

Herwig Milde:

The Bulgarian Dance Folklore

(coop.: Belcho Stanev, Varna, Bulgaria)

(C) 2004 Herwig Milde, Freiburg Br., Germany. 254 pages. Published by Dieter BALSIES Verlag, Kiel.
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A book about the background of Bulgarian folk dances, on the geographical, historical and social context, the costumes, the music, as well as on the main Bulgarian folk dances, their rhythms, types and step figures. It is aimed at readers who, as folk dancers or through other ways of approaching Bulgarian folk, are looking for answers on fundamental questions about the specific character of the Bulgarian Dance Folklore.

Foreword by Prof. Klaus Kramer, Freiburg Br., Germany.

Introduction: About the backgrounds of Bulgarian folk dances, and the origin of this book.

Notes on the pronunciation of the Bulgarian names and technical terms.

1. Geography: Balkans and Black Sea

Relief: Stara Planina - the actual "Balkan" Mountains - Sredna Gora, Rhodopes, Thracian plain, Danubian hills and Danube valley; climate, water resources, flora and fauna; Black Sea coast.

2. History: Thracians, Romans, Slavs, Turks ...

The culture of the Thracians, their religion and mythology and their traces in Bulgarian traditions; the material and spiritual culture of the Slavs, their spirituality and their social order, slavic heritage in language and traditions of Bulgaria, the proto-Bulgars: origin, religion, culture, social order and their remains today; Boris I., the last proto-bulgarian Khan and first Bulgarian Tsar; activities and importance of Kyril and Methodius; the conquest of Bulgaria by the Turks from the 14th century, oppression and cultural preservation under Turkish rule; the role of the christian faith for the formation of Bulgarian identity, the "Bulgarian rebirth" in the 1st half of the 19th century; insurgency, war and liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, Balkan wars and the Macedonian question in the 20th century.

3. Customs, holidays, dance events: St. Lazar's Day and St. George's Day

„Horo“ and „zadruga“, the "sedjanka", family celebrations (birth and childhood, upbringing, courtship and betrothal, marriage, house building, death and funeral), holidays and customs in the year (Christmas Eve and Christmas, around New Year, Babinden, Trifon Zarezan, Martenici, Shrove Tuesday, Lazarovden, Easter, Gergjovden, St. Constantine and St. Elena, Pentecost, Peperuda and German); the social significance of the celebrations.

4. Rhythms and dance types: Horo, Kopanica, Rachenica, Chetvorno ...

Horo - the epitome of the Bulgarian folk dance; outer dance forms; the authenticity debate; dance names and their significance; Râchenica; rhythm types: 7/8, 2/4, 9/16, complex rhythms, and the respective dances.

5. Folk music instruments: Gâdulka, kaval and tambura

Appearance, construction, sound and playing technique of svirka, kaval, duduk, dvojanka, zurna, gajda, tambura, gadulka, tapan, tarabuka; development of the Bulgarian folk music in the 20th Century: from solo to band; modern instruments; the Bulgarian folk music today, „sâbori“ (with 30 photos).

6. The ethnographic regions: "Oj, Shope, Shope ..."

Geographical location of the regions Shopluk, Pirin, Thrace, Rhodopes, Northern Bulgaria, Dobrudja, the general character of their dances, their choreographic style, preferred dance forms, rhythms and instruments, predominant style elements and figures, typical dances.

7. Steps and figures: The main Bulgarian folk dances

Descriptions of 47 popular dances of the six regions with their most common basic steps (88 pages), including time course and rhythm, readable in real time. With references to style and movements, name of dance and its meaning, origin, formation and hand hold, source.

Annex: Bibliography, lyrics of quoted Bulgarian songs, alphabetical index.

All photos by the author.