

## Instrumental Influences in the Mediterranean

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[This is one of three talks given in Barcelona in 2008 at the behest of Prof. Josefina Roma of that city. The other two are *Muslim Influence and the Global Mediterranean* and *Muslim Influence in Spain*]

It is a fundamental mistake to consider any music, and any aspect of any music, in isolation. No music is free of influence from its neighbours. Even that of such isolated peoples as were the Alaskan Eskimo before the coming of the Vikings shows some influences common to the peoples of the Arctic right around the uppermost parts of our globe. Perhaps it is easier for me to see this as a problem because my own field is not really that of ethnomusicology but of ethno-organology, the study of musical instruments. Thus when confronted with an instrument such as the *rebab andaluz* my immediate reaction is to look at similar instruments elsewhere such as the northern European rebec and, to take just one example from several, the instrument known both as the pontic *lyra* in Greece and the *kemençe* in Turkey.

And this brings me to the subject that I wish to discuss today, the fact that we, here in Spain, are on one edge of a sea, a sea that has not isolated the communities on its borders but has, at least in some respects, helped to link them together.

The Mediterranean Sea has been the centre of a single cultural unit to different degrees at different times. Its coasts have always been inhabited by different peoples in different areas, speaking different languages, and with often very different cultures and general *mores* of life. And yet there has often been a cultural link, and that link has been in our area of study. Not so much the music, though there have been many musical links, but much more in the instruments on which sometimes similar, but very often quite different musics, have been played. We can see a suggestion of this today, for Spanish pop, French pop, and Italian pop are all recognisably different, as we hear in the European Song Contest each year, but turn down the sound on your televisions and just look at the picture, and the instrumental link is there.

To some degree, this has been true throughout history. To what extent the Egyptians traded and settled across the Mediterranean is unknown, but we can find instrumental connexions in several areas. The instrument which is commonly known as the *zummāra*

today goes back to the Old Kingdom in Egypt and it is still used in Egypt, Israel, and points east, with very little, if any, changes from the pattern of five and more thousand years ago. It is played with added bells of horn in Tunisia as the *zakra* and with an added horn reed cap as the *alboka* among the Basques. It is always played with circular breathing, breathing in through the nose while blowing out through the cheeks. Doing this is a knack, which is taught to children with a straw and a glass of water; every time the bubbles stop, the child gets a smack round the ear, and they learn quite quickly! The main difficulty is keeping the air pressure equalised and avoiding a pressure drop, and thus a pitch drop, when changing from diaphragm pressure to cheek pressure. This can be avoided by using an external flexible reservoir instead of the cheeks, and this same instrument can be seen, again in Tunisia as a bagged *zakra*, blown through a bag as a bagpipe, a device whose use goes back at least to the Roman Emperor Nero. In some areas the bag has vanished again, but there is no doubt that the Dalmatian *diple* was once a bagpipe chanter. Ethno-organological history is still in its infancy, though the International Council for Traditional Music's Archæomusicology Panel's work is already bearing interesting fruit. As yet, we do not know whether this instrument was diffused over this whole area from Ancient Egypt; as we shall see, some of its spread may only go back as far as the Muslim Caliphates or the later Ottoman Empire.

One which is more certainly traceable to Egypt is still to be heard where we are today, but it seems to have appeared only in these two areas. Other forms of clappers are known from almost the whole area, indeed the whole world, but this special form of clapper, the castanets, is more limited in distribution.

Another instrument which appears in Egyptian iconography is the frame drum. This instrument we call today the tambourine. The French associated it with the Basques as the *tambour de Basque*, the Italians associated with the *tarantella*. The ancient Israelites called it the *tof* when they crossed the Reed Sea during the Exodus from Egypt, and the modern Arabs call it the *duff*. It was certainly used in Rome where it was called the *tympanum* and, before that, it been used as the *tympanon* in ancient Greece. Once again, who spread it we don't know; it may have been the Egyptians, or it may have been a people whom we know did sail the whole Sea, with bases in Palestine, Carthage, and Cadiz, and who even reached my own country, the Phoenicians, but unfortunately, thanks to somewhat drastic treatment by the Romans and to the paucity of cultural studies of archæological material in the Holy Land, we

know nothing at all about Punic music or their instruments.

With the Romans, we are on much surer ground, for we have many illustrations of Roman instruments even though we know nothing at all about Roman music. They were a fairly unmusical lot, thinking that music was an effeminate pastime, more suited to their subject peoples than to themselves, and while we have a good many descriptions of Greek music and its scales, there is much less evidence about Roman. They were, like the Chinese, syncretists and simply imported and adopted the musics, as they did the religions, of many of the peoples of their empire. We know that they used the Egyptian *sistrum* when they took over the Egyptian Isis cult and also the Egyptian small cymbals, and so on. They took the Greek *aulos* and renamed and elaborated it as the *tibia*. We know all their military instruments also. We have mosaics from Roman North Africa showing many of the same instruments that we see on mosaics from elsewhere in the Roman Empire, but of course we don't know to what extent these were adopted by the local people, rather than used by the Roman settlers in those regions. I don't know what, if anything, has been published in this country of Roman remains and it would probably be difficult to tell what the Spanish Emperors took to Rome from Spain, and what they may have sent or what the Spaniards in their legions may have brought back here.

Nor do we know, as yet at any rate, anything of the musical culture of such peoples as the various tribes of Goths, Vandals, and others who moved into this area, from the Balkans to Portugal, and later into Tunisia and Algeria, as the Roman Empire began to disintegrate in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. The influence of the Visigoths in this area must have been considerable, for their kingdom covered all of Spain except the Basque country for 300 years. Have any Spanish archaeomusicologists investigated their music or compared it with that of the Ostrogoths who occupied all of Italy and much of the Balkans? Or with that of the Vandals, who originated from much the same area and who occupied Spain before the Visigoths arrived? There is a convention of describing this period, from the disintegration of the Roman Empire to the ninth or tenth centuries, as the Dark Ages, but they are not so dark as they were, and the narrative historians, those concerned with battles and conquests, are filling many of the gaps, leaving far behind the cultural historians, among whom we should be working. So far, to a great extent, we are ignoring the discoveries of the archaeologists in our field.

Islam surged across the world within little more than a century after the Hegira, controlling the whole of North Africa and almost all of Spain by 711, and stretching through all of present-day Iraq and Iran to the east. Due in great part to the inclusion of the old Persian Empire, and despite the ascetic ideals of Mohammed himself, it brought much in its wake, not only music and instruments but many forms of learning, art, and luxury. Parenthetically, it was, in great part, the preservation in Persia of much of the knowledge of Classical Greece that was to fuel the European Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries. The instrument that the Arabs call the '*ud*' today was certainly known to the Sassanid Persians in the sixth century and it is found today throughout the Middle East, right across North Africa, in Turkey, in Greece as the *laouta*, in Bulgaria as the *cobza*, and of course throughout mediæval and renaissance Europe as the lute. In this country it was conflated with an already existing instrument, and its stringing and its tuning were applied to a flat-backed instrument to create the *vihuela*. I have already mentioned the *rebab* which was the origin of the rebec over the rest of Europe and which survives today in Morocco and the other parts of North Africa to which the Moors were finally driven from Spain. Its name of *rebab andaluz* distinguishes it from the other rebabs of North Africa, very different in style; this one was the Andalusian, one of several musical remembrances of their sojourn here. Another instrument that they brought was the shawm, the conical-bore double-reed instrument known as *dulzaina* in Valencia and *gaita* in Navarre and Morocco and, blown through a bag, in Galicia. This instrument I want to talk about in more detail in another paper, and suffice it to say here that wherever it exists in the world, and it is found, either bag-blown or mouth-blown, from the north of Scotland to the West Coast of Mexico and to the islands of Indonesia, it is evidence of contact at either first- or second-hand with Islam, through trade, conquest or other contact. We cannot ignore the fact, in this paper, that one cannot study the *dulzaina* and *gaita* without considering the Mexican *chirimía*, the Moroccan *ghaita*, the Egyptian *mizmar*, the Turkish *zurna*, the Macedonian *zurla*, the Breton *bombarde*, the Indian *shah'nai*, the Indonesian *tarompet*, nor the *gaita gallega* without considering the Breton *biniou*, the French *cornemuse*, the Scots *piobh mhor*, and, in both cases, many others.

I have been stressing, perhaps overmuch, the effects of conquest and domination. We must not forget the influences of trade, especially here in the Mediterranean, for before the days of the railway far more travelled by water, whether by sea, as here, or by river, as with inland Europe, than could ever be economically carried by mule, by horse, by man, or by

cart. Indeed the Phoenicians, whom I mentioned early on, had their base here in Cadiz because they needed metals from this country and from Britain for their bronze industry in what is today Israel. Where there are exports, there will always be imports if only to avoid sending back an empty ship, today for the sake of the balance of trade, so dear to all members of the European Community, and if not, in earlier times, for that reason (for who in Phoenicia or Rome was interested in the Spanish economy?) either as souvenirs or songs learned in the bodegas, or simply because those who remained in the trading outposts brought their own culture with them, a culture some of whose elements inevitably filtered into the life of the local community. To take an example from beyond our area, the reed-organ or harmonium was taken to India by the British for their churches; today the *śruti-box*, a miniature harmonium, is a pervasive, one might almost say a destructive, element in vast areas of Indian classical music.

Important, too, is the passage of peoples through an area. One migration of peoples that I do not have a date for, though I think it was around the 9th century, is that which came from somewhere in Central Asia, moved across North Africa, leaving some of their people in Morocco, leaving with them *al nafir*, their long trumpet, and moving on down across the Atlas and the western Sahara to become the Fulani people of Nigeria, where the same trumpet is found as the *kakaki* among the Hausa Emirates. From Morocco at some time before the twelfth century it came into Spain as the *añafil* and thence travelled throughout Europe where it became the general mediæval long trumpet and the ancestor of the instrument we use in our music today. We know, from much iconographic evidence, that they had brought *al nafir*, the long trumpet, with them from Central Asia; we do not know whether they had also brought the shawm *alghaita* or whether, as its name suggests, they had picked up the *ghaita* during their stay in Morocco. If I am right in suspecting the latter, that they collected it in Morocco, it would be a good example of how such instruments are spread, how as peoples spread and travel some things they bring with them and leave behind, and others they accumulate and take away. Thus music spreads from one people to another.

So far as the rest of Europe is concerned, that more distant from these shores, there were three main routes for the spread of Mediterranean culture. One was the Viking members of the Byzantine Guards, who travelled to and fro across Russia; this is how the lyre and the fiddle bow came into Scandinavia, for the bow originated somewhere north of Persia in the eighth or ninth century and travelled both to Byzantium and thus into the remains of the

Eastern Roman Empire and beyond, and into the Mahgrib and thus into Spain and across the Pyrenees. Another was the great Hispano-Arabic culture of Spain whose reflection we see in the *Cántigas de Santa Maria* and many other sources from the tenth century onwards. The third was the Crusades, with kings and their armies from all over Europe meeting the music and instruments of the Eastern Mediterranean and bringing much of it back with them to England, Germany, and France.

Finally, again within the Mediterranean, from 1400 onwards, there was the spread of the Ottoman Empire which eventually reached to the gates of Vienna. The whole eastern Mediterranean became one cultural area so that, for example, the Turkish *saz*, having already in the 16th century been the origin of the Italian *colascione*, later acquired some features from the Italian mandolin and became the Greek *bouzouki*.

Many more examples of such circum-Mediterranean links could be advanced, but these should suffice as a beginning. I would emphasise what I said as I began. None of these links, none of these influences, none of these similarities are visible unless our eyes are opened to wider areas than our own. It is Comparative Musicology that enables us to compare the instruments of the geographical and cultural area within which we work with the others from which they derived, to which they led, and with which they are cognate. As John Donne said, “no man is an *Iland* intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*”. The same is true of the overwhelming majority of our instruments. The same is true of Ethnomusicology.