scores related to Turkish music in these archives. The first original cataloguing of some of the Turkish music materials in these archives was undertaken as part of the present research which was made in 2022. All documents in the archive are dispersed across both physical storage and digital formats, and certain digital entries include only estimated information such as approximate years. Despite being backed up several times and stored in a facility outside Sofia, the lack of regular access to these sources and the reliance on estimated metadata compromise their accessibility (Şevkiye Çakır, personal communication, December 3, 2022). Additionally, due to the absence of a standardized system, researchers encounter difficulties in locating the materials they are looking for.

In addition to the various shortcomings of the archives, differences in language and writing systems also constitute a significant issue in cataloguing. When archival materials

are catalogued solely in the native language of the archivists, this practice creates multiple challenges in terms of access, classification, and interpretation of the documents. For instance, archives in Bulgaria that hold Turkish music sources generally maintain catalogues and documents in Bulgarian, using the Cyrillic script. This presents a considerable barrier for researchers who do not speak Bulgarian. A Turkish researcher preparing for archival work in Bulgaria must learn the Bulgarian alphabet in advance in order to read the Cyrillic transcriptions of Ottoman Turkish song lyrics they will likely encounter. Moreover, the transliteration of personal and place names into different languages can complicate archive searches. For example, a folk song collected in a village near Kardzhali may be listed in the catalogue under its Bulgarian transliteration; a researcher would only be able to locate the entry if they are familiar with the region and know the Bulgarian equivalents of local names. This lack of standardized cataloguing practices can significantly hinder international researchers from discovering relevant materials within the archives.

The lack of uniformity between the catalogue systems used at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies and Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) reveals a significant deficiency in standardization. At BAS, historical folklore recordings are generally archived based on the name of the collector or by region. For instance, collections by folklorists such as Papaz Pavel Atanasov (1867-1960) or Nikolai Kaufman (1925-2018) are stored in separate folders; however, Turkish folk songs within these collections are not categorized as a distinct sub-group. In contrast, the BNR archive follows a different system derived from radio broadcast archiving practices, where magnetic tape recordings are numbered based on years and programs (e.g., a tape might be coded as fond 247, archive unit 4214). This coding system was designed for internal institutional use and is not sufficiently transparent for outside researchers to interpret. Moreover, there is no integration or shared search platform between the BAS and BNR catalogues. Due to the absence of a standardized international classification system (e.g., MARC standards or ISAD(G) archival description standards), researchers are required to learn and navigate each archive's distinct terminology and language separately. As a result, the lack of cataloguing coherence and standardization prevents the full potential of these cultural repositories from being realized and significantly hinders interdisciplinary and transnational research efforts.

Digitization Processes

Digitization is a critical process for the preservation and accessibility of archives; however, in the case of Bulgaria, this process has either not yet been initiated or remains at a very limited level. The lack of qualified metadata accompanying existing digital materials and the absence of standardized digital archiving software pose significant threats to the long-term sustainability of these resources. Furthermore, external researchers are not granted remote access to these digital collections. Particularly for recordings related to the Turkish community, the absence of any specific catalog means that data housed in BAS and BNR archives can only be examined physically, and only with the explicit permission of the archive authorities.

The Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) house the country's rich sound archives. The digitization of the BNR and BAS archives, along with the creation of a comprehensive catalog of existing recordings and resources, is of critical importance for preserving this cultural heritage and facilitating researchers' access. Today, with the continuous development of technological infrastructures in all music archives, various projects are being implemented to digitize analog recordings and to establish digital catalogs. However, the process of digital transformation progresses gradually, depending on the institutions' capacities and priorities, leaving some collections still inaccessible in digital form.

In 2017, the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) announced a comprehensive project aimed at transferring its entire analog audio collection into digital format. As part of this initiative, approximately 320,000 traditional sound carriers (such as vinyl records and tapes) and 100,000 CDs were planned to be transferred into a digital archive system.³

The digitization process is significant not only for preservation purposes but also due to its potential to democratize access. The Bulgarian National Radio's (BNR) effort to digitize its archives could, in the future, pave the way for researchers and even the general public to access these recordings through online platforms. Indeed, BNR has reported that it is working on integrating digital content into various radio platforms. However, since the transition is still ongoing, it has been observed that the level of digitization at BNR

³ For detailed information <https://www.noa-archive.com/news/42-bulgarian-national-radio-digitizes-archive-with-noa>

remains limited. In particular, the fate of magnetic tapes stored in facilities outside Sofia is uncertain; according to archive personnel, there are no existing backups for these tapes, and they therefore urgently need to be transferred to digital formats. This situation highlights that digitization is essential not only for enhancing access but also as a matter of risk management. Without digital copies, physical archive materials may gradually deteriorate or be lost entirely, threatening the disappearance of a nation's written and oral cultural heritage.

There have also been some digitization initiatives on the side of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) music archive. In particular, the Institute of Art Studies, affiliated with BAS, has carried out academic projects aimed at transferring the folk music archive into digital format. Within the scope of this project, technologies have been developed to present the notations and lyrics of Bulgarian folk songs in a digital library. Furthermore, the BAS archive has aimed to scan and database the written and audio folk music materials in Bulgarian folklore and to create an online catalog accessible to researchers. As a result, the rich folkloric collections held by the BAS archive including notations, field recordings, tapes, and transcriptions compiled since the late 19th century have begun to be preserved digitally and partially made accessible. It is stated that, within these project, over 19,000 items including folk music recordings, musical notations, and ethnomusicologists' field notes have been digitized (Danova; Kumichin, 2011: 63). However, there is no information available regarding whether the Turkish recordings or audio materials from other ethnic groups held in the BAS archive have been included in the digitization efforts.

The scope of digitization efforts at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) is not as extensive as that of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), and the outcomes appear to remain largely confined to internal institutional use. For instance, the digital Turkish Music archive database maintained by BAS does not offer open online access to researchers; relevant materials and recordings are still accessible only upon request and can be examined on-site to the extent permitted.

In summary, digitization processes in Bulgaria's music archives are progressing within the framework of technical infrastructure and preservation strategies. Digitization and cataloging efforts in both archives must aim not only to facilitate access for external

researchers but also to ensure the secure and sustainable transmission of archival materials to future generations. For this to be fully realized, it is essential to complement digitization with the development of online access platforms and the design of databases capable of multilingual search functionalities. Currently, even if researchers wish to benefit from digitized content, they must either contact the relevant institution to request a copy or visit the archive in person. Therefore, as digitization continues, aligning these processes with the principles of open science and cultural sharing is critically important for ensuring the public accessibility of the archives.

Institutional and Political Obstacles

Experiences related to music archives in Bulgaria reveal not only technical challenges but also institutional and political obstacles. The management and policies of archives play a decisive role in determining which elements of cultural heritage are made visible and how they are represented in archival records. In particular, the position of minority musical heritage within archives is closely linked to national cultural policies. In the case of Bulgaria, the musical heritage of the Turkish minority has long remained on the periphery of the country's official cultural discourse. Even today, this cultural heritage remains largely invisible within the archives.

The influence of Bulgaria's political history is clearly reflected in the shaping of archival policies. For example, the assimilation policies implemented in the 1980s (specifically the forced Bulgarization campaigns between 1984 and 1989) imposed significant restrictions on the language and culture of the Turkish minority. During this period, the public performance of Turkish folk songs and the production of new recordings were effectively banned or discouraged. This political climate likely influenced archival practices as well. During these years, Turkish-language broadcasts and music recordings at the BNR archive were largely suspended, and existing recordings were not broadcasted. Notably, Nikolai Kaufmann, who was working at BAS during this time and responsible for collecting many of the folk songs in the archive, reportedly collected all available audio materials from the radio station together with his wife and hid them in a storage facility, following a government order to confiscate and destroy all materials related to the Turkish community outside Sofia. These materials were later reintegrated into the archive (as cited in Sađirođlu, 2024: 78). Of the 61 Turkish folk songs catalogued in the aforementioned study from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 42 were collected by

Kaufmann. Thus, Nikolai Kaufmann played a crucial role not only in the development of Bulgarian musicology but also in the preservation, collection, and safeguarding of the folk music traditions of all ethnic communities in Bulgaria.

Even today, national cultural policies continue to indirectly influence the visibility of minority music in both archives and the media. For instance, a regulation adopted by the Bulgarian National Assembly in 2022 requires that at least 60% of the music broadcast between 06:00 and 20:00 on public media outlets, such as BNR and BNT, must consist of works of Bulgarian origin. Such decisions may marginalize minority languages like Turkish by excluding them from official definitions of 'Bulgarian music,' thereby limiting their public presence and archival representation. Therefore, even if recordings in Turkish or other minority languages exist in archives, they may be excluded from the definition of 'Bulgarian music' and remain confined to the shelves.

Another institutional obstacle is the inward-facing structure of archives, which often lack transparency and openness. Traditionally, archival practice has prioritized the mission of preserving and safeguarding documents, often placing user access as a secondary concern. In the case of Bulgaria, the resistance of the BAS archive to researchers' requests and practices such as the restriction of 'detailed examination' of certain documents reflect a protectionist reflex among archivists. This approach can be particularly disappointing for ethnomusicologists who rely on field experience, as being unable to access photocopies or digital versions of documents they know to exist or failing to receive sufficient information from archivists can seriously hinder their research. These access barriers, which depend on the discretion of archival staff within the institutional hierarchy, reflect a structural issue: archives require a user-oriented reorganization. Transnational researchers frequently report encountering similar bureaucratic challenges in archives across various countries. Particularly, the neglect of archives due to lack of funding or administrative indifference leads not only to the failure to preserve cultural heritage but also to the inability to share existing materials. In this regard, the funding and governance of archives are closely tied to political will.

For instance, archival scholar Alejandro García Sudo emphasizes that the poor condition of archives cannot be attributed solely to time or climate, but rather to negligent authorities. He recounts discovering that nearly one-third of a regional archive mentioned

in a 1990s catalog had been seriously damaged. García argues that the state of these archives cannot be explained away by natural disasters or lack of resources alone; instead, the neglect by responsible officials and bureaucratic obstacles are the main causes of such destruction. Therefore, he stresses the necessity of cooperation between state institutions, universities, and civil society organizations (2017: n.p.).

As evidenced, the challenges faced by music archives are not unique to Bulgaria but are also prevalent in many other parts of the world. The spectrum of issues from access policies and cataloging practices to digitization efforts and institutional ideologies clearly demonstrates that archival work is not merely about collecting documents but intersects deeply with power relations and collective memory.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that music archives are not passive repositories of the past, but active institutions that shape cultural memory, identity, and representation. In contexts like Bulgaria, where political and historical transformations have been profound, archives serve not only as centers of preservation but also as sites where ideological filtering takes place. Fieldwork conducted at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art Studies (BAS) and the Turkish Broadcast Department of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) revealed multiple methodological challenges, including limited access, inadequate cataloging systems, and fragmented digitization efforts.

One of the key findings of this study is the absence of standardized cataloging practices, particularly regarding Turkish folk music. The lack of a dedicated category for minority materials, incomplete metadata, and inconsistent transcriptions reduce the reliability and accessibility of these archives. As Lundberg argues, such structures reflect not neutral storage, but selective cultural narratives shaped by power. Digitization, often seen as a technical necessity, also carries ethical and political weight. For marginalized communities, it is essential for safeguarding cultural heritage.

Beyond the Bulgarian case, this study offers a framework for understanding the broader issues faced in transnational ethnomusicological research. Archives are not just about preserving data they define what is valuable and whose voices are heard. Thus, researchers must approach them with critical awareness and cultural sensitivity.

Conducting archival research in Bulgaria as a Turkish scholar brought not only bureaucratic limitations but also tangible experiences of socio-cultural exclusion. The combination of access restrictions, data loss, and institutional bias revealed how deeply archival systems can reflect broader political and historical tensions. These obstacles did not merely hinder academic inquiry they exposed the structural inequalities that continue to shape which voices are preserved, and which are silenced. Ultimately, this study affirms that music archives are far more than technical repositories; they are cultural battlegrounds where memory, identity, and power intersect. For ethnomusicology, the task is not only to document sound but to amplify the silenced, protect the endangered, and interrogate the systems that determine cultural value. Therefore, fostering an archival approach that is equitable, inclusive, and attentive to cultural diversity is not only imperative for advancing ethnomusicological research, but also for ensuring the long-term sustainability of collective memory.

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Rethinking Folk Dances of Samsun in Greece with Ethnochoreohistory

ABSTRACT

The population exchange between Türkiye and Greece from 1922 to 1924 left unforgettable traces on the people of both countries. Following the migration, a new integration process based on acculturation was experienced in the areas reached. Samsun is one of the cities that experienced the widespread effects of migration. Fueled by migration, dance draws attention as a vital identity element in both countries. The concept of dance in social memory is intertwined with a longing for home. In these aspects, the two societies are rich in cultural elements that will remind each other. Therefore, research on dance, a crucial aspect of human performative traditions, highlights the mutual importance of the Black Sea and Western Thrace. Various findings were obtained from the fieldwork conducted in Samsun, Canik, Bafra, Alaçam, Kavala, Xsanti, and Thessaloniki between 2013 and 2025, along with the literature reviews conducted during the same period. The pre-exchange dances of Samsun were researched and examined using the ethnochoreohistory method. Ethnochoreohistory aims to identify key moments related to monumental events in the dance's past to narrate the life process of the dance. Due to its foundational aspects, the details of the language used in the research field are essential to this research method. Oral history research and fieldwork involving participant observation lie at the heart of ethnochoreohistory research. This contemporary method incorporates tools from new media anthropology, including netnographic scans and artificial intelligence automations. The images obtained were transferred to paper using an internet-supported QR code system. The identified dance melodies were notated using the MuseScore4 program and verified in a digital environment. The findings are anticipated to become part of the educational repertoire of institutions offering academic folk dance education.

KEYWORDS

Samsun

Kavala

Black Sea

Dance

Ethnochoreohistory

Introduction

The necessity of rethinking the current state of dance is quite crucial for understanding and conveying its social impact. The periodised exploration of dance can also provide insights into its future. Therefore, in the current research, some folk dances of Samsun will be examined more closely. The dance culture diversifies in similar ways along the coastal strip from Samsun to Artvin and the inner regions. In the research process of Black Sea dances, new theories have been developed, or some existing theories have been applied to these dance studies. Examples such as the application of choreomusicology to Rize dances and the emergence of the term ethnochoreohistory from Georgian dance studies have also been inspiring and encouraging for this article. The research will analyse findings on the identity and dance culture created by people who migrated from various regions of the Black Sea to Greece through the exchange. The periodic division of the findings obtained within a historical context is a requirement of the ethnochoreohistory method that will be applied.

As is known, the population exchange between Türkiye and Greece from 1922 to 24 has caused numerous sociological, political, and cultural consequences. According to the fieldwork and source scans I have intermittently conducted since 2013, the dance culture of the Black Sea coastline from Ordu to Trabzon, especially Samsun, has been shaped by the influences of various migrations. In Türkiye, traditional dance is categorised by regional definitions and provincial borders. However, the situation is somewhat different in Greece. Both the settlement policies of the time and the country's cultural approach to traditional dance enhance the variety of dances within a region. During the research, it was noted that dances from multiple regions were performed collectively in the same dance venues in Kavala and Thessaloniki. Today, the written sources in the field of Turkish folk dances primarily consist of academic studies. Previously, the work of individuals who felt responsible for and dedicated to the local dance culture provided guidance. Studies on Samsun folk dances are also limited. The nine-day research trip conducted by Muzaffer Sarısözen and his colleagues in Samsun in 1943 represents the first known study of the Republican period. The findings of this research predominantly contributed to the folk music repertoire, with only a few dance identifications (Gürcan, 2007: 25). The most comprehensive study on Samsun folk dances is *Samsun Folklore*, a book comprising Hikmet Gürcan's research from the 1970s to 2000, which identified 97

dances from 67 villages. In addition to these studies, there have also been publications that offer brief paragraphs of information on Samsun folk dances (Altaylı, 1967; Bulutoğlu, 2011). When examining Greek sources, we find that the most comprehensive work is titled *Pontus Dance Processes and Spaces, Greek Spaces Theatre*, authored by Nikos Zournatzidis in 1988 (Zournatzidis, 1988: 1). Some content of this book was translated into Turkish by Ömer Asan and published in the book *Temel Kimdir?* as sections, one of which is titled *Samsun Folk Dances* (Asan, 2006: 244). The book *Pontus Dance Chronicles* by Homeros Pachaturidis, published in 2018, is the most recent publication in Greek, examining the progression of Black Sea dances in Greece (Pachaturidis, 2018: 1). Anastasia Psomiadi's doctoral thesis, *Local societies without a homeland. The social representation of Pontic dances for Pontians in Greece and Pontianness*, completed in 2006, was accepted by the Institute of Social and Political Sciences at Panteion University. This thesis explored the dance motivation and emotional states of Pontians in Greece (Psomiadi, 2006: 1).

In the early years of the Republic of Türkiye, state authorities intervened to stage traditional dances locally. The dynamics of this situation in the Black Sea region vary from province to province. However, precise information explaining why some dances were eliminated and which ones became more prominent in the local dance repertoire of Samsun has yet to be uncovered. This curiosity also enhances the motivation for the ethnochoreohistory method. Until the 2000s, the prevailing approach in Türkiye was to identify traditional dances and present them with a claim of 'authenticity,' without further consideration. However, ethnochoreology and related scientific fields that have gained traction in Türkiye over the last 25 years have integrated traditional dance into social sciences. An image of traditional dance that needs to be documented, along with the notes of the music accompanying the dance and cognitive information about the dance, forms the backbone of dance research. Ethnochoreohistory, which underpins this study's methodology, aids in explaining the knowledge of traditional dance by dividing it into chronological periods.

An Overview of Ethnochoreohistory

It is not new information for dance researchers that the history of world dance has a European-centred origin and is shaped by Western perceptions. The term

ethnochoreohistory refers to a discipline that aspires to be the dance historian of ‘other’ peoples. As is known, terms and concepts in the social sciences help to visualise the action groups we aim to understand; therefore, the term ethnochoreohistory aims to concretise the dance historian of abstracted otherness. In other words, this term is a term of awareness. The claim is that for real-world dance history to be formed, the dance histories of peoples on whom historical research has not been conducted constitute the pieces of an incomplete puzzle. Thus, the term ethnochoreohistory aims to destroy itself. When the issue of the existence of people whose dance history is not visible in the world disappears, this term will naturally lose its necessity.

The term ethnochoreohistory is based on foundations such as historical particularism, Annales school historiography, ethnomethodology, and folklore. It applies new media anthropology through fieldwork, where oral history studies are conducted. After a review of general, cultural, and local literature, netnographic research is completed with definitions and classifications (Küçük, 2024: 186-190). The motto of this research method is to be a ‘curious guest.’ The adopted attitude also facilitates handling controversial issues such as the confidentiality of the community’s identity under research and consent approval. In particular, studies on issues common to the Turkish and Greek people, who have shared painful years in recent history, deserve more sensitive attention. In studies conducted in Greece and Türkiye, the idea of fellow countrymanship has been the main motivation for finding common ground. This attitude has made it easier to avoid addressing issues that the two countries have historically disagreed on and to focus solely on dance and music culture.

During the research process, participation in the natural habitats of the dance was demonstrated. In 2018, by utilising the transportation and communication opportunities provided by the İzmir Tourism Folklore Association, contact was made with well-known people in Kavala and Xsanti regarding Black Sea dances. Participation in village entertainments, the equivalent of highland festivals in Türkiye, was ensured, and dance performances were included. Information about the dances was obtained during and after the performances. During this time, time was spent with *kemençe* and *tulum* performers, producers, listeners, and participant observation was conducted. In 2018, dance and music environments were witnessed in Elaiochori, Nea Karvali, and Kechrokampos, and in 2024 in Thesaloniki-Kalithea, Xsanti-Komnina, Kavala-

Kokkinochoma, and Chrysoupoli. The dances of people who migrated from Şebinkarahisar, Maçka, Giresun, Kars, Samsun, and Bafra were identified during the research process. By adhering to the application stages of the ethno-choreological history method, limited information will be provided about Samsun and its surroundings, which is the subject of this article.

Who lived, who lives, who dances in Samsun?

According to the statements of the source persons in the fieldwork conducted in Samsun in 2013, with the dissolution of the Karamanoğlu principality, the community that settled in Thessaloniki from the Konya, Karaman region by the Ottomans was later settled in Samsun after the exchange (Samsun Exchangee Society Association, personal communication, 2013, December 09). In 1813, the British traveller Sir John Macdonald Kinneir (1782-1830) wrote that only Turks lived in Samsun and reported that there were only Christians in neighbouring villages. In addition, Greek sources state that the Samsun Greeks came from Cappadocia and settled in the region. This information is also confirmed by the oral history research conducted in Kavala in 2018 (Efthimiadis, Zafiris, personal communication, August 26, 2018). Ionidis mentions 150 families of Cappadocian origin living in the city in 1870 (Öztürk, 2005: 1006). If we consider that the migration traffic, in light of all this information, parallels the transfer of dance, the diversity of Samsun folk dances can be explained to some extent. Based on fieldwork conducted in the regions where the exchanged communities lived, we can also confirm a similar diversity from the informants' statements in Greece. If we consider that the dances were carried with them as part of human life, we should not ignore that these dances underwent significant evolution as a result of long processes and geographical changes. It was often difficult for people to perform their dances in isolation from the dances of the region when they arrived as a result of migration. In this case, if we look at today's dances, it would be useful to search for some clues about the regions we will compare. The existence of Black Sea dances around Thessaloniki and Kavala, and the existence of Thracian dances around Samsun stem from the same reason: namely, the exchange. Although both countries officially welcomed those who came with the exchange, local integration problems were experienced. For this reason, it took time for traditional dances to be brought to public spaces and thus they remained distant from external choreographic factors.

Migrations affect the demographic structure of nations and have a strong impact on socio-cultural life. People changing their living spaces often causes the cultural elements they apply to be transferred. Depending on the cultural structure of the geography where the migrating community settles, their own characteristics may become so rarely applied that they are on the verge of extinction. If we consider that societies committed to their traditions are more successful in their struggle for existence, traces of migrations in the 15th century and the population exchange in the 20th century can be seen among the cultural codes of Samsun folk dances.

If we view all this migration traffic as dance migration traffic, we can explain the variety of dances in Samsun to some extent. While the similarity between the dances of Thessaloniki, Kavala, and Drama and those of Edirne, Tekirdağ, and Kırklareli can be attributed to their geographical proximity, the fact that the same or very similar dances are performed in Samsun reinforces the notion that they emerged as a result of the aforementioned migrations and exchanges. Additionally, the two-time dances that seem to stand out slightly from the general character of the region can be interpreted as a reflection of Central Anatolian dance culture to the north. In line with this interpretation, Greek sources indicate that there are Cappadocian influences in Bafra dances (Vasiliki K. Tirovola, 2007: 241). In this context, it is possible to observe dances from the pre-exchange period of Samsun in Kavala and Thessaloniki. According to Nikos Zournatzidis, one of the foremost researchers of Pontic dances in Greece, Armenian and Georgian influences are evident in Pontic dances (Evangelinos, 2025). Zournatzidis, who noted that Pontians have over 180 dances, argues that contrary to Dora Stratou's views, Pontian dances are not solely focused on war themes but instead celebrate joy and social unity (Stratou, 1979: 78). İberya Özkan expresses the same view regarding Georgian dances in Anatolia. The issue that has prompted many researchers to reassess this topic is that the nation-state ideology prevalent in the 19th and 20th centuries regarded dance as a tool for political propaganda (Buckland, 2006: 6). After the exchange, Pontians who arrived in Greece established associations to resist assimilation and preserve their culture, forming an identity representation through dance. One of the stereotypes of Pontian identity is the ability to dance (Psomiadi, 2006: 47). For the exchangees who arrived in Samsun, identity representation through dance is a relatively new concept. Consequently, the same level of traditional dance engagement has not been observed in Samsun

compared to Kavala and Thessaloniki. Of course, it should not be overlooked that this situation has variables related to population density, demographics, and various sociological factors. In the research conducted, instances of the same dance performed differently—whether under the same name or to different melodies—were identified. The dances that exemplify this observation are *İkileme*, *Sarı Kız*, and *Tiffon* dances.

İkileme

According to written sources, this dance is performed in the Bafra and Vezirköprü districts of Samsun (Gürcan, 2007: 37). However, it could not be determined through the netnographic research. Based on information provided by the source people in Samsun, when the exchanged people play the *İkileme*, they perform the *Kaba ceviz* dance. When the non-exchanged people play the *İkileme*, they perform the *Telgrafın telleri* dance (Tuğral, Adem, personal communication, April 04, 2025). In the village of Kechrokampos near the city of Kavala in Greece, the performance example given in QR code 1 was identified, and the accompanying melody is presented in Note 1.



QR code 1.

Note 1.

Archive Information: İdris Ersan Küçük's
Personal Archive
Region: Kavala&Samsun
Source: Maria Diamantidu

Researcher: İdris Ersan Küçük
Research Date: August 2018
Notation: İdris Ersan Küçük

♩ = 160

5

9

13

17 Lyrics...

21

25

29

Sarı Kız

There are five different dances called *Sarı Kız* in the Black Sea region. Two of them originate from Bafra. One is known as *Sarı Kız Jump* and the other as *Sarı Kız Bafra*. They are performed with a drum-zurna duo or accompanied by a *kemençe*. In Samsun, this dance is presented as a single piece that includes the jumping part and features a different melody than the one exemplified below (Samsunmem, 2020). Additionally, the *Sarı Kız* dance is referred to as the henna dance in Samsun, and this dance involves a boy and a girl performing together (Ekiz, 2021: 19). One of the other two versions is called *Sarı Kız Maçka/İmera* while the other is known as *Sarı Kız Aytrapolis*. The term *Aytrapolis* translates to Gümüşşehir, meaning it is a dance associated with today's Gümüşhane (Asan, 2006: 250-258). Another *Sarı Kız* performed in the Black Sea region is located in Artvin and is more commonly known as *Sarı Çiçek*. However, since the song accompanying the play features the chorus *Come on, Sarı Kız* (Özaydın, 2016: 5), this version is sometimes referred to as *Sarı Kız* (Özaydın, 2016: 5). These five different dances should not be confused with one another. Apart from these, some Greeks who lived in Anatolia before the exchange settled in Kars (Markos and Moraitis, 2003: 13). The *Sarı Kız* dance performed in Kars was also brought to present-day Greece through the exchange and is performed there under the name *Sarı Kız Kars*. Research conducted in Samsun has identified that this dance was performed in the districts of Alaçam, Bafra, Lâdik, and Vezirköprü (Gürcan, 2007: 37). In the village of Kechrokampos, near the city of Kavala in Greece, the performance example indicated in QR code 2 was found, and the accompanying melody is presented in Note 2.



QR code 2.

Note 2.

Archive Information: İdris Ersan Küçük's
Personal Archive
Region: Kavala&Samsun
Source: Maria Diamantidu

Researcher: İdris Ersan Küçük
Research Date: August 2018
Notation: İdris Ersan Küçük



Tiffon

In Greek written sources, the dance known as *Turfon*, *Tirfonas* around Bafra is performed with *davul-zurna* and *kemençe* (Asan, 2006: 250). Again, in the same source, it is written that the dance is performed with 5/8 (3+2) rhythm, but in the example found in Kechrokampos, it is determined that it is performed with 9/16 rhythm and violin accompaniment. The image of the mentioned determination is in QR code 3, while the accompanying melody is given in Note 3.



QR code 3.

Note 3.

Archive Information: İdris Ersan Küçük's
Personal Archive
Region: Kavala&Samsun
Source: Maria Diamantidu

Researcher: İdris Ersan Küçük
Research Date: August 2018
Notation: İdris Ersan Küçük



During the research process, there were also dances identified in written sources that were not experienced in the field. Additionally, although dances from different regions of the Black Sea were identified in the fieldwork, they were not included in the article to maintain focus on the Samsun context. However, these findings can be listed as follows to give researchers an idea:

- *Thanati Langeman* dance means “girls jumping” in Turkish. It is a girls’ horon performed in the village of Asap in Bafra, but it is also performed as a mixed dance. It is performed with *davul-zurna* and *kemençe* in 2/4 rhythm.

- *Koritsi Horonu* means ‘girls’ *kayidesi*’ or ‘girls’ tune’ in Turkish. The dance, known to be from Bafra Kapıkaya village, is performed with *davul-zurna* or *kemençe* in 9/8 (3+2+2+2) rhythm.

- *Arhulamas* dance is performed in Samsun Bafra. The Turkish name of the dance is *Karşılama* (Özcan, 2024: 25). It is called *Omal Tsanikias* in Canik. Other names given to the dance include: *Kotsihton Omal*, *Empr Obis* ‘front and back’, *Omalin* or *Tzanim Aman* in Şebinkarahisar, *Tsarahot* in the Çakrak region of Giresun, *Fulur Fulur* in the village of Staman in Trabzon, and *Kerasunteikon* and *Lahana* in Giresun, meaning Giresun style. It is performed in 9/8 rhythm. Due to its performance with multiple melodies, the placement of the triple step varies.

- It is known that the dance called *Lafringon* or *Lafranga* belongs to Samsun. The literal

meaning of this dance is 'lightly' in Turkish. It is similar to *Kotsari*, which is the equivalent of *Düz horon*. It can be performed with all instruments and in a mixed circle. The rhythm is 2/4. In Samsun, this dance is referred to as 'lame crow.' It tells the story of a crow running and covering distance in the field (Ekiz, 2021: 19).

- The literal meaning of the *Mavron Peğad* dance is 'black spring' in Turkish and is performed in Bafra. It is accompanied by *davul-zurna* and *kemençe* in a 9/8 (3+2+2+2) rhythm.

- The other name of *Monon horon* is *Tek kayide*. The rhythm of this dance, performed by men in Bafra in a circle, is 2/4.

- The dance called *Samsun horonu* can be performed with the accompaniment of any instrument, in a mixed and circular manner. Its rhythm is 2/4.

Conclusion

The findings, as expected, reveal similarities that strengthen the ties between Türkiye and Greece. Some observed results indicate that the same melodies have different names or that different movement phrases are performed for the same melody in the two countries. Similarly, it is evident that similar movement phrases are labelled differently in both nations. These findings provide insight into the nature of dance culture in Samsun during the pre-republican period. According to Hristos Samoulidis, there is no data regarding Samsun in Melpo Merlia's Black Sea records prior to 1930 (Markos and Moraitis, 2003: 12). Another factor to consider in interpreting and classifying the research findings is the different institutionalizations of dance in the two countries. For example, while traditional dance in Türkiye is integrated into academic education through conservatories, the academic visibility of traditional dance in Greece is found within sports schools. Consequently, Greece's dance transfer techniques and the protective attitude towards movement may serve as an example for dances in Samsun. In the fieldwork, there was technical information about the notation of the detected music that did not align with written sources. It can be posited that Türkiye's investigative approach, which does not separate dance from music, can enrich dance research in Greece. It is a natural expectation that the two peoples, who have shared common spaces for years, will exhibit similarities across various cultural domains, particularly in dance.

As a result of this research, the foundational elements of the transformation in Samsun folk dances were identified. The collection of information within a limited time and spatial scale will pave the way for more extensive studies. It is anticipated that technological developments will facilitate dance research, especially through the application of the ethnochoreohistory method, which represents a cognitive innovation. While the visibility of dance is currently transcribed onto paper via QR codes, it is expected that new dance research methods supported by artificial intelligence will emerge in the future. This modest study on Samsun dances heralds innovations in dance research amid the rapid changes of our time, emphasising that the ethnochoreohistory method is eager to explore many more local dance histories.

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Human Capital and Cultural Resilience: Sulukule Entertainment Houses as an Alternative Urban Economy

ABSTRACT

'Entertainment Houses' of Sulukule are small-scale businesses based on human capital that operated from the 1950s to the early 1990s. These businesses reflect the unique characteristics of the Roma/Gypsy community, a marginalized urban social group known for its skills in the entertainment sector. This study examines Sulukule's historical music, dance, and entertainment, focusing on Entertainment Houses' roles in cultural transmission, vocational training, and economic models. In addition to literature data, I will also interpret data obtained from ethnographic research conducted in the neighbourhood at various times from 2006 to the present. In this study, I argue that Sulukule Entertainment Houses function as spatial initiatives aimed at transforming the market conditions shaped by entertainment and tourism forces—especially amidst the neighbourhood's demolition threats that create insecurity and informality—into opportunities. This process also carries critical implications about how the image of *Sukululeli* is constructed, while subtly hinting at the resilience of life in the neighbourhood and the influence of artistic mastery in its formation.

KEYWORDS

Sulukule
Urban economy
Gypsy/Romani
Performance
Music
Dance
Entertainment
Houses

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Introduction: Urban Space, Sulukule, Fieldwork and Destruction¹

Beyond historical and contemporary descriptions and definitions of the city, the pursuit of understanding through the construction of relational processes allows us to witness the consumption of the constructed simultaneously. This paradoxical angle provides a solid foundation for examining a specific example, such as 'Sulukule.' The practices undertaken by those who have the power to dominate the city's touristic potential through urban policies reveal the historical conditions in a constructive or destructive construction process. Places like Sulukule, which have attracted tourist attention for many decades due to their location within the historical peninsula and city walls of Istanbul, as well as the performative forms applied by the local people, should be conceived within this continuum.

Prasiasa's work, which focuses on the processes of conflict and adaptation between local traditions and foreign market demands, argues that the relationship between tourism and power dynamics often leads to the commodification of local culture, transforming cultural elements into marketable products (2022). While the historical 'touristic appeal' of Sulukule is created through the environments in which its musicians and women dancers produce entertainment, negative social perceptions in local and national memory arise from the same source. Therefore, the craft in Sulukule generates labour and shared profit; however, daily life must contend with legitimized discourses of control and intervention. The neighbourhood faces the persistent dangers of isolation, segregation, social stigmatization, ghettoization, and displacement because of its creative economic strategies, often rooted in social relations and cultural practices. The concrete manifestation of this phenomenon is the historic Sulukule Entertainment Houses, which represent a performative and spatial urban example of a marginal neighbourhood economy. The Entertainment Houses, which I describe as a small-scale entrepreneurial activity based on human capital, are unique examples for the Gypsy/Roma community, a marginalized urban social group known primarily for their entertainment expertise.

¹ Sulukule neighborhood was demolished in 2007 as part of Istanbul's urban transformation projects. However, this study focuses on the Sulukule Entertainment Houses and covers the period from 1952 to 1993, so the most recent demolition is not included. For detailed studies on the struggle of NGOs and independent activists alongside the neighborhood during the last demolition process, the social cost of demolition, and the eventual destruction of cultural accumulation, see; alaturka.sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com, Somersan and Kirca-Schroeder 2007; Islam, 2009; Bahçeci, 2017; Erdal, 2021; Oral, 2011; Çetken, 2011; Kaban, 2011; Placing Sulukule Report, 2007).

Historically, economic adaptation for the Roma, who are a highly mobile, peripatetic community typically working in the goods and services sectors, is not limited to the example I have examined. The literature, especially sources focusing on urban economies, shows that Roma communities demonstrate economic adaptability by engaging in marginal and niche economic activities that help them survive outside mainstream economies. This flexibility is supported by internal structural dynamics and responses to socio-economic, financial constraints, ensuring persistence despite exclusion and discrimination (Sway, 1984; Kertesi, 2000). To Sway, the increased flexibility resulting from exposure to foreign cultures is achieved through five strategies adopted by the community: “nomadism, exploiting available resources that may be viewed as worthless by society, avoiding sex-typing in work, avoiding age barriers in the distribution of labour, and becoming multioccupational” (Sway, 1984: 85). On the other hand, the primary reason for this strategic approach is the complex interplay between socio-political marginalization and economic adaptability. Lack of capital or property, difficulty accessing public services and education, and economic weakness marginalize them on one side, while developing their survival skills on the other. Therefore, the case study in this work, the entertainment houses of Sulukule, exemplifies these ordinary skills—yet unique in terms of space and structure. Exactly with this quality, these venues served as a resilience mechanism amid urban change by emphasizing accessible private spaces. So, in this study, I argue that Sulukule Entertainment Houses were spatialized attempts to overcome precariousness and informality in response to the neighbourhood’s demolition threats, seeking to turn the market conditions shaped by entertainment and tourism representations of the period into an opportunity.

I will interpret my narratives with support from literature and historical accounts recounted by neighbourhood residents during my ethnographic work, as a researcher and activist, when Sulukule was demolished entirely (2006-2012)². There is an important reason why I position myself here as both a researcher and an activist. Historically, I was conducting ethnographic research for my doctoral thesis at that time, focusing on Türkiye’s Thrace region and several neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Romani settlements. The main questions I explored in my thesis were how the 9/8 Romani dance,

² I respectfully remember Bergüzar, Erdoğan, and Gülsüm, who were witnesses of that period and are no longer with us. They shared their stories about the entertainment venues, the homes, their efforts to survive in Sulukule, and how they tried to cope with precarity.

originating in Turkish Thrace, transformed into a cultural phenomenon within popular culture since the early 2000s, and how the content and organizational mechanisms of the Rom identity, which was politically and socially reconstructed during this process, were structured.

Weddings were usually the right rituals for ethnographic research because dance was the focal point of the work. For the ethnographic material in Istanbul, which is part of Turkish Thrace, being in Sulukule meant not only attending weddings but also witnessing weddings where people danced on the rubble of demolished buildings. In this context, my questions as a researcher about dance, music, and culture seemed quite irrelevant; the demolitions were the only issue that weighed heavily on all of us, and all plans, meetings, and conversations were filled with the energy of resistance to the demolitions. The joyful weddings I attended the previous weekend in Edirne's Kum neighbourhood — where hosts and guests aimed to have the most lavish wedding despite their poverty, and where we enjoyed ourselves and danced until the early morning — now carried the sadness and anger of celebrations mixed with deep poverty and displacement the following weekend.

It was a complicated work process for me; it was impossible to keep the expanding emotional intensity, which was rooted in my conscience, utterly separate from the ethnographic framework based on information gathering. Normally, I knew that the texts I wrote from the information I collected in the field were already a new construction, but in Sulukule, trying to focus on solutions for helplessness and anxiety made it even harder to keep the processing of knowledge separate from emotions to a reasonable degree. On one hand, my position offered the potential to build trusted knowledge through honest conversations. Still, on the other hand, the environment itself, my inability to plan specific questions ahead of time, and my inclusion of Sulukule in a continuous process of solidarity rather than a strict research schedule also limited the research.

On the other hand, my observations of dance in various settings strengthened my analysis of bodily representation; I could see the difference between dance performed at an ordinary wedding and dance at festivals and performances organized by the Sulukule Platform, which was established to resist demolition. I could realize the meanings of the dance for outsiders and locals alike. Despite this complex process, in my interview-based conversations with middle-aged women who used to work in entertainment houses and

with musicians who owned those houses, I aimed to understand a period I hadn't lived through, based on what they recounted. One musician described how two different music groups mastered their craft by playing various songs in adjacent rooms simultaneously, while another shared how terrible they felt when Sulukule was first demolished during that same period. I didn't bring a notebook to write down my questions; as they spoke, and as Bergüzar (dancer, singer, and violin player) showed me her shoes and clothes from that era, I committed the information to memory. Sulukule was just a small part of my doctoral research, which involved extensive ethnographic studies, but from a small neighbourhood, a vast history of a city emerged.

Sulukule Demolitions in the 1950s and 1960s

In his book, *İstanbul'un Planlamasının ve Gelişmesinin Öyküsü* (The Story of Istanbul's Planning and Development) (2013), İlhan Tekeli emphasizes the impact of the aftermath of the Second World War on Istanbul's evolution into an 'urban region.' He characterizes this period by the republic's radical modernity project, highlighting its populist³ aspects, migration and population growth, mechanization in agriculture, and the resolution of peasant issues (Tekeli, 2013). In 1950s Istanbul, the focus on tourism was crucial for the city's re-planning:

"(Between 1956 and 1960) The Municipality of Istanbul collaborated with Professor Hans Högg, who had prepared the plans for Hannover and Munich, on the development of the city plan [...] A meeting took place on April 21, 1957 [...] to assess Högg's work and the zoning efforts. During the meeting, Högg stated that one of the two primary issues facing the city is resolving traffic congestion, while the other is enhancing the city's touristic significance" (Tekeli, 2013: 179-180).

One of the seven roads constructed in 1957 as part of this operation was Vatan Avenue, now known as Adnan Menderes Boulevard, which begins outside the city walls, passes through the Bayrampaşa Valley, and connects to Aksaray Square. The construction of Vatan Avenue also marked the first demolition of Sulukule. The narratives of the

³ In the study, the terms populist/populism are described as a form and style of political performance. "According to Moffitt, the three key features of this style are its appeal to the people against the elites, its insistence on authoritarian third parties that balance the performances of being ordinary and extraordinary by shifting between the positions of appearing from the people and being above them at the same time, and the presence of a crisis discourse" (Balta and Özel, 2018: 102).

neighbourhood residents help us capture a historical snapshot of the area before the demolition:

According to the information obtained from conversations with Ziyaeddin Kul and Şükrü Pündük, the original Sulukule was located where Vatan Street now runs. At that time, the city walls continued uninterrupted along the street. On the opposite side of the current Vakıf Gureba Hospital, where the Police Department, the new municipal building, and the shopping centre are located, there were fig and mulberry gardens not so long ago, 50 years ago. The area from Sultan Mahalle to Akgün Hotel was known as Sulukule. There were 250 houses along the city walls and 40-50 houses along the street, alongside cafes, mansions, *gazinós*, and a river flowing to the sea right through the middle of the neighbourhood, through Yenibahçe and Yenikapı. The name of the neighbourhood came from this water and the walls (tower). Sulukule Street stretched from Edirnekapı to Topkapı. At that time, more than a hundred belly dancers lived in the neighbourhood, playing music and dancing. Most of the residents were *Rumelians* from Bosnia, Macedonia, and Thessaloniki. There were both Greek and Armenian churches. The famous musician violinist Tatar Ali, the singer Safınaz who married the Egyptian violinist Bülbül Salih, Ali Şenses and Huriye Şenses, violinist Variye, the famous singer Gülistan, Band Sergeant Major Krik Ethem, Bulgarian İbrahim, clarinettist İhsan, Kandıralı's sister-in-law, violinist Recep, Sofrom Çokyaşar, the famous dancer Anaka, Eleni, Afro, Rodiye Gözüpek, Pedro, and Nigar all lived there. (Oral, 2011: 10)

From the quote above, when we look at the region with a rough historical spectrum, it is possible to realize that its occupational and social diversity is today compressed only under the title of Gypsy/Roma identity and entertainment. At this point, it is necessary to draw attention to a historical irony; within this cramped cultural resource, music, dance, and entertainment traditions are spurred that have maintained continuity for centuries. Undoubtedly, this history is very much related to the Gypsies/Roma, a peripatetic⁴ social group whose cultural creativity in coping with changing conditions we are sure of, and the social, political, and economic conditions surrounding them. As the constant displacement and the danger of it motivate compulsory specialization in a field, the strict adherence to this specialization, the investment in it, and the extraction of labour from it necessarily expand the competence and creativity.

⁴ Peripatetic is used to describe groups that are endogamously characterized, highly mobile, and have a mutual economic integration with the larger society based on exchanging services or goods (Yılgür, 2016; 79; for a detailed study linking the concept with Gypsies and itinerant communities, see Okely, 1983).

After 29 houses were demolished and the avenue was constructed, some residents retreated to today's Neslişah and Sultan neighbourhoods. İlber Ortaylı describes how, after the demolition, the residents of Sulukule overflowed into the Neslişah neighbourhood, leading to social conflict between the two groups. This illustrates one of the reasons for the negation of *Sulukuleli* (who live in Sulukule), which I will discuss in the following sections.

The residents of Kuruçınar, Sarmaşık, Küçükçeşme, and Çalı streets around the Neslişah Mosque (i.e., the second group of the Neslişah neighbourhood) are entirely different from the first group, wearing hijabs and maintaining the new religious lifestyle seen in the Fatih neighbourhood. They are in constant conflict with the first group, which serves the entertainment industry. Two distinct realms, living side by side on the same streets, are visible. The dialect used by the first group, one of the authentic dialects of Istanbul, is not found in the second group. Children who cannot attend school in the first group, because they do not have a birth certificate, are not included in the second group. The second group complains that the neighbourhood is wrongly called Sulukule. (Ortaylı, 1994: 70-71)⁵



Figure 1. *Milliyet*, 1966, "The New Sulukule will be in Rami."⁶

⁵ Works using this narrative as a source and stating that "Gypsies living in the region have been rehabilitated by Kadiri and Naqshi sectarian Islamic communities for the last thirty years" (Göncüoğlu and Yavuztürk, 2009: 127) indicate the growing prevalence of the "new religious lifestyle" in the Fatih neighbourhood. The new religious lifestyle refers to the rise of Islamic identities in post-1980 Türkiye and, for example, to the pre-existence of "the lifestyles and daily life practices that the İsmailağa community established around the mosque in Fatih-Çarşamba" (Kara, 2019: 63).

⁶ The newspaper clipping in the image announces the good news that the Ministry of Tourism has reached an agreement with the municipality to build a new Sulukule neighbourhood. Underneath the photo is written, "The relocation of the neighbourhood residents who have entertained tourists and Istanbulites here for many years." This 'tourism and entertainment' value, frequently emphasized in the newspapers of the time, helps strengthen the belief in the construction of a new Sulukule after the demolition.

In the 1960s, the neighbourhood was demolished for the second time. The newspapers of 1965 were filled with the promises of the Ministry of Tourism for a new Sulukule and images of the neighbourhood being evacuated due to the danger of the walls and buildings being torn down, featuring headlines such as “The new Sulukule will be in Rami” (see Figure 1). Finally, in May 1966, on the morning of a wedding in the neighbourhood, the day of the marriage, the second major demolition took place, involving 200 police officers and 50 security guards (Oral, 2011). This time, some of the residents who had primarily settled in the Sultan neighbourhood after earlier demolitions began to continue their lives here. Moreover, during this demolition, the ministry suggested establishing an association; the Sulukule Association was founded in 1969, and the 1st International *Çigan* Festival was held in the same year (see Figure 2). However, the promise of ‘new Sulukule’ did not materialize.



Figure 2. Sulukule Festival Poster, 1969 (Akçura, 2019)⁷

Reports from newspapers during this period focus not only on demolitions; Sulukule, highlighted in early 1950s news reports by Milliyet during public festivities like Hıdırellez, Istanbul Spring, and Flower Festival celebrations, begins to emerge as a subject of twilight entertainments, politically charged news, and neighbourhood life affected by crime in the

⁷ There is no solid evidence that the festival depicted in the poster actually took place. However, literature on Sulukule and various online sources indicate the festival lasted a month and was attended by more than 300 musicians from Europe and Türkiye. (Karadoğan, 2024; Akçura, 2019; Mimarizm web, 2008; Yılmaz, 2009).

latter half of the 1950s. This chronological framing allows the demolition of Sulukule to gain legitimacy through discussions that include the Ministry of Tourism and Culture as one of the addressees of the demolition, reinforcing the narratives about the neighbourhood that is intended to be improved. For instance, the neighbourhood celebrates national pride; a 1959 news article titled “Sulukule Gypsies don’t want to establish a Coptistan! (Sulukule Çingeneleri Kıptistan İstemiyor!)” recounts the protests of Sulukule residents against the proposed establishment of a Gypsy State, initiated by American Gypsies and supported by the United Nations (Doğanalp, 1959). Conversely, the Gypsy culture in this neighbourhood has not been civilized and might be seen as a threat to the privileged. In Peyami Safa’s⁸ column, the entertaining presence of Benli Naile, who is a dancer from Sulukule, attends society nights, raised concerns that the aesthetic and artistic understanding of the upper-class bourgeois is equated with that of the Gypsy (Safa, 1955). Similarly, cartoons titled *Sulukule Geceleri* (Sulukule Nights) ironically reference the production of first-class entertainment featuring the Sulukule Gypsies (Milliyet, 1956). Furthermore, the announcement that Sulukule would be demolished, with the headline “a modern Sulukule neighbourhood is being established,” and the declaration of 40 days and 40 nights of festivities following the demolition of the homes showcase as a fiction of “the satisfaction and consent” in the neighbourhood (Milliyet, 1957). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the tragic fate of Sulukule—both its demolition and the increasing popularity of its ‘entertainment’—highlights the city’s rich diversity as a touristic commodity and the relationship along with the control of necessary rent by the privileged class.

Sulukule as a Cultural Domain: Music and Dance

Long before moving to the Sultan neighbourhood, Sulukule was one of the settlements where urban music and dance traditions from the 19th century were carried over into the Republican period. For example, journalist and writer Refi Cevat Ulunay, in his 1965 writings about the neighbourhood’s demolition, recalls the old culture of Sulukule and provides insights into this culture from the late 19th and early 20th centuries: “I grew up with the famous *Zurnacı* Yakomi... We would go to Sulukule from Asmaaltı, with some expense for the neighborhood with the late Ahmet Rasim, Zeki Arif’s father, *Kanuni* Hacı

⁸ Peyami Safa (1899-1961) is one of the well-known nationalist novel authors of the early republican time, who was born in Fatih.

Arif Bey, and their friends, stay for days, and enjoy ourselves to the fullest”⁹ (Ulunay. 1965; 4).



Figure 3. Early 20th century, a scene from Sulukule (Resimli Dünya, 1925).¹⁰

For another example, the notes written in Ottoman Turkish by a journalist who visited the neighbourhood in the 1925 cultural magazine *Resimli Dünya* (Illustrated World) are remarkable for their command of terms used in professional music performance, especially by women and children: (see Figure 3).

On the other side, a sharp-headed little boy, maybe 6 years old, started singing in a high-pitched voice: “*Ayşem, Ayşem mor menekşem.*” While drying laundry in front of the window, his mother said, “Put the word *menekşem* on *icaz* (*hicaz*¹¹). It’s not *Neva*!” When the child started “*Ayşem*” for the second time, he corrected this defect. One by one, two by

⁹ Yakomi was one of the most renowned *zurna* and *clarinet* players in Istanbul’s entertainment scene at the time. Ahmet Rasim (1864-1932) was one of the most influential historians and writers of the period, while *Kanuni* Hacı Arif Bey (1862-1911) and his son Zeki Arif Ataergin (1896-1964) were well-known composers and performers in the Ottoman-Turkish classical music tradition. The enjoyment mentioned in the quote probably refers to the pleasure of making music.

¹⁰ The image is probably a pose struck for a photo taken during the interview mentioned in the text. The girls’ hand movements while dancing show the position known as the traditional *parmak şıklatma* (finger snap), which is common throughout Anatolia but is considered one of the most distinctive features of Gypsy/Romani dances (For details on the dance, see Girgin, 2014).

¹¹ In the quotation, names such as *Hicaz*, *Neva*, *Gerdaniye* are the names given to certain pitches in Ottoman-Turkish *makam* music.

two, pantless, shirtless, little Copts surrounded us. They sang in unison: “*Havalarda tayyare, Selam söyle o yâre, Oh anam oğli da, yuf babam oğli da Yuf çeri başına, Allah..*” The last verse of this lively song, which ended with “*Yuf*”, prompted the intervention of an old man squatting at the door. “Not *gerdaniye*, silly. Press the treble *çargâh* so that the *yufs* come out big.” The children, realizing their mistake, glanced at each other’s faces and each threw a big “*yuf*”. There is no doubt that the love of music, even in its simplest form, runs through the veins of these tribal people. (Resimli Dünya, 1925)

Moreover, widespread professional knowledge among women indicates that female performers are active in the professional arena. In contrast to literature depicting a field dominated by male performers and their circles, the female violinists of Sulukule, who continue to be successful today, highlight an essential historical context. Furthermore, the story of an Armenian shoemaker who began playing the violin in the same source provides historical evidence of the construction of musicianship shaped by an identity rooted in Gypsyism:

How are you, Andon? Still here?” Young Andon, who had been an apprentice in the shop his father opened 45 years ago, now seemed so used to them. “Where could I go?” he was saying. “I was born blind and crippled by my mother. And there was the shop. Some people took care of me; they said, ‘Stay here, Andon!’ So I stayed.” Andon learned the violin after the age of twenty. He said, “I realized that in every house, day after day, *zurna, darbuka, gırnata*, drums, singing, harmony. I joined them, and now I earn five or ten money. (Resimli Dünya, 1925)

The internalized perception of the pairing of Sulukule and Gypsy, which continues to this day, has existed since the 1940s, making the reference to Sulukule explicit, even though there are different regions in Istanbul known for Gypsy lifestyles. For example, Osman Cemal Kaygılı’s (1939) novel *Çingeneler* (Gypsies) mentions Ayvansaray and Sulukule and their “girls singing Carmen.” Turan Aziz Beler’s (1946) novel *Beyoğlu Piliçleri* (Beyoğlu Girls) describes the “entertaining” women of Sulukule. Additionally, in Sulukule, one of Muzaffer Sarısözen’s collection fields in and around Istanbul in 1951, the majority of the informants were women, and the musical repertoire included dance tunes, henna songs, folk songs, and urban popular songs (Şenel 2010). Some sources emphasize the fame of the Sulukule Gypsies, who have been known since the 17th century for their roles as musicians, dancers, fortune tellers, acrobats, and magicians in the urban entertainments of the Imperial period (Marsh 2006).

In the transformation process of *çengi*¹² performances that coincide with the early years of the Republic, Istanbul *çengis* are replaced by belly dancers in the second half of the 1940s. After the Second World War, “Türkiye would import not only a new economic policy with foreign aid and loans, but also a new lifestyle centred on consumption” (Zorlu, 2003). Moreover, the ‘Western civilization’ of the founding years of the Republic has now changed; European life and culture set out to construct a new ‘West’ during the process of ‘Americanization.’ However, the new West, as a by-product of traditionalist power and populist modernization after the war, would exclude the ‘western’ of the early Republic and establish the condition for the existence of the ‘western’ as ‘becoming *alaturka*.’¹³ Undoubtedly, the only reason for the preference toward *alaturka* is not the content of the ideological discourse. Levent Cantek, who discusses capital’s transformation of *alaturka* for its own needs in the music debates of the forties, mentions that capital turned *alaturka* into an object of necessity and nurtured it. He also states that the private sector’s intervention in a state-controlled field demonstrated that *alaturka* was an economically profitable investment (Cantek, 2013: 236)¹⁴. Therefore, during these periods, the repertoire of Gypsy/Roma musicians who had long mastered *alaturka* represents a highly productive labour for the market. The increasingly popular profession of belly dancer in the emergence of new consumer culture and entertainment signifies an expansion of opportunities for Gypsy/Roma performers. The rise of *alaturka* entertainment in the 1950s and the popularization of Gypsy performers during this period support the tendency of capital due to both the improvised, flexible, and ordinary nature of the performances and the easy accessibility of informal labour. Furthermore, the traditional professions of musicianship and dancing attributed to Gypsies have long been characterized by rehearsed, tried-and-true mastery.

¹² The tradition of *çengi* and *köçek* refers to urban solo dance in the court tradition of the imperial period. For details of their standard practices in the Balkans and the evaluation and Gypsy pairing from the 19th century to the present day, see Girgin, 2015.

¹³ Generally, the word ‘*alaturka*,’ meaning ‘Turkish style’ or ‘Turkish fashion,’ comes from the Italian word *alla turca* (in the Turkish style). During the Ottoman Empire, it was commonly used in Europe to refer to ‘Turkish style.’ In Türkiye, it is used both to describe the ‘traditional Turkish style’ in areas like architecture, music, clothing, and behaviour, and to contrast with Western style (*alafranga*). Here, I refer to the collection of traditional urban music that became popular from the 1940s onward, which has been Turkish Art Music since the 1980s.

¹⁴ For example, ‘*alaturka* revues,’ the new name for the revues of the early period that emerged in the 1940s, and the syntheses popularized with Safiye Ayla (one of the famous Turkish *makam* music singers) in the lead role are the most concrete manifestations of this situation.

On the other hand, the growing relationship with the Middle East and Arab culture, for example, constitutes a dominant narrative in the melodrama genre of Turkish Cinema in the 1950s. The presentation of Arab culture and *rakkase* (dancer) in Egyptian films of this period is also one of the sources of contemporary belly dancing. The first Gypsy-themed film in Turkish Cinema in 1952, *Arşak Sulukule'de* (Arşak in Sulukule) depicts the quarrels of two families in the neighbourhood as an element of comedy. Haphazard entertainment environments and oriental music dances are frequently seen in the movie. In the 1956 film *Şaban Çingeneler Arasında* (Şaban, Among the Gypsies), the scenes are filled with music and dance. The general character of the melodrama productions of the 1960s is a continuation of this process. "Images of minarets, call to prayer, cemeteries, *gazelhanes*, singers, *rakkas*; wealthy men and women with evil hearts; poor young girls and young men with good hearts; prostitutes with hearts of gold who have fallen into evil ways; murders committed for the sake of honour; wives who are cheated on, women who are raped are common elements of these films" (Esen, 2010: 58). The category of belly dancer, which is the counterpart of the *rakkas* mentioned in the quote, begins to emerge around the same time. The fact that the 'bad path' in the 'fallen woman' stereotypes is predominantly depicted through the performances of singing or belly dancing in nightclubs reinforces the negative perception of female belly dancing. Belly dancing, which has been considered an Eastern and vulgar art form since the early republican era, has come to be viewed as an 'immoral' form of bodily expression due to the rise of conservative values and tendencies.¹⁵ Thus, the concept of immorality on a national level also supports the East's feminine aspects from the West's perspective. In other words, the tourism market of the period both imported Middle Eastern and Arab culture and perpetuated the negative connotations attached to the product itself. Furthermore, it was not a new behaviour that performances not taking place in situations or neighbourhoods where women's dancing was not functional as part of a ritual, or those that had moved outside local areas or spaces reserved for women, were not approved for religious reasons. In Türkiye, until the 1980s, belly dancing, which often embodied the concept of the femme fatale, began to be redefined in this context, similar to the developments in

¹⁵ In the early Republican period, the term *dansöz*, which was also used for ballet performers, referred to a dancer and is derived from the word *danseur*. During this time, no clear relationship was established with oriental dance or the so-called belly dance. However, the non-national or uncivilized dance of this era is the *Çiftetelli*. While oriental *dansöz*, which is associated with belly dancing, began to replace *Çiftetelli* in the 1950s, it also became distinct from the artistic, classical, and educated forms.

other fields, through the interaction of the official discourse with the other¹⁶. In this process, one of the continuous and most visible sources of capital for the social perception of the Gypsy has been the Gypsy/Roma dancer women in Sulukule, where Ottoman *çengis* were also trained.

In the 1950s, the neighbourhood of the Gypsies was Sulukule (And, 1959: 25). So much so that in a crossword puzzle published in 1952 with the answer “*Sulukuleli*”, the question was asked as “belonging to the place in Istanbul where Gypsies live” (Milliyet, 1952)¹⁷. During this period, the female dancers of Sulukule were performing with teams of 3-4 women in touristic organizations and Istanbul Spring and Flower Festival celebrations. Moreover, the decision to represent Istanbul in the folk dances competition organized by the Turkish Folk Dances Dissemination and Sustainance Facility in 1954 with Sulukule dancers and *Çiftetelli*, but the cancellation of the team’s participation due to the discussions that ensued, while referring to the popularity of Sulukule entertainment culture at the time, also shows the Sulukule people who were outside the ‘national’ in the representation of the ‘Turkish Folk Dances’ repertoire. The debates focus on including *Çiftetelli*, considered an urban solo dance, in the national repertoire. Still, the questioning is not based on *Çiftetelli* itself, but on the exclusion of the dance’s skilled performers as Gypsy women (for details, see Girgin, 2015). The claim that the *Çiftetelli* dance spread to Anatolia from Sulukule (Baykurt, 1996) also supports this. The crisis of not being recognized as official and being viewed as cheap labour in the market also led to the emergence of Entertainment Houses as an economic space for those living in Sulukule during this period, through local entertainment performances.

¹⁶ From a historical perspective, the relationship between ‘being Gypsy’ and belly dancing reflects an embedded discourse. The similarity in the visual designs of most Gypsy-themed films in Turkish Cinema also reveals a significant implication. Although the early Gypsy films feature fictionalized Balkan Gypsies, the dancer figures on the posters are striking in this context.

¹⁷ Undoubtedly, this pairing mainly reflects the entertainment sector. Historically, it is known that the nomadic and resident populations in Sulukule comprise various peoples, forming an urban periphery. The association of Sulukule with crafts has persisted since the primitive accumulation periods established by the market outside the city walls. This area is equally productive for those who grow vegetables in the orchards as it is for those who practice traditional trades such as tinsmithing in Edirnekapi. This custom point stands out for its commercial activity. (See Somersan and Kirca-Schroeder, 2007; Ortaylı, 1994).

A Neighbourhood Economy: Sulukule Entertainment Houses



Figure 4. American dancer Ann Miller's visit to Sulukule (Talayer, 1955).¹⁸

Çiftetelli and 1950s belly dance performances, which are not part of the national repertoire, have long been popular in tourist shows through 'Sulukule and its Gypsies.' The Gypsies in Sulukule, who were hired as dancers in entertainment venues outside the neighbourhood, including house parties, promenades, and gazinos, had previously performed during celebrations in palaces and mansions and worked under guilds. Beginning in the 1950s, while the musicians and dancers from Sulukule continued to perform in public and private spaces outside their neighbourhood, they also converted outdoor parts that connected to their homes, the passageways between adjacent buildings into entertainment venues. This new form can be seen as an updated version of the organization of entertainment branches that have existed since the Imperial period through the guild system (Akçura, 2019; Uçan, 2011; Somersan and Kırca-Schroeder, 2007) However, this new form differs from the previous structure by altering the spatial order within the neighbourhood and conveying spatial re-meaning through its popularity both in the neighbourhood and beyond. In the guild system, a traditional trade union organization from the imperial period, dancers and musicians (*Çengi, Köçek*) affiliated with the craftsmen's guild were artisans hired for performances and celebrations. However, musicians and dancers hired from outside the neighborhood are not mentioned

¹⁸ "Hilton's guests enjoyed a cruise on the Bosphorus yesterday. Ann Miller, who attended a Sulukule night, mentioned that she attempted to belly dance but was unable to do so". Ann Miller (1923-2004) was an American dancer, singer, and actress who gained fame in the 20th century, especially during the 1940s and 1950s, through her appearances in Hollywood musicals. The Turkish people particularly appreciated her for her tap dancing skills in the musical drama film *Kiss Me Kate*, a popular movie of that era that was widely shown in Turkish cinemas. Because of this, the claim that the dance master in the news "could not dance ours" had a certain touristic appeal. However, it is quite ironic that a cultural phenomenon not widely accepted within our national framework is embraced when it goes beyond our borders.

in the Sulukule Entertainment Houses, and the venues are clearly fixed and marked. For example, signs hanging in front of some houses that read "...’s mother’s house, oriental dance" illustrate this organized spatial layout (see Figure 5). Therefore, the venue, which can be viewed not only as a cultural phenomenon or social event but also as a product, highlights the dialectical process of social, economic, and political relations both within and outside the community, and thus its production (Lefebvre, 2014). Sulukule Entertainment Houses redefine what it means to have physically neglected houses on the city edges through a performative and relational process. Highlighting the importance of relationships reveals a micro-level effort within the community’s coping strategies, as well as larger forces like urbanization, neoliberal capitalism, and rent-seeking zones that create urban ghettos. This renewed relationship shows how cultural knowledge and professional experience are transformed into economic capital directly and without intermediaries within its own domain.



Figure 5. A sign in front of the Entertainment House that reads, “Remziye’s place, oriental dance group” (Büber, 1993).

“These houses were connected through intricate labyrinths to the owners’ actual one floored-houses, and there was constant back and forth between the two “homes” for service and performances” (Somersan and Kirca Schroeder, 2007: 100). The number of these houses, which were initially quite small and for which there is no clear information about their commercial content, increased to 34 in the 1980s. The houses do not possess licenses as “entertainment venues with alcohol and music,” but receipts are issued through the Fatih Karagümrük Sports Club. The municipality profits from the entertainment tax (*rüsum vergisi*) collected from the owners of entertainment venues. One of the owners of the entertainment houses from that period told me that he still keeps the certificates of appreciation given to them occasionally for paying their taxes on time

(Personal communication, 2008, July). The grandparents, uncles, and grandmothers of the current generation living in the neighbourhood, the majority of whom own entertainment houses, discuss how they developed their artistic mastery while serving different customers simultaneously in the rooms of their homes, which are located close to each other and connected by a small space:

Sometimes, 4 to 5 rooms are full at the same time. Each room features a large table, a team of musicians, and several dancers who take turns one or two at a time. Generally, after the *gazino*¹⁹ closes, the main need of the customers is to have fun rather than to eat or drink. Different bands play various types of music simultaneously; can you imagine having to concentrate and play your instrument despite the sound of music coming from the other room? This is how he develops the ability to focus only on what he is playing, only his instrument next to him. That's why the musicians of Sulukule play well together and concentrate effectively. They grow up in a challenging environment. The ear is responsible for everything; if there's a mistake, it's the culprit. You can't blame the noise. (Personal communications, 2011, 2025, April-July)

The mastery of the dancers reveals various representations of the dancing female bodies in the neighbourhood. There is a distinction between the dance form in the professional bodily expressions of women dancers in tourist representations and the dance form in their own representations in daily life rituals and social environments. Marta Savigliano employs the concept of auto-exoticism in her study, which examines the political economy of the demand for the exotic, using Tango as an example (2004). This concept, which can also be applied to Gypsies/Roma in general and their growing fame since the second half of the 20th century, relates to the new perception of the exotic other that transforms during presentation. "Exotic others laboriously cultivate passion to be desired, consumed and thus recognized in a world increasingly governed by postmodern standards" (Savigliano, 2004: 320). Thus, what is regarded as dance in Sulukule, outside of Sulukule, is a form of expression that 'auto-exoticizes' itself within the entertainment produced. The image of 'Sulukuleli,' often marginalized within the same community, embodies this passion. In my study conducted in Ahırkapı (2004-2008), another Roma neighbourhood in Istanbul, the local population's statement that "Sulukuleli's are the shame of the Roma;

¹⁹ *Gazino* does not have the same meaning as the English word 'casino'. It is the general name given to drinking and entertainment venues featuring music in Istanbul. For detailed studies on *gazino*, see Beken, 1998).

the Gypsies we follow are only in the movies; they are Gypsies, we are Rom” exemplifies this marginalization. Sulukule’s Romani dance performances reflect this memory that the intertwined expression of the 9/8 Romani Dance, recognized for its Thracian identity, with the belly dance among the Roma of Sulukule, stands out. While in Thracian Romani, local identity is reflected in the diversity of dance forms, including belly movements and steps; hip and shoulder movements enhance this diversity as a result of the professionalization of Oriental belly dance in Sulukule.

On the other hand, the environment in the Entertainment Houses is not just a music or dance show, but a holistic performance. Everything from the table set to the cloth on it is clean and meticulous. As sloppy as the old and dilapidated walls of the houses may look, the care in the rooms is much higher. Moreover, the older female hosts bicker with the customers, witty taunts, street fights, and (*hecal atma*) recitative calls are the sine qua non of these performances: “The man is bald, the woman says, “come here, curly” or he has jet-black eyes, for example, she invites him to have fun by saying “oh, my greyish blue, come and sit inside” (Personal communication, 2025, May).

The limited number of descriptive accounts of the Sulukule Entertainments in the literature, where we do not hear many reports from customers who have shared this experience, comes primarily from journalists and reporters. One of the earliest examples is by Islam Çupi, a journalist known as a sportswriter:

One early fall day in 1952, we had followed a trail towards Sulukule... we had rattled the wooden door of a wooden house. It was with such a first night that our day and night intimacy with blind Fatma, the patroness of the house where we would eventually be tied in a brother-sister knot, and with the dolls Remziye, Rukiye, and Hacer would begin [...] *Kör* Fatma would sing an *alaturka* song in her burnt voice after centering the bottle of *raki* for three or four doubles, followed by the artistic rhythm of the girls. If the lamp were out too late at night, she would never leave us; she would let us stay in her home, accepting the money in grams or not at all. (Çupi, 1994: 22)

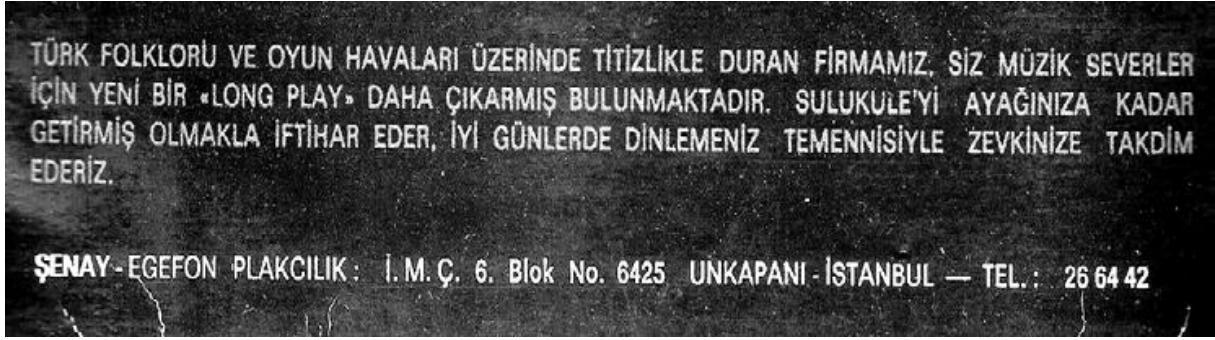


Figure 6. *Sulukule Romanları 1 Exotic Oriental Belly Dance Music*, 1976, Back Cover.²⁰

In Istanbul, 'having fun in Sulukule with belly dancers' was so popular that the production strategies of music industry bosses in the 1970s and 80s intended to 'take entertainment to the people's doorstep' for those who could not go to Sulukule (see Figure 6). Many records released under the name *Sulukule Çingeneleleri/Romanları/Eğlenceleri* (Sulukule Gypsies-Roma/Entertainments) feature this fury, presenting the 'oriental' sound of ambient music from the entertainment houses. The 1982 record titled *Sulukule Ekibi Evinizde* (the dancers of Sulukule are at your home) claims to revive 'the historical Sulukule entertainment.' It can be seen that the entertainment, which was referred to as 'historical' in the 1980s, recalls its heritagized fame. The women dancers from Sulukule, who have been performing in numerous gazinos and entertainment venues in Istanbul since this period, have been collectively known as the 'Sulukule Ensemble.' This title has been the only one used for the women who took to the stage with belly dancing until the 2000s. Even if the dancers are not from Sulukule, they exist on stage as 'Sulukule Ensemble' (Personal communications, 2013).

After the 1980 coup d'état, the entertainment repertoire, which functionally became a means of apoliticization, stretched the *alaturka* form. On the other hand, it also allows us to see the forms of entertainment produced by the government, their periodic variations, and the broader political economy context. Mehmet Kendirci, in his study on the forms of entertainment produced during the early republican period, with the claim of "modernness" (Kendirci, 2022), highlights that the government also partners with forms it does not support in terms of material gain, prestige, etc. Since 1950, through

²⁰ "Our company, which meticulously focuses on Turkish Folklore and Dance Tunes, has released a new long play for you, music lovers. We are proud to have brought Sulukule to your doorstep, and we present it to your taste with the hope that you will listen to it on good days" (Back cover letter). Similar to the example of irony in Figure 4, when Sulukule entertainment was turned into a tourist product, it was integrated into national folklore.

entertainment shaped by populist modernization, touristic representation in the liberal market, engagement with the global, and urbanization's role in capital accumulation, it becomes evident that Sulukule's peripheral labour force is acknowledged—even if not morally supported—to expand the centre. This partnership results in the 'marginalized' Sulukule culture being kept far away from the city's rent transformation and capital growth, yet never entirely disregarded.

In the 1980s, within the already popularized *alaturka* repertoire, the belly dance of the Middle East, along with the rise of *Arabesk* music of the period, expanded its market and achieved its most popular period. The *Gırgiriye* films of the same period (1981-1985) are a caricatured reflection of Sulukule entertainment on the screen. If true, Sabiha (Çıkarır), the inventor of entertainment houses (Çınar, 1955), recognized this popularization and understood the significance of the 'brand' for economic sustainability. "The entertainment houses, which employed approximately 3500 people, ensured the economic development of the neighbourhood. The apartment buildings built during this period can be shown as evidence of the neighbourhood's wealth" (Akçura, 2019: 106). During this period, when entertainment venues such as *gazinos* entered an industrial growth process through urban patrons under the control of the local economy, entertainment houses also sank into this market. However, entertainment houses serve as alternative venues for the urban lower-middle class who cannot afford the high costs of *gazinos*. Still, this situation does not diminish the admiration and interest of 'rich' tourists from abroad and the upper-class audience. Middle-aged musicians living in the neighbourhood proudly described the 'customers' they listened to from their masters:

Foreign tourists loved our entertainment, but were they the only ones? My father used to tell me that one night, Zeki Müren²¹ came to our entertainment; they were very excited at first, thinking he wouldn't like us. Then they realized it wasn't like that; they talked about music, and Zeki Müren sang songs from the classical music repertoire, accompanied by our female violinists. He enjoyed the performances very much. (Personal communication, 2010, March)

Gökhan Akçura, drawing from his experience in the 1980s with the *Sulukule Reorganization Project* prepared by the ministry, expresses the neighbourhood's desire

²¹ Zeki Müren (1931-1996) was a Turkish *makam* music composer and performer; an iconic artist known as the 'Sun of Art' for his innovations in stage costumes and performance concepts.

for official state institutions to regulate the entertainment houses that provide economic stability. It was requested that these values, which had evolved into a school that nurtured generations, served as a natural space for music and dance teaching, and generated economic output, be owned and secured by the state:

Years ago, we published the monthly magazine of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TÜRSAB). Naturally, we were also interested in the “touristic arrangement projects” in the city of Istanbul. When we heard that one of these was the “Sulukule Redevelopment Project,” we sought information from Ahmet Ertuğ, the Director of the Istanbul Planning Office of the Ministry of Tourism, who prepared the project. Ertuğ informed us that the owners of the houses that organized the Sulukule shows had requested assistance from the Ministry of Tourism in arranging their neighbourhood about four years before that date [1982]. In response to this request, the Istanbul Planning Bureau of the ministry prepared a project covering 34 houses. The Sulukule houses were examined, the organizers of the shows were interviewed, and it was decided that “the most appropriate venue was again the house/room scale.” A new series of houses was planned where the Sulukule houses were located, preserving the property-parcelization features. (2019: 89)

The project is advertised but fails to materialize. Meanwhile, as entertainment houses became more popular and a new economic model emerged, many families and women from Thrace and the east moved to the neighbourhood in the 1980s.²² This shift is one of the reasons for the onset of a period described by neighbourhood residents as ‘deterioration,’ as newcomers cannot fully grasp the area’s culture.

Dancers were coming from Thrace. There were also people from the eastern regions, such as Sivas, and from the western regions, such as İzmir, who wanted to rent a place and create an entertainment house. But this place was different; they couldn’t understand that. At first, we weren’t in this entertainment business to make money; it was our form of entertainment. Then, when it became touristic, when there was a demand for it, we thought it would be a source of livelihood and alleviate our poverty. So, everyone here was family, friends, brothers, and sisters. Don’t think of it like a store, sister. For example, if there were a lot of people coming for entertainment, a lot of food would be cooked, and

²² Post-1980 internal migration is a comprehensive aspect of Türkiye’s social history; it is not only about the new residents who settled in Sulukule. The rural internal migration (from rural to urban) that took place until the 1980s took on an urban character (from urban to other metropolitan areas) after the 1980s. Neighborhood residents stated that those who settled in Sulukule during that period also came from cities such as Kirklareli and İzmir.

the appetizers prepared would not fit in some people's cupboards; they would fill the cupboard of the neighbour across the street. By the time they took it to the customer, the kids would have already finished half of it. We used to call the houses shops when we talked, but it was not like a serious business. (Personal communications, 2007, 2008 July-August)

Nevertheless, interventions targeting Sulukule must consider a broader impact that goes beyond inter-community disputes or cultural 'degradation.' The post-1980 period witnessed privatization, the strengthening of free market mechanisms, the growth of finance and service industries, an emphasis on urban rents, the rise of new shopping centers, gentrification and spatial segregation, the commercialization of public space, and the implementation of global 'show city' policies as new features of Istanbul. This process, which began in the mid-20th century, transformed Istanbul from a single-centered city into a multi-centered metropolis after 1980 (Dökmeci and Berköz, 1994). This situation reveals a complex interaction between how market-oriented development expanded and how this transformation reshaped spatial, social, and political relations. For example, in the 1980s, the rising value of historic neighborhoods in terms of rent made Sulukule more attractive because of its proximity to the city walls. Following the large-scale internal migration after 1980, intense urban sprawl and the spread of conservative nationalist views, supported by the neoliberal order, also became evident in this process. As a result, the association of Entertainment Houses with 'debauchery and prostitution' was reinforced during this period. On the other hand, the 'carefully crafted passion' I mentioned earlier forms the basis for these claims, creating a story that justifies marginalization. Middle-aged residents of the neighborhood describe the reasons for the closure of the entertainment houses as follows:

We were making good money and paying our taxes, of course. The best we knew how to do was play music and dance. The state had been watching us since the 1960s; they wanted to turn it into a tourism center. We became increasingly popular, and they began to feel uncomfortable. Recently, they executed operations against our houses in the early hours of the morning, making them look like brothels. They wrote in the newspapers that now Sulukule is a house of prostitution! I pay my taxes; I don't harm or burden anyone. What other reason will they find to shut us down? (Personal communication, 2010, July)



Figure 6. Photograph from Sulukule, probably from the late 1980s, Yücel Tunca Archive.²³

Allegations of prostitution have also surfaced in magazine publications, featuring descriptions of ‘obscene entertainment.’ The May 1985 issue of the Turkish erotic magazine *Erkekçe* provides a detailed account of this entertainment environment. The text also notes that Penthouse Türkiye’s entertainment houses were “incorrectly referred to as brothels.” In the text, which presents information from the experiences of the magazine’s Sulukule research team, consisting of four journalists, the details about the rules of the houses do not suggest prostitution; however, the pornographic fiction is quite striking. (Erkekçe, 1985: 36-39, 104-106).

Finally, in early 1993, the Istanbul Police Chief closed down entertainment houses on the grounds of ‘moral concerns,’ which led to the loss of the neighborhood’s livelihood. Allegations of prostitution, which had been circulating for years, resurfaced after the houses were closed. This was because the main reason for the closure was the allegations of prostitution (see Somersan and Kirca-Schroeder, 2007; Uysal, 2012; Islam, 2009).

²³ The photograph seems to show women suddenly dancing in a messy room wearing everyday clothes, with musicians starting to play. The photo’s description doesn’t specify if this is a real moment of entertainment, a symbolic scene, or an unexpected situation. So, all options are possible; however, neighbourhood stories often talk about entertaining unexpected guests ‘as best as possible.’ What stands out about this performance is that, despite the seemingly downplayed look of the stage, costumes, and organization, the significance of entertainment—that is, dance and music—is highlighted. (see for photos; <https://alaturka.yuceltunca.net/sulukuledebiraksam>)

However, the real reason was related to the poverty conditions created in the neighbourhood following the closure of the entertainment venues. The economic collapse led to a significant shift toward the informal labour market. Moreover, for those unable to leave the 'protected area' or establish the necessary connections in the music industry, it led to unemployment. The neoliberal city, focused on capital accumulation, was consuming the powerless others and making them even more invisible.

Now, everyone isn't a dancer in the market; here, they're dancing in their grandfather's Entertainment House and making money. But they can't perform on stage in a bar or a *gazino*. On the other hand, not everyone can find a job in the market right away. Many musicians have started selling goods on the street, and some have started going to the vegetable market. (Personal communication, 2010, September)

The closure of entertainment houses in the early 1990s marks the first step in 'cleaning up' the area and opening it to new urban uses. Conversely, the commercialization of public space and the increasing transfer of control to the private sector reinforce the idea that entertainment houses, seen as uncontrolled use of public space, are incompatible with the neoliberal urban order. This clash also created problems for Istanbul, which has been marketed as both a city of spectacle and a 'global city' since the 1990s (Keyder, 1999), especially regarding its orderly, prestigious, and Islamic identity. The tendency in neoliberal urbanization to push low-income and unwanted groups to the city margins (Can and Silva, 2023) is evident in the Sulukule example, where the tourist showcase, closed to one of the several centres (in this case, the historical peninsula), is used as a policy to eliminate undesirable cultural practices. Therefore, the total closure of entertainment houses in 1993 is not just a moral or security issue; it is also linked to policies focused on rent-driven transformation, creating a global city image, commercializing culture, and spatially segregating marginalized groups in Istanbul's neoliberal urban development.

Conclusion

The entertainment houses of Sulukule were not just places for leisure but also tangible symbols of social resilience, economic innovation, and cultural exchange. From the 1950s to the 1990s, they served as both adaptive responses to Istanbul's neoliberal urban changes and autonomous survival mechanisms, creating alternative economic and cultural spaces for the Roma community. In this way, these houses highlighted Roma

human capital through music, dance, and performance, while turning this capital into marketable value within the tourism and consumer economies of the period.

Yet, the Sulukule experience is characterized not only by creativity and productivity but also by rupture and loss. The closure of entertainment venues in 1993 cannot be seen just as a moral intervention; instead, it reflected broader urban policies aimed at eliminating ‘undesirable’ cultural practices as part of constructing Istanbul’s global city image. Under the guise of morality, these venues were stigmatized and delegitimized, while in reality, their disappearance signaled the displacement of marginalized communities and the removal of their cultural labor from the urban economy.

The extensive literature on Gypsy/Roma socio-economic positioning provides notable parallels with Sulukule. Descriptions of Gypsies as “those who do not want to enter society” (Gimelch, 1986), “those who reject proletarianization” (Okely, 1983), “those who adapt rural economic strategies to urban contexts” (Gmelch, 1977), “those who refuse the totalization of the modern bourgeois order” (Münzel and Streck, 1981), and “those who occupy the gaps inherent to all complex societies, but rendered more problematic in modern ones” (Streck, 2008) highlight an enduring dynamic (Brazzabeni, 2016: 4). Sulukule’s entertainment houses exemplify this dynamic precisely: filling social and economic gaps with repeatable, flexible, and solution-oriented performance practices. As Judith Okely’s work on English Gypsies shows—highlighting knowledge of local economies, manual skills, salesmanship, bargaining, and role-playing adaptability (Okely, 1979)—such inventive strategies explain the distinctive professionalism of Sulukule’s musicians and dancers.

The entertainment houses thus functioned as an ‘interstitial space,’ a physical reflection of flexibility within the gaps of the modern city. Their value depended on their ability to create a socially accepted activity zone not restricted by strict formalities. The key to gaining such legitimacy was constant interaction with audiences, which turned these houses into spaces that were neither illegal nor disconnected, but rooted in the everyday intimacy of gendered and embodied performances. Paradoxically, the very flexibility and creativity that supported entertainment venues also made them seem threatening to wider society and authorities. Like the Ferentari neighborhood of Bucharest in Romania, described as an “inner east” in need of domestication (Pulay, 2016), Sulukule was

constantly portrayed as a space of marginality and possible deviance. Its repeated demolitions and closures show how these ideas persisted over decades.

In conclusion, the Sulukule entertainment houses serve as a powerful site for understanding both the cultural resilience of the Roma community and the conflicting dynamics of neoliberal urbanism. They were spaces of economic livelihood, vocational training, and cultural expression, while simultaneously being excluded from the circuits of capital accumulation that transformed Istanbul. What remains today is not only the memory of demolition and loss but also the acknowledgment of Roma creativity, cultural resistance, and the transformative potential of human capital. The legacy of Sulukule thus urges us to re-examine urban memory and social justice through the lens of this layered experience.

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