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## SOME PARALLELS OF RARE MODAL STRUCTURES IN WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE

*by*

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IN the course of investigations made in the folk music of East European peoples a great number of archaic musical phenomena have emerged. Their abundance is such that the music of western nations appears in contrast to be of comparatively recent origin. The folklorist, who is acquainted with East European folk music, can, however, discern phenomena in western folk songs which—on account of their very rarity—western scholars do not adequately appreciate. It is proposed to draw attention in this paper to peculiarities of modal structure which occur rarely in western collections but are customary and characteristic features of the folk music of eastern peoples.

I. The following song (The Saucy Sailor) is included in Cecil Sharp's collection from Somerset<sup>1</sup>:

EXAMPLE 1.



Sharp adds the following note: "Usually the air is in the mixolydian mode. Mr. Hendy's tune, however, is not, strictly speaking, in a diatonic mode at all. . . . I have never come across another folk air in this scale (i.e., the aeolian mode with a sharpened third), nor do I know of one recovered by any other collector." Sharp was ignorant of the Moravian folk music in which this scale occurs very frequently, nor could he know of similar airs in Hungarian and Rumanian folk music which had not as yet been published.

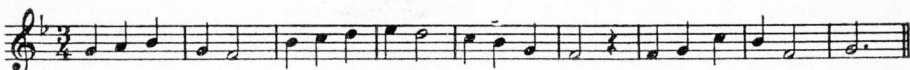
Here is an illustration from Hungary<sup>2</sup>:

EXAMPLE 2.



and another from Moravia<sup>3</sup>:

EXAMPLE 3.



The following is from Rumania<sup>4</sup>:

EXAMPLE 4.



Harvest songs of a similar structure are to be found in Canteloube's collection<sup>5</sup> of French folk songs. In the following example, although the tune ends on *do*, it would seem from the "ô" which has been added to the text that the final *do* is an addition and that the cadence was originally on *sol*. =g (L)

EXAMPLE 5.



These examples, taken from areas far removed from one another, demonstrate that we are faced with a special heptatonic mode which does not fit into the old theory, and that actual life offers much richer treasures than can be inferred theoretically.

2. Another rare system is to be found in Sharp's Appalachian collection.<sup>6</sup> This is a mode of a pentatonic system with semitone: *g, b, c', d', e', g'*. This modal structure occurs with great frequency in the Cheremiss collections, and recurs among the songs transcribed by Bartók from phonograph cylinders now in the custody of the Ethnographical Museum in Budapest.<sup>7</sup> While most of the melodies do not go beyond the fifth tone, some have a tonal range up to the octave. We find similar tunes in Hungary, but these have become hexatonic; the upper part of the melodic line is completed usually by the addition of *fa* or sometimes by that of the upper *la*, while the lower part remains gapped.<sup>8</sup>

3. In the introduction to his Appalachian collection<sup>9</sup> and in the notes to the songs as well as in his "Conclusions"<sup>10</sup> Sharp calls attention to a peculiar intonation which, I am convinced, is something that is closely connected with the problem of tonal structure. In some of the songs the third and seventh sway between the major and minor key and, in some cases, these notes are neutral. Moreover, although in some of the tunes we find no neutral intonation, there are alternating major and minor thirds at identical points within one and the same song. This is a phenomenon well known in Hungarian folk songs and is described by Bartók in his book on Hungarian folk music.<sup>11</sup> He calls it the "Transdanubian third" as it occurs with great frequency in that part of Hungary, although—as evidenced by recent gramophone records—it can be encountered over the whole domain of the Hungarian language. I cannot agree with Kodály,<sup>12</sup> who attributes this phenomenon to the



influence of the major scale of urban music. One has to bear in mind that it appears chiefly in pentatonic tunes and just in those rural regions which have not been influenced by the cities, in regions where the phenomenon in question is an archaically traditional one, as in the Appalachian Mountains. It manifests itself in both regions—in Hungary and in the Appalachians—as a melodic style turning from pentatonic into heptatonic, and I think I am justified in drawing the conclusion that we are faced with a specific development of the tonal sense in the course of this change of style. The neutral third crops up also in the East, among the Cheremiss, as is evidenced by Bartók's notation of phonograph records which are kept in the Hungarian Ethnographical Museum.<sup>13</sup> Bartók also points to a similar phenomenon among the Rumanians: "When peasants perform, it occurs fairly often that certain degrees—chiefly the 3rd and 7th, but now and then the 2nd and 6th too—are intoned unsteadily. This may be observed in Rumania as well."<sup>14</sup> In the original Hungarian edition Bartók stressed that it applies particularly to the old-fashioned tunes. They, too, have many pentatonic airs that have no connection with the Hungarian tunes and these must be regarded as an ancient European characteristic rather than a phenomenon which was the result of the influence of some Turkish people, for example, the Cumanians. This is the more likely as this phenomenon appears also in Rumanian areas which have never been exposed to Cumanian influence. Bartók's recordings show that neutral thirds occur also in the folk music of the southern Slavs.<sup>15</sup>

I would add that the Grusians use panpipes of which not only the tuning but also the absolute pitch are fixed by tradition and the neutral third appears in them. Stechenko-Kouftina identifies this kind of tuning with the Javanese pelog.<sup>16</sup>

4. Sharp's Appalachian and Somerset collections<sup>17</sup> each contain mixolydian tunes in which special importance is attached to the augmented fourth (tritonus) between the seventh below the final note and the third, thus giving rise to sounds characteristic of the lydian mode, as in the following example from Somerset:

EXAMPLE 6.



This modal structure is characteristic of a melodic style current among the Rumanians of Bihar (Western Transylvania). The following is a typical song from Bihar<sup>18</sup>:

EXAMPLE 7.



5. There are several melodies in Canteloube's anthology in which the relative position of the tones is suggestive of the tetrahexachord<sup>19</sup>: their paramount tones are the tonic, the fourth and the sixth; a strong emphasis is given to the leap from the tonic to the fourth tone and back: all this makes the air sound as if it concluded on the lower dominant. A similar structure is to be found in Hungarian tunes, especially in the new ones,<sup>20</sup> which Bartók termed "plagal," designating the cadence as a "plagal cadence."<sup>21</sup>

This kind of musical architecture with the connected melodic turns is very frequent in the purely pentatonic music of the Cheremiss with the modes concluding on *sol* and *mi* continued by a transposition a fifth lower as in the following<sup>22</sup>:

## EXAMPLE 8.



This is the only experience of the kind that I have as yet met with, and it is perhaps not safe to generalise on such slender evidence. Nevertheless, I have a strong suspicion that not a few folk tunes, which appear to be mixolydian, are in reality incomplete major tunes. . . ."

Sharp was wrong in his supposition. We have, in Hungary, much evidence that such tunes, having two endings of this kind, are performed by old singers always with the conclusion on *sol*, and young people are without exception those who perform them with cadences on *do*.<sup>23</sup>

The many East European examples that have been referred to must have made it clear that their occasional western counterparts must not be regarded as a mere matter of chance; they are, in fact, regular instances of modal evolution in the course of which they have, in the West, come to be isolated, and are now surviving only as hidden relics among the mass of new songs. Thus the quoted examples taken from East European folk music reveal only analogous points in the process of development without, of course, a necessary genetic connection with the western counterparts. The following examples, on the other hand, are such as justify the assumption of a genetic connection.

6. Another similarity is to be found in songs associated with the New Year, *chanson de quête*: the "Guillonée" of the French, the New Year's greeting of the English and the Hungarian counterpart, the so-called "Regölés," a more untouched form of this traditional custom which is accompanied by traces of masquerading in animal skins. These songs have a similar melodic structure, while their texts reveal even more surprising identities.

In the following Hungarian example<sup>24</sup> the short phrase of four bars is repeated throughout the text:

EXAMPLE IO.



The western examples are, from the French<sup>25</sup>:

EXAMPLE II.



and from the English<sup>26</sup>:

EXAMPLE 12.



The similarity of the first part of the western songs to the one-lined Hungarian air is so close that, taken together with the identity of the texts and the custom, they can no longer be accepted as the products of various independent processes of evolution but must be regarded as having originated from a common tradition.

The principal characteristic of these Hungarian Regös songs is their ending with a leap on the fifth within the major hexachord, which recurs in every refrain.<sup>27</sup>

As a matter of fact the majority of the songs consists only of a two-bar motif in major, the second bar being the leap: *do-sol*. It is only in their first line that the French and English songs have retained a cadence on the fifth; they are completed by a line concluding on *do*, the subsidiary character of which is especially conspicuous in the French air. (I should add that this cadence on the fifth occurs in some other French folk songs—even in New Year songs without being followed by a descent to *do*.<sup>28</sup>) This subsequent completion of the song by a second line concluding on the *do* has recently sometimes been found also in Hungary, especially in performances by children. We can therefore conclude that the cadence on *do* marks the path of modernisation.

Having already dealt elsewhere<sup>29</sup> with the similarities, as revealed by the texts and the whole custom alike, I need not go into this question here. Seeing that certain corresponding similarities can be demonstrated also in the Greek tradition it seems justifiable to assume a survival of Greek-Mediterranean traditions both among the Hungarians and the western peoples rather than to postulate a direct borrowing from the French, something that actually did happen in the Middle Ages in the case of Hungarian ballads.

The cadence on the fifth here discussed seems to indicate that the major hexachord, too, has modes other than that concluding on *do*. The above quoted archaic examples have preserved at least one of the other possible modi, that which ends on *sol*. And it is by means of these more numerous and clearer East European examples that the more isolated—and in their obscurity hardly understandable—western phenomena can really be “explained.”

The material I have had the privilege to present to you should serve as a warning that many an ancient treasure is still hidden in the folk airs of the West. We feel confident that continued comparative research work and especially a further assiduous collection of folk music material will yield many a surprise for scholars and friends of folk music alike.

## NOTES

Unless otherwise stated Bartók refers to Béla Bartók: *Hungarian Folk Music*. London, 1931.

1. Cecil J. Sharp—Charles L. Marson: *Folk-Songs from Somerset*, London, 1905-9, No. 92.
2. Példatár: Collection of tunes compiled by L. Vargyas to Z. Kodály's *A magyar népzene* (Hungarian Folk-music), 3rd ed. Budapest, 1952, No. 332. (See also Nos. 9, 331, 370, 343, 344, 370 and 473.) (No. 9 = Bartók, No. 40; No. 331 = Bartók, No. 280.)
3. František Sušil: *Moravské národní písně*. 3rd ed. Praha, 1941. (1st ed. 1832.) No. 139. Other examples are Nos. 4, 9, 17, 36-38, 119, 160, 186, 228, 296, etc.
4. Béla Bartók: *Cântece populare românești din comitatul Bihor (Ungaria)*. București, 1913. No. 132. (See also No. 168 and others.)
5. Joseph Canteloube: *Anthologie des chants populaires français*. I-IV. Paris, 1951. II, p. 271. (See also III, p. 176.)
6. Cecil J. Sharp: *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. Ed. by Maud Karpeles. I-II. London-New York-Toronto, 1952. No. 140 K.



7. *Marij kalyk muro*. Leningrad-Moscow, 1951. Nos. 56, 58, 78, 87, 89, 94, 145, 148, 151, 153-7, 166, 168, 203, 208-9, 212, (217), 231-2, 237, 244, 267. Also in Robert Lach: *Gesänge russischer Kriegsgefangener*. I. Bd. 3. Abt. *Tscheremissische Gesänge*. Wien, 1929. (Ak. d. Wiss. Phil.-Hist. Kl., Sitz. b. 204. Bd., 5. Abh.) Nos. 1-11, etc.; MF 624C in Ethn. Mus. Budapest; Collected by J. Wichmann.
8. *Op. cit.* Note 2. Nos. 186-187. (No. 187 = Bartók, No. 146.)
9. *Op. cit.* Note 6. Nos. 5B, 49M, 82F, 82G, 106D.
10. Cecil J. Sharp: *English Folk Songs: Some Conclusions*. 3rd ed. revised by M. Karpeles. Methuen, London, 1954 (1st ed. 1901), p. 71.
11. Béla Bartók: *Hungarian Folk Music*. London, 1931, p. 18.
12. Zoltán Kodály: *Die ungarische Volksmusik*. Budapest, 1956, p. 25.
13. MF 624a, b, 625a, 627a, b, 628a; also, neutral third and sixth together in MF 625b.
14. *Op. cit.*, Note 11, p. 18; also *op. cit.* Note 2.
15. Béla Bartók—Albert B. Lord: *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs*. Texts and transcriptions of seventy-five folk songs from the Milman Parry collection and a morphology of Serbo-Croatian folk melodies. New York, 1951. No. 34b, 45, also 23b and 50.
16. V. K. Stechenko-Kouftina: *Drevnejshie instrumentalnye osnovy gruzinskoj narodnoj muzyki*. I. Flejta Pana.—Les plus anciens fondements instrumentaux de la musique populaire géorgienne. I. Le flûte de Pan. Tiflis, 1936: See Chapter V, and the cent-table on p. 172 in particular (p. 228 in the French summary). The book in question was reviewed in detail in the *Sovietskaia Ethnographia* 1938, pp. 193-198 q.v.
17. *Op. cit.*, Note 6. No. 110E and *op. cit.*, Note 1. No. 34.
18. *Op. cit.*, Note 4. No. 173.
19. *Op. cit.*, Note 5. I, 187, 328. (= Bartók, No. 226). II, 17, 211, 316, 408. III, 172. IV, 416.
20. *Op. cit.*, Note 2. Nos. 180, 189, 440 (= Bartók, No. 131) and 441 (= Bartók, No. 128), etc.
21. *Op. cit.*, Note 11, pp. 40-41.
22. V. M. Vasilev: *Marij Muro*. Kazan, 1919. No. 22.
23. See Szendrey Zsigmond—Kodály Zoltán: *Nagyszalontai gyujtés*. Budapest, 1924. Tunes 5 and 6 and notes, p. 365.
24. *Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae*. II, No. 865.
25. Jérôme Bujeaud: *Chants et chansons populaires des provinces de l'Ouest, Saintonge, Aunis et Angoumois*, I-II. Niort, 2 ed. 1895. II, 156.
26. *Op. cit.*, Note 1. No. 126.
27. For a typical air of this kind see *op. cit.*, Note 24. II, 855. See also Nos. 776-876.
28. See Charles Beauquier: *Chansons populaires recueillies en Franche-Comté*. Paris, 1894. No. 90. In the major key, *op. cit.*, Note 5. III, 345. Also in Dorian key, Achille Millien: *Chants et chansons. Littérature orale et traditions du Nivernais*, I-III. Paris, 1906-8-10. I, p. 209.
29. L. Vargyas: *Francia párhuzam regösénekeinkhez: Les chants de quêtes pour le nouvel an dits "regös" et quelques parallèles français*. In: *Néprajzi Közlemények*, II (1957), No. 1-2, pp. 1-10.

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