

“Albanian folk music”, Features

The analysis below provides an outlook on the Albanian folk music subject. As you will see from the analysis, we can conclude that the Albanian folklore intertwines different preferences, such as the ways of singing, musical scales, instruments or vocal music, etc. These preferences, are undoubtedly related to a macrostructure that we can call the Albanian "ethno-musical map", which comprises not only common features and properties, but also the differences that exist within the Albanian musical folklore.

The term "folklore" was first used on August 22, 1846, in a letter that William John Thoms (1803-1885), an English antiquarian, sent to the "Athenaeum" magazine in London. This term was proposed by him in the context of important discussions being developed in this magazine, regarding the most appropriate name that should be defined to indicate research and studies of customs, tales, proverbs, songs and superstitions of the people. According to Thomson (who also bears the nickname of Ambrose Merton), the term "folklore" (folk = small nation, lore = knowledge, study) was a specially composed name, thus a neologism. After being used for the first time, this neologism was used in various ways and in many European countries and beyond. For example, in Germany we have "volksunde" or "volkslehre"; in Greece "laography"; in the Iberian Peninsula "saber popular"; in France "traditionisme" or "mythographie"; in Italy "popular literature" or "demopsicologia = demologia" or "scienza demica" etc. Folklore scholars are called folklorists, mythologists, demopsychologists, or even anthropologists.

To begin with, we notice (refer to the map) that the Shkumbin River, besides being a boundary between the Gheg and Tosk dialects, it also serves as a natural guide for dividing our ethno-musical map into two parts. The area around river Shkumbin and further south marks the iso-polyphonic zone of musical expression (two, three and four-voices) or the zone which is otherwise known as "the multiple-voices". From the river Shkumbin and further north we have the monodic area of musical expression (monody, accompanied or even homophonic monody). According to professor Ramadan Sokoli: "wherever Gheg dialect is spoken, homophonic music is present". In the area surrounding this river, you can observe the phenomenon of rhotacism that occurs with the consonant *n* which transform into *r* or other rhotacism changes that occur with the diphthong *ua*, as well as many different phonetic features of Tosk dialect. Part of the polyphonic features characterizing this dialect is "iso" (the drone), too. The southern part of Shkumbin comprises the regions of Toskëria, Labëria, Çamëria, Myzeqe, whereas the northern part

comprises the whole northern part of Albania and the respective divisions of ethnographic areas.

Similarly, as in an equation, the southern iso-polyphonic zone is closely related only to the pentatonic musical scales, whereas the monodic area is closely related only to the modal, diatonic, but also chromatic scales. Consequently, these features are also reflected in the preferences for folk musical instruments, clothing, folk architecture, etc. As we will see, the Albanian musical folklore will embrace musical instrument of all kinds, including folk musical instruments, which are closely related to the scheme of sharing our folk music. Among them, I would like to mention the flute and the peculiarity of the monodic area, "lahuta" (lute) and çiftelia. Among the most prominent musical instruments regarding the iso-polyphonic area, we can mention the bicule (cylediare), the bagpipe or the lahuta (lute).

It is obvious that the Shkumbin River cannot serve as a real border for these areas, as on both of its banks, both in the north and in the south, there are several micro zones, which we can call borders. The folklore of these zones comprises features which combine both the folklore of the south and north. As a result, polyphony and pentatonics can also be found in some villages of Tirana county as well as in Librazhd. The case of Ladorisht village located in "Tosk Macedonia" tells us about the coexistence of polyphony and monody in folk music within a village. Anyway, this is a phenomenon that does not spoil the classification of our ethno-musical map.

There are still many unclear things about this controversial classification, yet this macrostructure of our musical folklore, despite all the existing divisions, is a direct expression of the fact that our musical folklore is original, that it is different in variants and, as such, does not create artificial divisions. Such artificial divisions do not exist, because a general popular compositional method, which ensures the unity of these two units, but also the diversity of their expression operates on this macrostructure. Questions such as "what is it and where it comes from" can be answered by saying that it is only one element of our ethnos, which is not fully known to us.

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