

BULGARIAN FOLK DANCES

Folk dances form an important part of Bulgaria's national culture. The wealth of rhythms and melodies and the great variety of figures, steps, and rapidity of movements demonstrated in the chain dances or HOROS, embody the creative genius handed down from generation to generation.

Until recently, the HORO was danced every Sunday and holidays, all over Bulgaria, by young and old. Even today, folk dancing is still a beloved entertainment among Bulgarians on wedding days, at country fairs, regional festivals, and big national festivities. Many dances are connected with various rituals and customs. Presently, in every region of Bulgaria, there are local HOROS and versions of widely known types of dances which reflect the local taste and character of the people.

The names of some dances and tunes refer to the town or village they come from: RADOMIRSKO, KULSKO, etc. Other names originate from a person's name: DENJOVO, GANKINO, DAJČOVO, etc. Often, dances are related to the milieu in which they are danced or indicate a craft guild: GRANCARSKO HORO (Potter's Dance), KASAPSKO (butcher's), KALAJDŽISKO (tinsmith's), etc.

The 2/4 beat is quite common in Bulgarian folk music although the most characteristic rhythms are the ones which are the foundation of many unequal beats such as: 5/16 (PAJDUSKO), 7/16 (RACENICA or CETVORNO), 9/16 (DAJČOVO or GRANCARSKO), 11/16 (GANKINO or KOPANICA), 13/16 (ELENINO, KRIVO SADOVSKO, etc.), 15/16 (BUCIMIS), 18/16 (JOVE MALE MOME), and other different combinations of HOROS with unequal beats.

Among the most popular Bulgarian musical instruments used in folk music today, are: the GAJDA (bagpipe), KAVAL (long wood pipe), DUDUK (block pipe - "frula" in Serbia), GADULKA (rebec), TAMBURA (a kind of mandolin), and for percussion, the TAPAN (big drum with beating sticks) and the TARABUKA (small hand drum). In the past century, however, instruments like the VIOLIN, CLARINET, TRUMPET, and ACCORDION have appeared in Bulgaria and have been widely used by talented musicians.

The most common hand holds used in Bulgarian line dances are: the NA LESA or NA KOLAN -- when the dancers hold each other by the belt L over R, the NA RAMO position -- shoulder hold and finally NA RAKA -- hands joined at sides -- this is quite common for Serbian KOLOS.

FOLK DANCE CAMP - 1970

BULGARIAN FOLK DANCES (continued)

The RACENICA is also a very popular and widespread folk dance which can be performed solo, in couples, or in a line (HORORACENICA). It is considered by many as the liveliest of all Bulgarian dances for in it, dancers can show their greatest skills. It is done by young and old at weddings and general festivities. Every region has its own style of RACENICA. Among the most exciting are the SOP RACENICA in Western Bulgaria where the movements are fast, small, and sharp, and the DOBRUDJAN RACENICA (also called RACENIK), in which the dancers (usually men) are arranged in a line and go through various tricky and acrobatic motions.

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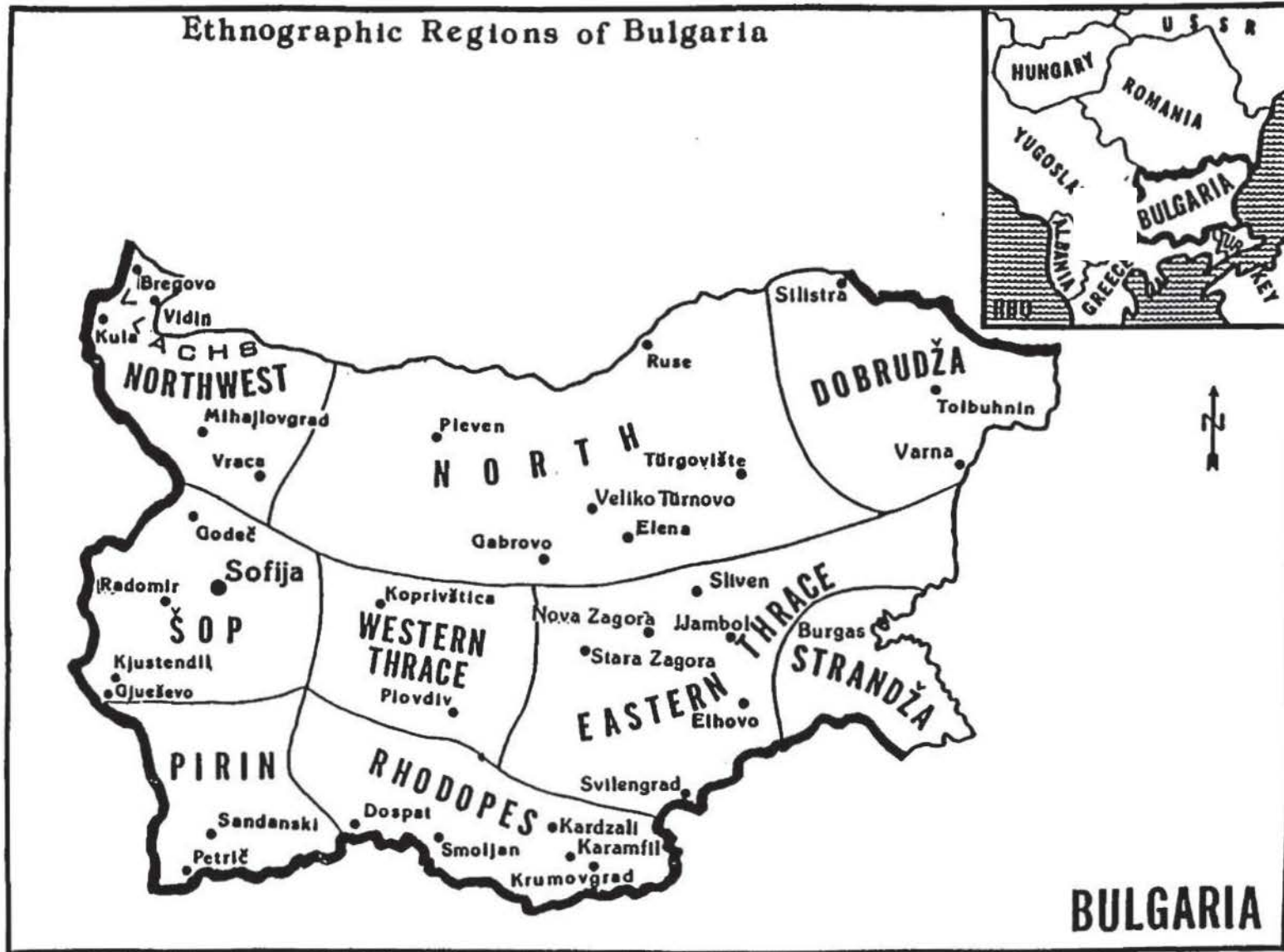
PRONUNCIATION KEY:

The Bulgarian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet. In the enclosed dance descriptions, however, the official Slavic phonetical Latin alphabet * (as used in Croatian) is being utilized.

^v S	- as in the "sh" in the word "shout."	Cyrillic:	Ш
S	- as in the "s" in the word "sit."		С
^v C	- as in the "ch" in the word "check."		Ч
C	- as in the sound "TS."		Ц
^v Z	- as in the sound (ZH" (or the French "J").		Ж
J	- as in the "y" in "yoke."		Я
[^] A	- as in the "u" in "but."		Ъ
U	- as in the sound "oo" (or the French "ou").		У

* Proclaimed at the La Haye Slavistic Conference, 1955.

Map of Bulgaria



FOLK DANCE CAMP - 1991