

Abstract

The work deals with interethnic contexts in the traditional Bulgarian music, which in the past were often neglected or marginalized for various reasons. Convergent processes which take place as a result of cultural interaction between the Balkan ethnicities are assessed. A role of the long-term affiliation of the Balkan region with one state structure (the Ottoman Empire) is examined as one of the factors, which could significantly help mutual contacts between involved ethnicities.

The author's starting points are based on the philological concept of the Balkan Linguistic Union, in which a set of phenomena and convergent tendencies in genetically unrelated languages of the Balkan area are researched. The author raises the question whether it is possible to formulate a similar thesis in the field of music and to define a notional *Balkan Music Union* based on the assessment of the main converging processes.

For this purpose, two distinctive phenomena, which are both present in the Bulgarian folklore as well as, to certain extent, in a broader Balkan context, are selected. Musical and cultural interaction between two ethnic groups is examined at the ceremony of the *Nestinarstvo/Anastenaria*, folk mysteries which culminate with a dance on hot coals and is practised by small communities of Bulgarians and Greeks in several settlements of the South-East Balkans. The terminological congruences in the specific lexicon of these Bulgarian and Greek communities are accentuated and comparative methodology is utilized to collate the music segment of the Bulgarian and Greek version of the ceremony.

The second case study deals with the asymmetrical rhythms (so-called *aksak*), which are widely involved in the metro-rhythmical construction of the traditional Bulgarian music. This phenomenon is, to certain extent, present in the Balkan music on a general level and it therefore represents a higher level of music interaction with the participation of larger number of ethnicities. In this chapter, a distribution of some *aksak* forms in the music of Balkan ethnicities is evaluated.

Results of the work are interpreted in the discussion and in conclusion, the author outlines the prospects for further possible research in this area.

Keywords: Balkans, Bulgaria, Greece, traditional music, nestinarstvo/anastenaria ritual, asymmetrical rhythms aksak, Balkan Language Union