

SEEKING FOR ORIGIN OF SONGS WITH REFRAIN TUMBA AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

Lithuanian singing tradition there are some songs with refrains *tumba tumba*; *tumba tumba tumba drica* and similar to them: *èiumba èiumba èiumba dra*; *èiumba olia dria*; *tumdi tumdi tumdidi* etc. The aforementioned songs are considered by folklorists as „frivolous“, „ditties“ etc. According to singers, these songs were sung by children or „during entertainment activities“, while „working“, „during Shrovetide“, „parties, christening and wedding parties“. They can be either monophonic or homophonic. The aforementioned refrains expand one of the text lines or create a new one (Ex.1).

In some songs, a refrain *tumba* repeating becomes a drone part, *basso ostinato*. It is possible to propose that in these two-part (or more voice parts) songs syllable *tumba tumba* and similar imitate instrumental accompaniment (Ex.2).

Similarly the refrain *bam-bam (bim-bam)*¹ sung in the lowest drone vocal part may imitate bells (incidentally, the term *bordun* is related to bells²) (Ex. 3).

This thought seems not to be new – in traditions of most nations different syllables very often become an imitation of instrumental accompaniment (*Pamiatniki mordovskogo...*, 22; Ruitel, 1988; Khertsea, 1988; etc). However, in this case we are interested in particular syllable *tumba*, which as far as we know is heard in many-part songs of some nations. A drone based on repeating of one note of a refrain *tumbe-tumbe*, is typical for Aromanian songs (Gramosten ethnic groups) (Ex.4).

As it can be seen here on the back of considerably accentuated choir part, a gorgeous solemn soloist, melody is heard.

It is interesting that in Serbia, songs based on similar sounds, make a group of peculiar songs named by people as *zumba*. For example, one of these songs is sung by a group of men: some men are repeating a refrain *zumbe zumbe* (upon I-II-I-V levels). There is a following comment of ethnomusicologist: „A humorous song. Sung while distilling *rakija* (plum brandy), but also on carousing days, at celebrations or in work groups. Its folk name „*zumba*“ determines that it belongs to a specific group of songs. The group accompanying the lead singer only pronounce onomatopoeic syllables which indicate an imitation of instrumental accompaniment. Individual singers sometimes imitate animal voices“(Hey, Rudnik, you old mountain..., 64–66).. (Ex.5). The question is whether between Lithuanian refrain and a refrain of nations mentioned hereunder is any close connection or there is a completely accidental similarity of syllables.

In the Lithuanian language a word *tumba* (also in the neighboring Russian language *ò á àà*) has the following meanings: 1) a short post at the road; 2) pedestal; 3) a small bedside table (in Russian *ò á àà -èà*); 4) a blimp (an awkward, fat and sluggish person).

A word *ò â âi* is related to Latin vulgar *tumba* „grave“ that is considered as a borrowed word from Greek *ὄγι ἀδ* „hill“ (Fasmer, 1996:120).. An English word *thumb* „is related to a Latin verb *tum̄cre* „to be swollen out, to puff up, etc. Indo-European **tu- / *tû- / *teu-* „to swell out, intumescere, bloat out“; an English word *tomb* is a borrowed word from French *tombe* that was originated from a Latin word *tumba* that has a similar radical with a Latin word *tum̄cre* etc. (Klein, 2003: 787–788). It is supposed that all the words mentioned belong to the same Indo-European family of words (regarding Lithuanian, the following words should be mentioned: *tum̄ti*, *tumulas*, *tukti* etc. (Fraenkel, 1962-65:1139)). All the aforementioned words more or less are related to „swelling out, puffing out,,

Having remembered that Aromanian language mentioned belongs to Macedonian-Romanian dialect of the Romanian language (besides, there are impacts of other languages experienced while migrating (Muszkalska, 1999:81)), it is possible to propose that *tumbe-tumbe* contained in songs could have a similar meaning as the same radical words of modern Romanian. For example Spanish word *tumba* – „grave“; „catafalque“; *tumbo* – „shake, rumble-tumble“; „boom, thunder, clop“; *tumbón* – „lazybones, sponger, do-nothing, idler“ (Petrauskas, 2007: 721–722, 754). It seems that a refrain *tumbe-tumbe* existing in Aromanian songs (as in Lithuanian?) could, on one hand, mean „something fat“ (in music – deep tone), „inert“ and similar. It would be suitable to „express“ the deepest drone part (*drone*). It is interesting that in Sardinian *launeddas* the biggest drone pipe is named *tumbu* (the parts of a *launeddas*: *Loba*: 1) *tumbu* 2) *mankosa manna*, *Kabittsina* – *Mankosedda*) (Bentzon, 1969 (1): 14–15) (Ex. 6).

In ancient India (VII century) it was known about a stick cither with a pumpkin resonator. In „Mahâbhârata“ it (together with a bamboo flute *vam̄œa*) was mentioned as a *tumba v̄ ò â* (Kaufman, 1981:180). In this case *tumba* means a pumpkin, i. e. something „swollen”.

On the other hand, a refrain *tumba* might be related to a radical expressing an appropriate sound. Let,,s remember that there are different names of various drums of onomatopoeic origin. For example, *tam-tam* „a large gong“ [Mid-19th century. Origin uncertain: perhaps from Hindi “*tom-tom*”]; *tom-tom* [c. 1693], „drum“ (originally used in India), from Hindi *tam-tam*, probably of imitative origin (cf. Sinhalese *tama-tama* and Malay *tong-tong*). *Dù ndún* – double-membrane, hourglass-shaped drum of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. It is capable of imitating the tones and glides of the spoken language and is employed by a skilled musician to render ritual praise poetry to a deity or king. It has counterparts in East Africa, Asia, and Melanesia³. In ancient India *dundubhi* – a war drum, an assistant of thunder god Indra has one more name „Indra“s fist“ (it was mentioned in „Rig-Veda“, „Mahâbhârata“ and in others) (Kaufman, 1981: 31–32). It is necessary to remind here that one vulgar name of the names of Lithuanian thunder god *Perkû nas* is *Dundulis* (originated from a verb *dund̄ti* „to boom“; a sound produced by a drum).

It is possible to state that a name of a two-sided drum of Marii (one of small Finno-

Ugric ethnic groups; in Rus. Fed.) *tumyr* or *tiumyr*. This drum was used as a ritual and helping instrument. Sometimes its ostinato figures become an accompaniment to choir singing (*Musikalni entsiklopedicheski slovar...*, 556).

Let,,s return to a song refrain we are interested in - *tumba*. One of the meanings of a word *tumba* (plural form *tumbas*) presented in different dictionaries is „African drum“ in Central America or „Afro-Cuban instruments.⁴ There are some different names of these drums as follows: *tumba francesa* (percussive cylinder-shape instruments, used for accompanying to songs and dances; they became popular in Cuba at the end of XVIII century through Haitian blacks named the French⁵), *tumba vendu*, *tumbadora vendu* and others. Having remembered that Spanish word *tumbo* (which upon its assonance is similar to a noun *tumba*) means „shake, rumble-tumble“; „boom, thunder, clop“, it is possible to propose that words *tumba-tumba* (*tumbe-tumbe*) being repeated in songs can be treated as a kind of imitation of accompaniment of percussion instruments. By the way, here it would be suitable to compare an English word *thump* as well (it is similar to a word *thumb*, related to something „swollen out“). The last word is of onomatopoeic origin [Mid-16th century. An imitation of the sound]. *Thump* (noun) 1 „powerful blow“; 2 „a sound of thump (strike); knock; (verb) 1 „to strike a violent blow, to rap, whack; to punch, beat“; 2 „to thump, knock, tap“.

There is no telling whether there is a relation with a name of a drum *tambur* (Italian *tamburo*, Spanish *tambor*, French *tambour*). *Tam·bour* noun (plural *tam·bours*) military drum (4): a drum, especially a snare drum [15th century. Via Old French from, ultimately, Persian *tabî ra* „drum“, perhaps influenced by Arabic *tunbû r* „lute“]; comp. *tam·bou·ra* (plural *tam·bou·ras*) „stringed Asian instrument“: a fretless stringed Asian instrument resembling a lute, played to produce a harmonic drone [Late 16th century. Via Arabic and Persian from Persian *dunbara*, literally „lamb“ tail“]. Also comp. *tam·bou·rin*: „a large cylindrical two-sided drum“ (its body height is about 1 meter; appeared in Provance (France) XI century.); another kind – a drum of adjustable height (taking up the ropes connecting membranes). French folklore instrument *tambourin de Béarn* is a string „drum“ with enteric strings, struck by a stick (a type of zither) (*Pasaulio muzikos instrumentai*, 1999:224); also *tam·bou·rine* „percussion instrument with jingling metallic [Late 16th century. From French, literally “small drum,” from *tambour*]. Likewise com. *ta·bor* or *ta·bour* „small drum“: a small drum played with one hand while the other hand plays a pipe. *Tabors* were used especially in the Middle Ages [13th century. From Old French *tabour*, of uncertain origin: probably from Persian *tabî r* „drum“ (source of English *tambourine*.)]

I would like to say that the objective of this report is in no case related to a detailed linguistic analysis. It can be treated as a trying to investigate into possible relations between appropriate musical sounds origin (in most cases it relates to percussion). It seems that in different languages a sharply emphasized sound is

expressed by similar tone syllables: *tum-(dum-)*, *tun-(dun-)*, *tam-*, *tom-* etc. It is natural that in folklore songs they become a basis of various refrains and at the same time a basis of imitation of instrumental accompaniment drum?) (for instance, it is possible to state almost for sure that a refrain *bung bunga da* is aimed at imitating of a drum sound; compared to Latvian *bunga* „drum“). In Lithuanian songs there are more refrains with similar radicals: *tum-di tum-di tum-didi*; *tum-ta dritata*; *tumba (d)rylia ocha*; *tumba rasa* (combination of these words is extremely mysterious). By the way, in one of refrains (*tumbala tumbala tumbalalaika*), found in Jewish songs⁶, another musical instrument – the balalaika is mentioned (Russ. triangular-shaped stringed instrument [Origin: 1780–90; < Russ balalaika, equiv. to *balalai-*, prob. orig. a. v. base, akin to *balabolit*, *balakat* “chatter, talk nonsense“ (cf. Russ. dial., Ukrainian *balabáika* balalaika), expressive derivs. of Slavic **bay-* speak, tell, akin to fate, -phasia + *-ka* n. suffix]⁷). It is interesting that in Lithuanian songs the imitative vocable *bala* is used to imitate “gypsy” or other foreign languages⁸, for example: *Viè bala èium bala, aka èiuka èium bala*.

Nevertheless, the question is for what purpose this „instrumental“ accompaniment is used in songs – whether it can be treated as an original way to imitate percussion instruments? Or it can be treated as a means to emphasize an accented rhythmic? Or probably it is used for creation of appropriate gorgeous background for a free solo melody performance? (Ex. 7). It is difficult to present an unambiguous answer to this question. One way or another, in Lithuanian there was recorded a considerable amount of songs sung at wedding parties (as well as within other events or gatherings), when all the guests are sitting at the table tapping the table with fists or flatware (spoons, for instance). This way of performance provided the event participants with a feeling of fun and community.

Probably, in ancient times this tapping and knocking to the table had a magical sense – in order to protect a newly married couple as well as other wedding participants against malign forces (knocking to the table the wedding disguised are singing when welcoming a crowd of wedding attendants). Eventually, this way of performance became a funny and noisy helping means while singing within events attended by a considerable amount of people. It seems that a refrain *tumba* serving as a percussion and other syllables similar to it are used for the same purpose (remember Serbian songs *zumba* that are sung within parties with alcohol drinks, festivals; maybe there is a relation with Spanish word *zumba* „thrashing, striking“; „bell, jingle“; „humming top“ (a toy); *zumar* „to sound, grizzle, buzz, hum, burr“; „to hit, strike, punch, beat“; *zumbido* – „humming, whirr“). It could be that at one time *tumba* and similar refrains could sound together with a drone and a ritual stick knocking or together with any movement that makes a sound (stamping, smacking and others; even now in some songs there are similar the syncretism relicts: these are the songs which end with a syllable: for instance *tram*, that followed by a loud stamping). Or maybe a refrain *tumba* in Lithuanian songs, which is usually heard in a bottom part of polyphony

songs should be interpreted as something „fat“, „short“ and „inert“ (while mentioning times of affinity of Indo-European)?

Regarding the word *tumba* interpretation“s relation with a radical representing a certain sound: it is a separate complicated theoretical question. Probably this question could be answered with the help of other nations,, specialists of different areas. For the time being let,,s leave it open.

Notes

¹*Bim-bam* – an onomatopetic imitation of a ringing bell (*Lietuviø kalbos þ odynas*, 1968, 823). A very similar phenomenon (possibly related typologically?) exists in the multi-voice singing tradition of Sardinia when performing songs called *tenores*. Only the main voice articulates the text, while other voices repeat a series of syllabic vocables, such *bim-bari-bam*, *bim-ba-ram bam-bam*, *bim-bom* etc. (the lowest voices – *contra* and *bassu* – perform a rhythmic bordun on the I and V scale degrees using the mentioned vocables; according to researchers the function of these voices is sonoric) (Muszkalska, 1999:159–160; Raèiù naitë-Vyèinienë, 2003).

²One of the meaning of the French word *bourdon* – large bell.

³*Online Etymology Dictionary*. November 2001. Douglas Harper. Logo design by Logo Bee.com. Page design and coding by Dan McCormack.

⁴*Ispanø -lietuviø kalbø þ odynas*, 2001: 721–722; *Diccionario de la Música Popular Cubana*. <http://www.artisanat-africain.com/instruments/lescongas/congas018.htm>

⁵<http://www.artisanat-africain.com/instruments/lescongas/congas018.htm>

⁶*Tumbalalaika* is a Russian Jewish folk and love song in the Yiddish language.

⁷*Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2006.

⁸Lithuanian *balabãsyti*, *-ija*, *-ijo* intr. „to chatter nonsense, prattle,,; comp. *balbasyti*; *balabosas* – kas balabosija, gossip, rattlebox; *balabukë* – a chatty girl, *balalai* – interj. sound used to summon everyone to the sauna (*Lietuviø kalbos þ odynas*, 2005).

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მაგალითი 1. ჩანერილია პანევიჟისის რაიონის სოფელ ნიბრაგალისის ეთნოგრაფიული კომპანიის მიერ 2003 წელს, ლიტვის მუსიკისა და თეატრის აკადემიის სტუდენტური ექსპედიციის დროს, დ.ბარონაიტეს, ლ.ჟარკაიტეს, ლ.იუკიუტეს მიერ. ნოტებზე გადაიღო დ. რაჩიუნაიტე-ვიჩინიენემ 2006 წელს.

Example 1. Recorded by the Ethnographic Company of Nibragalīs Village, Panevėžys Region in 2003 during the Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academ Students Expedition by D. Baronaitė, L. Sarkaite, L. Juciute. Transcribed by D. Raciunaite-Vyèinienė in 2006.

Žiū-ri ka-ti-nas ka-čiu-ķ. tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba. tu-ri žą-si-nas žą-siu-ķ.
 tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba. tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba.
 tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba. O aš vy-ras pa-sau-li-nis. tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba...
 tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba. tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba. tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba tum-ba...

მაგალითი 2. ქორნილის მონაწილეები მღერიან ჟედუვას რეგიონის რადვილსკას რაიონის სოფელ რაუდონდვარისში. სიმღერები მოისმინა და ნოტებზე გადაიღო დ. რაჩიუნაიტე-ვიჩინიენემ 1998 წელს.

Example 2. Wedding participants sang this at Raudondvaris Village, Seduva district, Radviliskis Region. Song was heard and transcribed by D. Raciunaite-Vyèinienė in 1998.

(R) E-jo se - nis lau-ko ar - ti. pa-si-ė - mės pyp-ķę kar - čią.
 (I P) Tvyst tvyst tiur-tiur-liu, tvyst tvyst tiur-tiur-liu, tvyst tvyst tiur-tiur-liu.
 (II P) Var - la nu-sti-pu-si, var - la nu-sti-pu-si, var - la nu-sti-pu-si.
 (III P) Tum-ba tum-ba...

მაგალითი 3. რესპონდენტი კ. ბოჩიულიენე, დაბ. 1862 წ. სალამიესტისში, ვაბალნიკასის საგრაფოში. 1932 წელს ნოტებზე გადაიღო ს.პალიულისმა (*Lietuvinu liaudies instrumentine muzika. . .*, N 341).

Example 3. Respondent: K. Boèiulienë, born in 1862 at Salamiestis, Vabalninkas County. Transcribed in 1932 by S. Paliulis (*Lietuviø liaudies instrumentine muzika...*, Nr. 341.).

♩ = 96

Bu-vo dū-da Vil - niuj.
 Kad Ir bu-vo, ne-ky go-vo.
 Ro-tas ro-to
 Bam, bam, bam, bam....

მაგალითი 4. არუმინული სიმღერა “ტუმბე-ტუმბე.”
Example 4. Aromanian song “Tumbe-tumbe”.

Moderato ♩ : 75

Solist
 Grup vocal

e,
Tum - be - tum - be, tum - be - tum - be, tum - be - tum - be.

e, *Vru - ni - oa - rd, vru dau - ori,*
tum - be - tum - be, tum - be - tum - be, tum - be - tum - be.

მაგალითი 5. ჩანერილია მამაკაცების ჯგუფის მიერ 1996 წ. (*Hey, Rudnik, you old mountain. . .N10*).

Example 5. Recorded by the male group in 1996 m. (*Hey, Rudnik, you old mountain... Nr. 10*).

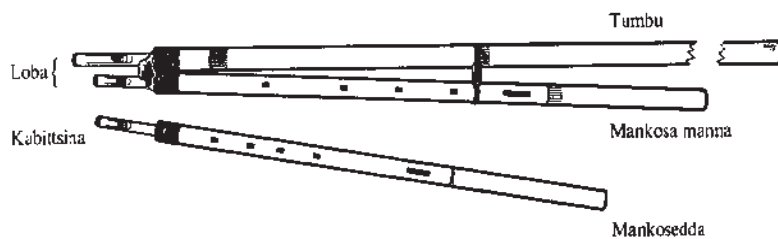
♩ = 60 74

ო-რი-ჯა-სე და-ნი არუ-ნი კად სა ვეჯ-ბე აო-ჰო'კუ-ნი და-ია ვი-დიმ მო-ჯე-ჯენ-ჯე
 ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე

ი- ჟუ! უაუ-აუ-აუ-აუ.
 მო-ჯე-ჯენ-ჯე, ლე-პო-პენ-ჯ(ე), კად სამ ბლი-ჯუ კუ-ჰე სთი-ტ'ო' ი-ჯა-სლა-ტე
 ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე, ზუმ-ბე

მაგალითი 6. სარდინიული ლაუნედასი.

Example 6. A Sardinian *launeddas*.



მაგალითი 7. ჩანერილია პაკრუოიის რეგიონის სოფელ კლოვაინაის ეთნოგრაფიული კომპანიის მიერ 1988 წელს. ჩაინერეს ე.ვიჩინასმა და კ. კალიბატასმა. ნოტებზე გადაიღო დ. რაჩიუნაიტე-ვიჩინიენემ 2000 წელს.

Example 7. Recorded by the Ethnographic Company of Klovainiai Village, Pakruojis Region in 1988 by E. Vyèinas and K. Kalibatas. Transcribed by D. Raciunaite-Vyèinienë in 2000.

Šar - ku - t na - ba - gut, ko - dë tu - jë mar - gë?

Tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba

Ko ne - bū - si mar - gë, šin - kor - kè - la ser - gë...

tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba tum - ba...