



Section 1. Archeology

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LAHUTA. ILLYRIAN-ARBËR-ALBANIAN, MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

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Abstract

The Illyrians, a population spread across the Illyrian Peninsula, indigenous to this region since the oldest cultures of the Bronze Age, are direct descendants of the ethnic groups that populated this part of Europe since the Neolithic period.

Music in Illyrian has existed since prehistoric times with primitive instruments, being perfected in later periods, inherited to this day by Albanians.

Keywords: *Lahuta, Illyrian, Songs of Heroes, Albanians, Rugova Prehistory-ancient times*

Prehistory-ancient times

We find the first traces of musical instruments in prehistory, archaeological artifacts do not give us much information.

In the prehistoric period, in addition to survival activities such as hunting and defense, man did not neglect music, which followed prehistoric societies and later developed into world civilizations.

The early hominid ability to emit sounds of variable pitch with some meaning suggests that music at its simplest level must have preceded speech (Jeremy Montagu. 2017).

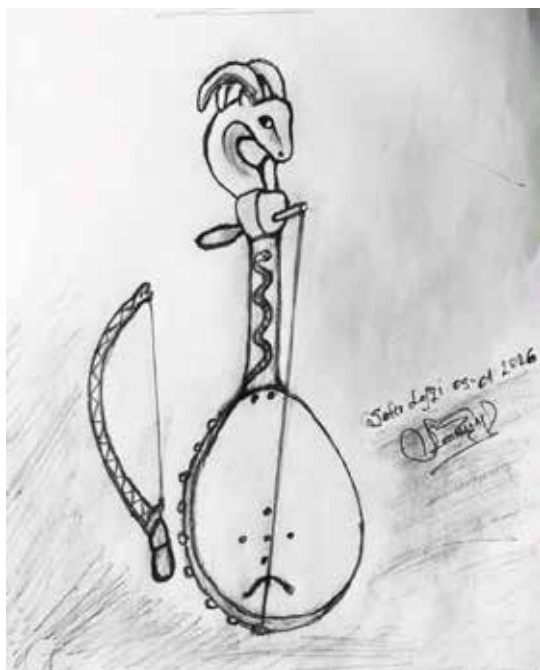
Prehistoric music, like other branches of prehistoric art, is extremely important in terms of the emergence of cognitive development and the evolution of human beings,

there is evidence of human creativity and symbolic thinking from about 90,000 years ago (Metin kartal. 2022, 7).

The spread of settlements over a wide area, the intensity of cultural layers and the increase in flint and bone tools is evidence of population growth, the appearance of anthropomorphic idols made of baked clay is an indicator of the organization of spiritual life (Stipceviq A., 1990, 7). Among the few artifacts found, we can mention: the representation of breath instruments such as: Fyelli (flute), syrinx, ocarina, etc. Ocarina, the oldest breath instrument in Europe, made of baked clay, discovered in the earliest settlement of Kosovo – Runik Skenderaj (Shukriu E., 2018, 39). According to international scholars, the main centers of ancient music developed in China, Egypt, Greece,

India, Iran/Persia, the Maya civilization, Mesopotamia, and Rome. The non-inclusion of Illyria among these centers is a consequence of the lack of proper study of the lahuta and its publication by Albanian scholars as an Illyrian musical instrument, publishing in scientific conferences.

Foto 1. Drawing of the lahuta by the author



In the 19th century, knowledge of Illyrian culture was enriched with a series of new facts – archaeological, philological, anthropological, enabling the creation of a much more accurate representation than that obtained from ancient written sources (Stipceviq A., 1990, 268). Throughout Roman rule the Illyrian religion stood close to that the Romans, the illyrian jealously preserving the beliefs and music of the ancients (Lajqi S., 2020, 18). Among the ancient authors who wrote about Illyrian customs and traditions, we highlight Strabo, who in his work “Geography” emphasizes that the Illyrians have always cultivated music using wind and bowed instruments (Iilirët dhe Iliria tek autorët antic. 155). From the data we have, the neighbors of the southern Illyrians – the Greeks and the western – the Romans, they did not have many reasons to sympathize with them in order to present them in a more objective way; many of the data they write about the Illyrians have a sound of antipathy and hostility (Lajqi S. V.,

2023, 44). The singing of epic songs with the lahuta has deep roots in the singing of Illyrian rhapsodes about the heroic deeds of their ancestors (Stipceviq A., 1990, 268).

Etymology of the Lahuta

As a chordophone instrument, we also find it in various languages and forms around the world, from Arabic – **El, ut**; from Old French – **leut**; from Italian – **liuto**; Croatian – **leut**; Greek – **lavuto**; Romanian – **lauta, alauta**; in Bulgarian – **lauta, llauta**; in German – **laute**, Slovenian – **lavta**, Turkish – **lavta** from Arabic **el' ud**. An evidence of this word in the Albanian language as the earliest evidence in the book Pjetër Bogdani **Cuneus Prophetarum** emphasizes: ...**Ata kënduekshin ndë mjedis e vashëzave e rasa të laudeve (they sang among the girls and the rasa (casa) of the laudeve** (Sokoli R.).

The terminology lavud (without wanting to go too far into the linguistic field, it comes from the Albanian word **lavdë**, weaving praise for the deeds of the saints *lavdë-lavud-laud-lahutë*) (*Lavdë in english means glory*) because we see its use among the Arbëresh of *Sicilia, Calabria-Italy* Lavud was inherited from the Illyrians and continued among today's Albanians as **lahutë**.

In our language, this word must have been used before the Ottoman conquest, it is clear that the word was taken from the Arberesh to the others (Minni, C. Dino; Ciampolini, Anna Foschi. 1990) in the Middle Ages, spreading it to other parts of Europe, and from here European countries and languages may have also taken the name Lavuda.

The lahuta in the Middle Ages to the present day

The arrival of other peoples during the Middle Ages in the territory of the Illyrian Peninsula, conquering and assimilated a part of the Albanians, they also adopted from them the lahuta. Legends have guided archaeologists to important discoveries, and although they cannot always be taken as direct historical sources, they provide valuable cultural context. Even today, Illyrian-Arbëror-Albanian folk music continues to be performed, sung, and danced to in many parts of the Illyrian Peninsula,

with the arrival of the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century changing its name from the Illyrian Peninsula to the Balkans. Traditional musical instruments are one of the rare treasures of Albanian culture, the craftsmanship of making musical instruments constitutes a special craft in Albanian craftsmanship. The making of musical instruments was initially done by each family themselves using local materials such as: leaves, grass, various plants, horns, animal skins, stones, wood, iron, etc. In the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the first musical instrument making shops began to open.

Making the Lahuta

The lahuta consists of an oval-shaped wooden pit, cavity inside, This cavity of the pit is covered with tanned leather, held on the side with a wooden peg. The body of the lahuta can also be made of gourd or tortoise shell, on the tanned leather edge of the pit, a wooden bridge is placed, usually placed slightly diagonally, on which the lahuta string rests, which is called on "*kamanec*" (Dukagjin) or "magjar" (in some places in Northeastern Albania). The lahuta string is connected and moved by a peg-shaped key. raised in a hole from the top of the tail of the instrument which is called a peg or loom (Tropojë), "krek" (Peshkopi), "gres" (Malësi e Madhe). The string passes from the peg over the "*kamanec*" and is held down in a loop shape, with a wooden protrusion at the end of the pit, Part of the lahuta is also the bow, made of oak or walnut wood, etc., which has the shape of a crescent moon curved into a crescent shape which is called "agrec" (*the bow*) (Krujë), "budat" (Tropojë), "ras" (Malësi e Madhe), "drocak" (Dukagjin) (Sokoli R., 2008). The entire lahuta is made from a single piece of wood, such as maple, chestnut, alder, oak, or walnut, etc., types of wood that hollow easily, In the Lezha district, they also use alder wood that grows in swamps because it is light, can be hollowed out thinly, and resonates well, The upper deck "Çapra e suprinës" It consists of tanned goat skin or cattle hide placed on the smooth upper side, The bow (argeci) is usually made of birch, walnut, harku (argeci) përbëhet zakonisht nga thupra e thanës, ar-rës, ect., its threads are made of black horse

tail. They twist and are placed from one side of the bow to the other, creating tension and arching the bowstring. The bow hairs are coated with wild pine resin, the quality of the sound and resonance of this instrument is not determined by the type and quality of the wood but more by the quality of the leather and its processing, processing of bow hairs etc. The lahuta's tail, which is the continuation of the box, it has no separate keyboard and ends with a carved goat's head, which according to Ramadan Sokoli may have been part of some ancient cult, or it can end with a heart-shaped ornament. The technique of carving numerous figures, which are realized with expressive force, presents many symbols of ancient cultures in other areas of life as well, in various objects, in constructions, etc. Even the carving of the snake – symbol of the cult of the forest and the clock – protector of his hearth, these indicate a strong connection of this instrument with epic song, with the environment etc. The lahuta is often decorated with symbols of ancient cults such as a goat's head, There are also lahuta's that have Skanderbeg's helmet carved on their heads (Sokoli R., dhe Miso P., 1991).

In particular, the carving of the goat's head follows us from Pyrrhus, Alexander the Great, and Skanderbeg as an Illyrian-Arberian-Albanian symbol. Among Albanians placing the snake in the Lahuta as a symbol the cult of the snake occupies an important place of this reptile creature, that can be found everywhere: in the mountains and in the field, on the rocks, water resources, in ponds, in lakes and seas. We see it as a sacred living thing on earth and underground, of water caves, well connected with the cult of soil water which most of them are preserved to this day (Tirta M., 2004, 112).

The sound is produced by passing a bow across the tail of the lahuta, while chords are changed by touching the tail with the fingers of the other hand, sound It is nasal and fits very well with the content of epic songs.

The common measures of the lahuta are as follows: The overall length of the tool is about 70 cm, the length of the tail is about 40 cm, head length, about 30 cm, width of the temple, about 20 cm, total length of the bow (argec), about 40 cm, the length of the bowstring (argec) is about 17 cm.

In the archaeological context, symbols carved on lahuta are material evidence of spiritual practices that archaeologists attempt to interpret through ethnographic and historical knowledge, which helps reconstruct the worldviews of ancient societies.

Location

The geographical spread of the lahuta in the country coincides with the spread of the songs of the heroes. We see the lahuta in Plavë, Guci, Sanxhak, Rugovë, Krujë, në northwest, then in Malësi e madhe, Hoti e Gruda, Kelmendi, Kastrati, Rranxat e Shkodrës, Dukagjin, Postrribë, Shllak, Nikaj-Merturi and in the areas Malësi e Gjakovës, and in other parts of Kosovo and Montenegro (Sokoli R., 1966, 92).

Usage

The way the lahuta is held depends on the occasion and the place, but usually the lahutari player stands cross-legged and holds the lahuta at an angle towards the right foot, along with the bow. This attitude shows family cases, by the chimney, another position could be where the lahuta player sits on a chair with his legs one above the other and the lahuta is held resting on his legs. The sounds of the lahuta are obtained by striking the string with a bow, but this instrument differs from other instruments of this genre in the way it produces sound. The fundamental difference is the principle of sound extraction, which is done with the "Flaxholet" (pine resin), The left hand rests on the side of the keyboard while the thumb creates a space in such a way that it controls the fingers of the left hand so that the sound comes out as clean and clear as possible. Only the four fingers of the left hand are used to play this instrument, and the way they move and open determines the tonal-modal basis of the piece played. The way the bow is used is very crucial for the quality of the lahuta sound and for its expressive properties when accompanying the singer. The tuning of the lahuta depends on the rhapsody register and generally its range of sounds revolves around the note *do* of the first octave. The lahuta is seen as very close to epic songs, with the songs of the heroes, the above-mentioned areas are areas where the songs of the heroes continue to live on. Rhapsodes continue to sing heroic

epic songs which symbolize the character of the highlander, the most favorite songs of the northern highlanders are accompanied by the lahuta. The lahuta is an ancient cultural and artistic testimony because songs accompanied by the lute generally exalt tradition, the cult of the ancestors, history, the glorious events of peoples throughout the centuries. Rhapsodes with lahuta sing to heroes and leaders to exalt their deeds with an epic and historical spirit. Even the most famous national epic "Lahuta e Malcisë" by Gjergj Fishta is also sung with the lahuta, Generally, the rhapsody is a performer, improviser and at the same time the creator of the song. The lahuta's accompanying role and its melodic ranges are quite limited despite the fact that it creates many variations, We see the lahuta in the introduction to the songs and in their accompaniment. In introductions, the lahuta rarely exceeds two or three notes, During accompaniment, the lahuta can create heterophonic deviations, while the rhapsody's speech has an intonation variety that extends from tetrachord to pentachord, hexachord and heptachord. In the introductions we can also see microtones which create contrasts of the melody, we also see undefined intonational chromaticisms in the introduction, accompaniment and narration of the lahuta's song. The lahuta line relies on the modal basis of the song and emphasizes it. The way the melody develops is first ascending and then descending. The ascent creates an epic elegiac situation in the song and then the descent is done in a gradual manner. The lahuta is used by men and is used in almost every mountain home, during the winter, by the chimney fireplace, but also on occasions such as holidays and weddings (Sokoli R. 1966, 92).

Today it is also used in open spaces in public spectacles, in rare cases the lahuta has also been used by women who dressed like men and stood like men (Haxhihasani Q., 1958, 169–176).

The epic of the heroes

The genesis of stringed musical instruments begins with the lahuta, a thousand-year-old single-stringed chordophone instrument, with which the Illyrian-Arbero-Albanian accompanied the epic songs of the heroes Cycle. Based on ancient musical creations, the songs of the heroes represent a cy-

cle of legendary songs accompanied by the lahuta. The songs of the nativity scenes are sung on the lahuta, not forgetting the legends and the singing of the Illyrian rhapsodists about the Iliad and the Odyssey, the bravery of Pyrrhus, Alexander the Great, Illyrian kings, Skanderbeg. The epic of the heroes represents a poetic and ethnocultural complex, among the special epics of the cycle we mention: *“Martesa e Mujit”*, *“Fuqia e Mujit”*, *“Orët e Mujit”*, *“Vaji i Ajkunës”*, *“Martesa e Halilit”*, *“Muji e tri zanat e malit”*, *“Halili pret Pajo Harambashin”*, *“Orët e Bjeshkës”*, *Gjergj Elez Alisë* (Arapi F. 1986; Uçi A. 1986; Lambertz M., 1958; *“Këngë popullore legjendare”*, 1965; *“Epikë legjendare”*, 1966; *“Këngë kreshnike”*, 1974; *“Rapsodi kreshnike”*, 1983; Uçi Alfred *“Epika heroike dhe roli i saj në folklorin shqiptar”*, tek *“Çështje të folklorit shqiptar”*, 1986) and to the battles of recent centuries, such as the Battle of Nokshiq. The Mountain Fairy is part of Albanian Demonology inherited from prehistory, her figure is a deity of the mountains, of virgin nature, protection of flora and fauna, divine hunter. As a warrior with supernatural strength, she helped the heroes just as Athens of the Greeks helped the heroes of Troy, featured in the Iliad and the Odyssey (Tirta M., 2004, 112).

Among other prominent musicians in lahuta singing and interpretation from the 1920s-40s, we mention: Pal Buli, Dodë Nikollë Loshi, Palok Ujka, në Malësi të Madhe; Gjergj Pëllumbi, Marash Nikaj në Dukagjin; Sokol Martini në Mërtur; Mirash Gjoni në Curraj të Epër etj. After 40s we have: Gjin Bardhoshin-Nikaj Mërtur; Prendush Gegën-Pukë; Sokol Martini-Tropojë; Osman Arifi-Tropojë; Nikoll Sokolaj-Lezhë; Shaban Groshi-Pejë; Gj. Martini-Vermosh, Shkodër; N.Delia-Totaj-Mërtur, Tropojë; S. Rushvelaj-Grishë, Shkodër; Zef Avdia-Curraj, Dukagjin ext. We also have female rhapsodes with lahuta, like: Katrina e Zikut, Dile Gjoni, Frange Curri (1900–1974), Cungë Smajlja, Sabile Fetahu etj (Ferial Daja. 1987).

In ethnomusicology, the construction of the melody of the heroes epic is of particular interest, which is one of its most visible and expressive musical parameters, that we don't really have a great variety of combinations in it. Oral traditions, Legends and myths consti-

tute an important part of the spiritual heritage, often, These stories have helped in identifying Illyrian symbols and interpreting them.

Lahuta in Rugova region (Kosova)

At the national level, about half a million verses of the epic of the heroes have been recorded so far, while in the Rugova region alone, over 120 thousand have been registered. According to these data, The epic fund of the Rugova province constitutes a quarter of the total national fund of this pillar of the spiritual culture of the Albanian people (Neziri Z., 2006, 169).

The fund of heroic epic songs of the Rugova region, collected by a large number of lahutars, is a very rich material of the albanian heroic epic that includes about 120 thousand verses in 15 volumes: in 7 of them the individual fund of the seven lahuta players, while in the other 8 volumes the material collected by the other group of lahuta players, who have a repertoire of less than 7–8 thousand verses. Of all this rich collection, only the fifth volume was published in 1997, which included 30 songs with ten thousand six hundred and fifty verses sung by Haxhi Meta – Nilaj (Neziri Z., 1997, 7).

From the richest and most renowned lahuta players in Rugova: Shaban Groshi-Shkrel (1923–1998), so a total of 19 songs; Haxhi Meta – Nilaj (1912–1994), from whose fund, 30 songs with 10,650 verses have been published; Isë Elezaj – Lekëgjekajn (1947), from whose fund 11 songs with about 6,500 verses have been collected; Isuf Selmani – Kuklecajn (1908–1989), from whose fund 22 songs were collected, Haxhi Meta- Nilaj is the second lahuta player to cross the ten thousand verse mark. These lahuta players are considered prototypes of other national lahuta players: Sokol Martini, Osman Arifi, Ndue Lulashi e Mirash Ndou (Neziri Z., 2006, 156).

In addition to them, among the rich fund of songs from the Rugova region, there are also: Ramë Çausi – Elesaliaj (1908–2000), Ali (1915–1992) e Rrustem (1919–2000) Tahiri – Metujkaj with around 7000 verse each; then Bekë Tahiri-Shala (1937–1990), Ibish Bajrami – Kurbogaj (1915–1992), Misin Nimani – Sejda (1912–2002) and Isuf

Veseli – Dreshaj (1926–2000) (Neziri Z., 2006, 157–158, 172).

Of course, these most prominent lahutar's players of this region have inherited the school of lahuta singing and songs of the Albanian heroic epic from previous lahuta players of the 19th century, their large number is very large. There are about 100 deceased lahuta players mentioned who were born in the 19th century or early 20th century (Neziri Z., 2006, 152).

A number of these lute players have known or mentioned it in the context of the tradition Qorr Hysin, who has sung in both Albanian and Bosnian, just as the other lute players in the collection have sung Millman Parry: Avdulla Ferizi e Salih Uglla, than Xhemajl Zogu and Sulejman Forti, Sulejman Makaj and Shaban Nuhoxhiqi (Neziri Z., 2006, 52, 107).

We should not be indebted to many lahuta players who have not been included by researchers, there are cases that they have left this life earlier, one of whom I heard about from the elders of the Rugova region who was among the well-known lahuta players was Selim Sylë Lajqi (1885–1972) who came from Nokshiqi (Monte Negro) and lived in the village of Rekë e Allagës-Rugovë.

Conclusion

The tradition of using these musical instruments has been preserved from generation to generation, every year in Kelmend, Vuthaj, Rugovë traditional cultural events are held, dances and songs are accompanied by the sounds of these musical instruments, In particular, the songs of the heroes were accompanied by the lahuta. The lahuta, as a bowed instrument, has been inherited by Albanians since the Illyrian period, and we can freely say that it is the lahuta.

In the oda (guest rooms) of Albanian towers, the lahuta has always been hung above the fireplace higher than the rifle.

We can freely say that the lahuta, a bowed instrument, was inherited from the Illyrians to today's Albanians.

Based on the general data I think the others took the name from the Arbëresh (Albanians who live in Italy) in the Middle Ages, spreading it to other parts of Europe, even European countries and languages, this is where it may have gotten its name from.

Above all, the lahuta from ancient times to this day has resonated and continues to resonate among Albanians in the new generations, not letting this sacred divine instrument disappear.

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