# Intersections: Music, Tradition and Education

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## On folk music research and some possible goals of the IKS László Vikár Forum

János Sipos

I presented some of the following thoughts at the founding of the ICTM Study Group *Music of the Turkic Speaking World* in 2007, Vienna. Though many parts of the paper primarily concern an ICTM<sup>1</sup> research group, some of them might be interesting for our Forum members as well.

Why have we taken the musical culture of the Turkic speaking people out of the world music heritage and handled it separately? Most Turkic speaking people are bound together by related languages and the Islamic faith, factors not exclusive but very important in the determination of identity. They live in an immense area ranging from China to Eastern Europe, as well as in Western-Europe and in other parts of the world from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onward. Because of their different ethnogeneses, their musical languages are significantly diverse. Consequently, we have undertaken to research the music of a linguistically related but ethnically and musically inhomogeneous group of peoples.

Research on Turkic speaking peoples can be easily extended to include people having geographic or cultural connections to Turkic peoples, e.g. the Chinese, Mongolian, Russian, Iranian, and Arabic peoples or even some American Indians. Of course there are remote cultures like those in Africa, Western (but not Eastern) Europe, and the Far East belonging to different musical worlds with polyphonic features. Moreover, the higher musical culture of the Turkic peoples is connected through the *makam* systems to the southern part of Asia as well.

Let us think now about what kinds of methods to use and which research areas are preferable. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the *univer*-

ICTM, the International Council for Traditional Music, is the former International Folk Music Council, to which Zoltán Kodály was elected president in 1961.

*salist* mode became predominant. It was searching for the origin and the evolution of everything, from which developed *comparative musicology*. In contrast to comparative musicology came (American) *ethnomusicology* with the same main question of how individual cultures function and its applications of social anthropology methodologies.

I suggest combining the advantages of both comparative musicology and ethnomusicology. At the same time we should use Bartók's and Kodály's methods, which are firmly focused on a researcher's own national culture while aiming to broadly explore its historical roots and cultural/geographical context by drawing on linguistics and other research disciplines outside of music. These combined methods might prove useful for studying the music of many peoples.

1) Collecting material	Doing concerted field work.	
2) Archiving	Cataloging, unifying and digitizing the material in archives and organizing living inter-archives cooperation.	
3) Philology	Searching, cross-researching and publishing documented folk music material.	
4) Analytical musicology	Determining and classifying melodic groups and styles in different folk music material.	
5) Comparative musicology	Comparing different musical languages, styles and idioms.	
6) Cultural and social anthropological aspects	Analyzing musical data and interpreting them in broad social-historical-cultural contexts.	
7) Description of historical situation and the process of changes in time	Introducing formation and transformation of musical structures, events, repertoire and especially drastic evolutions in style.	

Such coordinated folk music research might include the following successive, sometimes overlapping phases:

In the Hungarian research series there is a continuous expansion that can be divided into three main phases: During the *1st phase*, from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1957, the main goal was to find the ancient Asian homeland of the Hungarians. Because the Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ugrian language family, Zoltán Kodály and others tried to find parallels of Hungarian melodies in Finno-Ugrian folk music, especially in the folk music of the Cheremis people. However, it soon turned out that several musical styles are present not only in the music of the Finno-Ugrian Cheremis but also in the folk music of the Turkic Chuvash people, and that the Cheremis learned them from the Chuvash. At the same time – at the very beginning of scientific research on Hungarian folk music – Bartók started to collect and analyze Romanian, Slovakian, and Serbo-Croatian folk music as well as doing similar research in Algeria and Turkey.

In the 2nd phase, a period of areal<sup>2</sup> research lasting from 1958 until 1979, a significant research series was carried out in the Volga-Kama region, where László Vikár and Gábor Bereczki collected songs from among the Mordvin, Votyak, Cheremis (Mari), Chuvash, Tatar and Bashkir peoples. Thus the project to find the ancient homeland gradually changed into a largescale areal research effort among Finno-Ugrian and Turkic people living in a large region. This *areal musicology* followed the principles of areal linguistics, which classifies languages and dialects, in order to collate the territorial position and history of individual language communities, and to point out how different phonetic, grammatical and lexical rules manifest themselves in the area in question, independently of whether languages are related or not.

In the *3rd phase* – from 1987 up to the present – the area of research became even broader. I started my work where Bartók finished his: in the vicinity of Adana, Turkey and I soon extended it to include the rest of Anatolia. Later, I extended this research even further to include Turkic people living between the Volga-Kama region and Turkey (that is, the Azeris, Karachays, Western Kazakhs etc.), and to the folk music of the Mongolian Kazakh, Mongol, Kyrgyz and Tuvan people. For several reasons, the music

areal is a term used in linguistics "pertaining, or relating to the comparative study of languages or dialects in terms of geographical distribution and contact rather than historical development." Oxford English Dictionary accessed online on 11 April 2009.

of some American Indian tribes – the Dakota and the Navajo – became involved as well.

I have spoken on other occasions about these expeditions and the resulting books. This time I would like to stress only one important fact again. Though the music of the Turkic people is at the center of my research, I have come to realize that the more the research among them progresses, the more it steps outside of the Turkic framework. For example, we can only understand Anatolian folk music through knowing Greek, Kurdish and Syrian folk music, too.

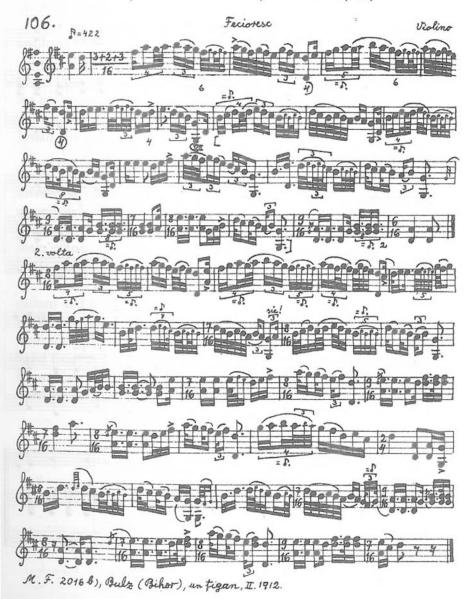
I present here a case that illustrates the importance of areal research. Lately, I examined "Lebensraum" and different manifestations of a special three-beat asymmetric meter, where the first beat is the longest, and the second and third ones are almost equal, or rather the third beat – especially in slow tempo – is somewhat longer than the second. On the basis of the main emphases it can be expressed relatively well by 7/8 (3+2+2) or 8/8 (3+2+3) time signatures.

This rhythm does not exist in Hungary but is popular among Hungarians and Romanians living in Transylvania. Béla Bartók's transcriptions show that the rhythm is also widespread in other parts of Romania. Three realizations of it appear in Example 1; the first one was played by a gypsy band from a Romanian village in Hungary (ex.1a), the second one by a Romanian fiddler (ex.1b) and the third one by a Turkish *kemenche* player from the southern coast of the Black Sea (ex.1c).



Example 1a. Romanian from Hungary

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### Example 1b. Romanian fiddler (Bartók's transcription)



This rhythm is very popular in Bulgaria; it also occurs in Albania, Macedonia, Greece as well as in Asia Minor, especially in the coastal areas of the former Greek city-states. It seems to be a relic of antiquity, described in the 4th century by Aristoxenos as *choreios alogos*. In all probability, people living in the above-mentioned areas acquired it from the rhythmic pulsation of ancient dances.

Example 2. A Greek melody



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The rhythm probably arrived in Hungarian areas through Romanian transmission, which would explain why it can be found only in Transylvania. On the other hand, since Anatolian asymmetric rhythms are not to be found in the folk music of other Turkic people, they undoubtedly do not belong to an ancient Turkic heritage, but we should rather suppose them to be of Greek origin. This is the more likely possibility because the Turkic people invading Anatolia had neither round nor couple dances, and with the newly learned dances they willy-nilly became adept with the new rhythms as well. And, rhythms can spread more easily if they are linked to dances.

We could extend the inquiry in several directions. First, it would be worthwhile to find other places where this rhythm exists in the living tradition, primarily in all those European areas that were once parts of the Greek, Romanian or Byzantine Empires. The investigation should spread over areas of former Hellenistic Greece, e.g. Egypt, Asia Minor and Syria. Another direction to consider might be to do a microscopic analysis of the local variant of the rhythm while observing how it changes during musical processes.

I have to mention here a few thought-provoking facts. The music of the Scandinavian peoples has been developing in parallel since the Middle Ages, but the folk music of some of them (especially that of the Norwegians) has preserved many unique characteristics and features. In Norwegian folk music the rhythmic accents often show asymmetric patterns, which may change in consecutive motives (e.g. 3+3+2+2+2, 3+2+2+3+2 or 3+2+3+3+2). This phenomenon is different from the one discussed above; here, usually 5 main accents (two with 3 durational values and three with 2 durational values) alternate with each other. If we add these values together, we arrive at 12/8 meter which is in harmony with the instrumental melody moving in 3/8. At the same time, we can find the triple asymmetry we are dealing with in Norwegian folk music. Sometimes different rhythmic variants alternate (3+2+2/3+2+2/2+3+2 or 3+2+2/3+2+2/3+2+3) but there are melodies consistent with the 3+2+3 rhythmic pattern. We see the 3+2+2 pattern in Swedish folk music as well.

The Polish *Polonaise* (and *Waltz*) has a triple rhythm, too, but the duration of these values is different in contrast to the 3/4 time signature,. In Chopin's *Military Polonaise in A-Major*, the duration of the three basic units change elastically, most often following a *short-longer-even longer* pattern,

while in the *Waltz in C major* the most typical proportions are *long-short-short* or *long-short-long*, very similar to the pattern we are discussing now.

The rhythm of the *zweifach* dance is also 3+2+2 and this rhythm can be found in South Germany, South-Bohemia (Domažlice) and in Bohemian areas where in olden times mixed Czech and German populations used to live. During my last trip to Austria I found this rhythm being performed in Burgenland. According to these latter data, this phenomenon might have been widespread in the past in Europe, and its existence may be camouflaged by a simplified 3/4 time signature. We find several occurrences of this rhythm in classical music, e.g. in the theme of Bartók's *Allegro barbaro*.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Romanian fiddler played the tune of Bartók's *44<sup>th</sup> Violin Duo* in this rhythm, and Bartók did not notate it in the musical score.<sup>4</sup>

An especially beautiful utilization of this rhythm can be heard in the Scherzo movement of Bartók's Fifth String Quartet, with a tempo indication of *Alla bulgarese*, (*vivace*,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , = 46). In some parts the 9/8 (2+2+2+3) pulsation changes to 3+2+2+2, and from the accelerating *Trio* it changes to 10/8 (3+2+2+3); then, with *Tempo 1* it changes back to 4+2+3. In spite of the 9/8 time signature, the movement is dominated by 3+2+3 rhythmic formulas crossing bar lines in canon (ex.3). These seemingly contradictory asymmetric rhythms find harmonic coexistence and are filtered through the talent of a genius so that they reflect the complexity of real life.

Allegro barbaro (1911) Sz.49, 31/1/1935 Hiversum and Bartók Recordings from Private Collections, ed. Somfai L., Sebestyén J. and Kocsis Z., Hungaroton Classic LTD, 1995, Budapest, 1st CD, 9th track.

<sup>4.</sup> The title is Siebenbürgisch (Ardeleana / Transylvanian Dance / "Erdélyi" tánc

Example 3a. Bartók Fifth String Quartet, first bars

## SCHERZO







Example 3b. 3+2+3 motives with 9/8 time signature

To conclude, I hope that this IKS Forum will be a fertile research endeavor that will be useful for teaching as well. I encourage its members to think of joint research possibilities and *realizable* large-scale projects that may produce significant scientific and pedagogical results.