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THE TURKISH LOANWORDS ČĀLGA IN BULGARIAN AND MANÉLE IN ROMANIAN

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Abstract

Bulgarian *čalga* and Romanian *manele* “ethno-pop” or “pop-folk” are loanwords from Turkish. Besides the etymology of these words, the features of pop-folk will be described from a linguistic, historical and sociocultural point of view. It is a phenomenon rooted in the local Romani cultures, which are characterized by multilingualism and linguistic creativity. At the same time, pop-folk in the Balkans is based on a long tradition of Oriental music.

Currents in popular music culture

The Bulgarian *čalga* and Romanian *manele*, meaning ‘ethnopop’, or ‘pop-folk’, are central concepts in the vocabulary of South-East-European music. Both words are taken from Turkish. A comparable phenomenon is the popular Serbian ‘turbo-folk’ (Roth 2012: 88).

Wagner (2008: 433) calls *čalga* “the most successful genre of Bulgarian music, a mix of traditional folk music and contemporary pop music.” “Pop-folk” has enjoyed increasing popularity in Bulgaria in recent decades and is seen as a unique kind of ‘Romani music’. It has been criticized for its trivial and kitschy lyrics written in vulgar language, although it has “today attained almost central social and political significance” (Roth 2012: 89; for a sociocultural problematization of the phenomenon see, e.g. Gehl 2010: 44–57). In particular, the so-called “čalga culture” has been accused of promoting and helping to cement obsolete traditional gender roles (Luleva 2008). In parallel, critics see in the Romanian *manele* “a mass phenomenon of poor taste and primitivism, of cheap Eastern tack” (Popescu 2008: 437).

Originally the Bulgarian *čalga* referred to the traditional light music of around the time of the Ottoman Empire and the Bulgarian National Revival. The Romanian *manéle* is a comparable phenomenon, also emerging from the musical culture of the East, cultivated unofficially in the second half of the 20th century among the Romani and today – though much criticized by voices within “high culture” – a mass phenomenon of Romanian popular culture. The two genres of music resemble each other in several aspects: both involve inventive, catchy melodies and incorporate elements of local folk music as well as Serbian, Greek or Eastern elements. Both *čalga* and *manéle* are characterized by the unconstrained and highly creative fusion of different musical styles, making them especially vital and fascinating genres within the global current of “world music”. The lyrics often have an ironical and humorous note. In many cases the content of the songs concerns clichéd themes such as desire, relationships and lost love, as well as money and “newly-rich” lifestyles. On a linguistic level they are characterized by vernacular expressions and obscenities, and code-switching. It is sung in Bulgarian and Romani and in Romanian and Romani, in the respective countries. The performers are mostly Romani. Listening to pop-folk is widely seen as a mark of identity. Internet portals such as YouTube and the Skoobe platform, for example, have made the music accessible to everyone for free – especially relevant for members of the Romani minority living abroad. The music and dance venues frequented by Bulgarian and Romanian Romani in other countries play almost exclusively pop-folk, ensuring the music fans remain up to speed on the newest hits. The pop-folk scene in its countries of origin is generally characterized by high productivity.

Travelling musicians’ argot

In Bulgarian- and Macedonian-speaking areas, as with other languages of the Balkans, there is historical evidence of argot, including – which is relevant for the present context – among travelling musicians. This includes above all the conventional argot of the travelling Schlager musicians who played in public houses and at wedding celebrations, and the forms of argot used among violin players. The original Bulgarian terms are *muzikàntski taen ezik* ‘travelling musicians’ argot’, *čalgadžijski taen ezik* ‘travelling Schlager musicians’ argot’, *cigulàrski taen ezik* ‘violin-players’ argot’ and *guslàrski taen ezik* ‘gusle-players’ argot’. The gusle is an ancient kind of one-stringed lute belonging to the folk-music tradition of the Balkan Peninsular. Travelling musicians’ argot, the Bulgarian *čalgadžii* or *muzikànti*, was documented at an early stage and described in studies such as that by Argirov (1901; on this article, see Leschber 2009: 128f). The Bulgarian scholar of argot Ivanov (1986: 22) documented some relevant examples in Bulgaria and Macedonia in the localities of Prilep, Bitolja, Ochrid, Kruševo, Veles, Skopje and Bracigovo. In a later study, Ivanov (1997: 165) found that 4.02% of words used in the Schlager musicians’ argot, *čalgadžijski taen ezik*, were of Turkish origin. More accurately, the Bulgarian and Macedonian variants of the musicians’ argot are characterized by a significant group

of words ultimately originating in Arabic or Persian, which were transmitted via Turkish (Ivanov 1986: 179). Argirov's (1901: 29) work made clear that not even the declension and patterns of word construction in these argot variants were adapted to fit the rules of Bulgarian. In the Bulgarian and Macedonian argots of the violin players and Schlager musicians, words whose origins are Romani outnumber those of Turkish origin. Indeed, words originating in the Romani language represent the majority within these argot variants. Historically, many Romani were multilingual, these languages at least including Romani, Bulgarian and Turkish; this is mostly still true today (for current data on the ethnicity and use of language see the 2011 Bulgarian census, which provides an evaluation). In the past it was above all Romani musicians who comprised the small orchestras that would perform at weddings and festivals in the Bulgarian and Macedonian villages and towns (Argirov 1901: 30; Kostov 1956: 412). Horse dealer and musician were once very common professions among Romani people, and these inevitably involved travelling long distances. Argirov (1901: 29–37) built a list of 163 words comprising the specific vocabulary of the travelling musicians' argot. The origins of a half of these – 79 – were in Romani. Thirty-four argot words used by the travelling musicians were Turkish or of Eastern, Persian-Arabic origin. A further nine words came from Modern Greek. Argirov was also able to identify nine words of Romanian origin and two that came from the Judeo-Hispanic. Only one Albanian and one Bulgarian word could be found. The origins of 29 additional words were unclear, though they probably stemmed from the Romani or the Turkish (or, originally from the Persian/Arabic). In the special Bulgarian of the violin players, *cigulàrski taen ezik*, specific usages based on hybrid models are found, which are formed of deverbal nouns originating in Romani, and Bulgarian verbs. Of particular interest is that, according to Kostov (1956: 423), words originally belonging to this violin-players' argot served as a basis for the formation of other argot variants. Elements of the violin-players' argot also entered and enriched the Bulgarian cant.

Etymology and derivatives of the Bulgarian *čàlga*

According to BNR (2001: 1111) the Bulgarian *čàlga* means 'Bulgarian folk song (usually with undemanding lyrics)', whose definition is supported by numerous references in the Bulgarian media (see Kràsteva 2000: 115). Stemming from this is the word *čàlgadžija* 'travelling musician' with a Bulgarian agent-noun suffix of Turkish origin in the variant *-džija* for masculine nouns (cf. Turkish *-ci*). The Bulgarian word *čàlgadžija* also has the variant *čàlgädžija* 'travelling musician', presumably taken directly from the Turkish *çalgıcı* 'id'. According to *Rečnik* 1982 the word has stress on its initial syllable: *čàlgadžija* (adjective *čàlgadžijski*) (*Rečnik* 1982: 987). A slight semantic change is seen in the obsolete Bulgarian *čàlgadžilàk* 'music' < Turkish *çalgıcılık* 'the profession of musician'. Closest to the original Turkish is the Bulgarian word *čàlgija*. According to Armjanov (2012: 369–370) the Bulgarian *čàlgotèka* means 'discotheque playing *čàlga* and pop-folk'.

In DTB (2002: 278) the Bulgarian *čalgà* is described with the stress at the end. The Bulgarian word *čalgija* is translated as 1. ‘musical instrument’, 2. ‘to play music, music’ < Turkish *çalgi* 1. ‘music, to make music’, 2. ‘musical instrument’, 3. ‘orchestra, band’, 4. ‘restaurant with band’ 5. ‘musical entertainment’, cf. the Turkish verb *çalmak* ‘to make, to produce sound, to play a musical instrument, to make music’ (see Steuerwald 1988: 211–212). According to DTB (2002: 342), *čalgija*, *čalgadžija* and *čalgidžija*, and *čalgidžiluk* are found in Serbo-Croatian.

Radloff (1911, III: 1886–1887) gives the comparisons *çalgi* (чалгы) 1. (Ottoman, Crimean) ‘the playing of a musical instrument’, 2. (Ottoman, Crimean) ‘the musical instrument’, 3. ‘the orchestra’. In Tietze (2002: 469), the Turkish *çalgi* (*çalgu*) is *çal-* II with the deverbial derivational suffix *-gi* (see Clauson 1972: 417–418 on *çal-*, which means, among others, ‘to play (a musical instrument)’).

Van der Linden (2001: 323–324) accords *tchalgi Baghdadi* the meaning of ‘musical collective from Baghdad’. In a small inquiry the author surveyed speakers of Baghdad Iraqi Arabic, who understand *tchalghi al-Baghđádi* as ‘name for a small Baghdad orchestra’. This word in the Baghdad dialect could again have been taken from another language, potentially Azerbaijani, a Turkic language, possibly via Persian.

Etymology and derivations of the Romanian *manéle*

According to Popescu (2008: 437), *manéle* has been present in Romanian since the 17th century. Ciorănescu (2001: 488) derives the Romanian *maneá*, usually used in the plural *manéle* ‘Turkish melodies’, from the Turkish *mane*, DLR (1965: 81) Rom. *maneá* (1). We can also compare the Bulgarian (dial., arch.) *manè* (2) (see BER, 3: 595, 649; *Rečnik* 1998, 9: 22) ‘song’, which originates from a phonetic variant of the Turkish *mani* ‘kind of folk song’, ‘antiphons with verses of a specific number of accentuated syllables’, ‘singing poem’. The word is also evidenced in the Bulgarian dialect as *maanè*, *manii* ‘Eastern music composition with a slow, meandering melody’, and in Kilkis/Aegean Macedonia ‘song with a theme of love or mourning’. (*Rečnik* 1982: 498).

Suciu (2010: 477–408) describes the Romanian *maneá*, pl. *manéle* – traditional 1. (lit., rare) ‘love song of Eastern or Turkish origin’, with the modern meaning of 3. ‘Romanian light music genre with traditional influences, originating around 1950–1960 in Romani circles, then entering Romanian subculture, with lively rhythms (...), etc., taken from the Turkish *mani* ‘type of folk song’, arch. *mānī*, arch. and dial. **māne* (cf. Tatar *mane*) < Arabic *manā*. Similarly, Räsänen (1969: 326) describes (Ottoman) *mani* ‘folk song’, (Crimean) *manä* ‘folk song, melody’; Steuerwald (1988: 758) describes the Turkish *māni* ‘traditional folk poem, (usually) in verses of four lines each with seven syllables, with the rhyme scheme a, a, b, a’. Eyuboğlu (1995: 474) confirms that the Turkish *māni* II was taken from the Arabic *mānā*.

For the Romanian argot Volceanov (2006: 158) establishes *manelist* (m.), pl. *maneliști*, *manelistă* (f.), pl. *maneliște* as nouns and adjectives, with the meanings 1. (pej.) ‘(singer) who performs songs of doubtful artistic merit, with lyrics that are often

vulgar or obscene' and 2. '(singer) who performs entertaining or love songs with slow-moving melody typical of Eastern peoples', although the latter seems to be the traditional, value-free and older meaning. The Romanian adjectives *manelistic* and *manelós* are rare and used mostly in literary contexts, and only begin to be evidenced at the beginning of the 21st century.

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