NAMES OF ROMANIAN FOLK DANCES

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Abstract

Through the richness of their semantics, folk dances can serve as documents for the historical and geographical space in which their creators live, should they be choreographers, musicians or many dedicated dancers. Names of folk dances are related to the forms takent these dances, to the place in which they were first performed, to the people who created them. Some of them have entered the lexis of Romanian as common nouns, others preserve their individuality as proper names, which might include anthroponyms, toponyms, hidronyms, all of them essential elements for the distinctive Romanian specificity.

Key-words: *folklore, folk dances, names, Romanian, onomastics*

Résumé

Par la richesse de leurs significations, les danses populaires peuvent servir comme documents pour l'histoire et l'espace géographique où vivent leurs créateurs, chorégraphes, musiciens ou simples danseurs passionnés. Les noms des danses populaires reflètent la forme sous laquelle elles se présentent, l'endroit où on les a dansées pour la première fois et nous renseignent sur leurs créateurs. Certains de ces noms sont entrés dans le lexique roumain comme noms communs, d'autres gardent leur individualité comme noms propres; parmi ces derniers l'on compte des anthroponymes, des toponymes et des hydronymes, qui sont autant d'éléments essentiels qui marquent la spécificité roumaine.

Mots-clés: *folklore, danses populaires, noms, Roumain, onomastique*

Folk dances represent the soul of a nation. As a folk art form, characterized by originality and complexity, folk dances are a manifestation of a nation's will. Through folk dances, people could express their feelings of joy or sadness and they could reinforce their individuality in connection with other nations.

Names of folk dances present a linguistic interest due to the elements of onomastics that characterize them (antroponyms, toponyms, hydronyms). They are also linguistically relevant from ethnological and cultural points of view, as they mark the Romanian specificity which has been preserved from immemorial times up to now. Names of folk dances are diverse. They can refer to flowers (*bobocica*), fruits (*alunelul*), animals (*ariciul*) or persons

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(*Brâul lui Murgu*), to places or regions (*lugojana, ardeleana*) as well asto rivers (*jiana*).

Whether traditional or new, spontaneous or organized, folk dances do illustrate a message by means of which they declare themselves as part of the cultural history of a nation. They are able to reveal the people's feelings and wishes in a sincere, direct manner, they are closely related to the life and history of nations, they faithfully accompany people in joy or sadness; thus they succeed in to equally expressing the character, temperament, force, wit and wisdom, as well as the sense of humour that a nation exhibits.

Romania possesses a rich and complex thesaurus of folklore. Romanian folk dances, well known through their beauty and great diversity, are part of this thesaurus together with folk songs, anecdotes, legends and poetry; they appear in a great variety of regional forms, and are known under the name of *horas* or dances.

For instance, the *hora* is one of the best known and most frequently performed dances. This term does express the idea of collectivity, it is a group dance, since it is always performed by many persons. *Hora* implies simultaneously song, dance, costume[1], adornments[2], etc. It is important to remark the sacredness of the *hora*, which presupposes a circle made up of only the most pure-hearted persons. An especially significant *hora* is *Hora căluşarilor*. For the community, *hora* is a metaphor, the circle is vowed to open in order to receive the young and the old as well as people who come out of mourning, but will stay closed for anyone who transgressed or broke the local moral standards. The name, *hora*, is used in most regions of the country, especially in Oltenia, Moldavia and Muntenia. This term may also be seen in locutions such as: *Hora miresei*, *Hora bradului*, *Hora căluşărească*, *Hora la patru*, *Hora la doi*.

Some dance names do originate from common nouns: *bătuta*, *brâul*, *brâuleţul*, *alunelul*, *rustemul*, *ariciul*, *găluşul*, *arcanul*, *geamparalele*, *sorocul*. These dances are characterized by virtuosity, energy, cheer but also by elegance and style. Other dances exhibit various other assets: *alunelul*, *brâuleţul* are performed by children; *căluşul*, *brâul* are mainly performed by men; *ariciul*, *arcanul*, *geamparalele* are performed by men and women; *învârtita*, *fecioreasca*, *trei-păzeşte*, *trei-leşeştile*, *fedeleşul*, *periniţa* are group dances, in pairs, or alternately performed by male and female dance partners.

Sometimes dance names are given by the name of the region or area where that particular dance is initially performed. The study of folk dance

[1] Cf. Butură, 1978, p. 304-321.
[2] Cf. Pop, Ruxăndoiu, 1978, p. 58.

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names originating from proper names (toponyms, hydronyms or personal names) attests the fact that every region is represented by at least one such dance, the most representative one, which bears the name of the respective area. For instance, such dances as *haţegana*, *someşana* or *ardeleana* are characteristic for the folklore zones Haţeg, Someş and Ardeal. *Haţegana* is a Romanian folk dance widely spread in the south of Transylvania, characterized by brisk moves, performed in pairs. The name of this dance comes from Haţeg, a region imbued with folklore and tradition.

Someşana is a Romanian folk dance characterized by more softened moves. *Ardeleana* is the name of a folk dance from Ardeal, with a moderate rythm, performed in pairs, and made up of two parts: *ardeleana de joc*, during which dancers perform slow steps and *mărunţica*, thus called because of the brisk steps that define it. Virtuosi perform various turning figures, helping their partners turn around them and pass under their arm. In Marga, on Bistra Valley, due to its difficult choreographic script, *Ardeleana* acquires the features of a *brâu*, keeping however its specific tune, and is danced only by young men. Some call this version of the dance *Ardeleana de la Marga* or *Brâul de la Marga*.

Frequently we may notice that even those dances that have been classified according to regions are further to divided into dances that are renamed according to a certain subregion or a village or even to the name of a person. Thus, *Someşana din Sângeorz-Băi* has already become a traditional folk dance for that specific region, since the *Hora someşană de la Sângeorz-Băi* has become a local feast which is held on Twelfth Night and marks the end of winter's holy days.

Other dance names that originate from proper names of sites[3] are: *Jiana*, which is the name of a brisk folk dance, popular around Sibiu and in the north of Oltenia. The name of this dance comes from the proper name of the river Jiu, which is the area where this dance was first performed. *Abrudeanca* is a folk dance from Ardeal, with a moderate binary rythm, very similar to *ardeleana*, *lugojana*, *someşana*. The area in which it is performed is Abrud, a toponym which also offers the name of this dance. *Braşoveanca* is one of the best known dances from Ţara Bârsei (south-east of Transylvania). This dance is also to be found in Moldavia, Dobrogea, Oltenia. The origin of its name is the object of debates, since there are several theories about it. One of these hypotheses argues that Braşoveanca means "the dance from the city of Braşov". Germans used to call this dance *Săseasca*, that is "the dance of Transylvanian Saxons". *Breaza*[4] (the dance

[3] Cf. Pitiriciu, 2011, p. 82-84.
[4] Cf. Iordan, 1963, p. 80.

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Ca-la-Breaza), is a Romanian folk dance performed in the sub-Carpathian area and in the south of Ardeal, which has a syncopated rythm. The name is derived from the proper name Breaza, a region from Ardeal. *Lugojana* and *Târnava* are two Romanian folk dances performed in pairs, with a moderate rythm, widely spread in the place of Lugoj and of Târnave.

2. Many names of folk dances are nouns with determiners representing names of persons, sites, etc. The structure of dance names is diverse:

- noun + genitive noun:

Brâul almăjenilor, Brâul carpenilor, Brâul ciclăenilor, Brâu Câmpulungului, Hora ceasului, Hora fetelor, Hora miresei, Jocul bradului, Jocul steagului, Sârba dogarilor and others.

- noun + preposition + accusative noun:

Dans din Oaş, Suită din Ţara Moţilor, Sorocul din Felna, Bătrânescul din Groşi, Dansul din Făgăraş, Dansul din Someş, Someşana din Sângeorz-Băi, Brâul din Banat, Brâul de la Bran, Brâul de la Murgu, Alunelul de la Goicea, Ardeleana de la Rugi, Alunelul de la Vlădila, Bătuta de la Vorona, Geamparale de la Islovăţ, Fecioreasca de pe Mureş, Ţarina de la Abrud, Învârtita de la Sibiu and so on. Many names with this structure contain toponyms.

- noun + adjective:

Alunelul bătut, Arcanul bătrânesc, Ardeleana bănăţeană, Brâul bătrân, Căiuţul moldovenesc, Căluşul oltenesc, Dansul oltenesc, Dansul moldovenesc, Rustemul oltenesc, Sârba căluşerească.

The anthroponyms present in the names of folk dances do underline the originality and personal features brought along by the creator of a unique variety of dance: *Ardeleana lui Luca*, *Brâul lui Murgu*, *Brâul lui Arsene*, *Brâul lui Toma* a.s.o.

As a manifestation of collectivity, based on traditon and customs, folk dances have continued to develop, they have been enriched by the addition of certain linguistic elements such as the ones from the category of deonomastics or names of persons. Originality provided by folk music and folk verse does constitute a source of additional assets which provide expressive value to folk dances.

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