

Harvest songs...Part 2

Back in February I posted five of the melodies used by different villages in their solo harvest songs—but could not at the time find a recording that *I* had made of the haunting melody used in Bítritsa (a village in greater Sofia, on the slopes of Vítóša Mountain). (I didn't feel right about publishing someone else's recording, but I couldn't find my own at the time.)



Bítritsa, Sófía region

It turned up recently, in a rather interesting way: I've been compiling a master list of all the places I have recorded, with dates and tape numbers, number of songs I recorded, and just a little information about who I recorded. In thinking about my recordings in said Bistritsa in the spring of 1985, I remembered that my first recording session in the village that year was on a day when I stopped by to see Dánče (Dana Ovnarska), then the youngest member of the group. It just happened that Ménka Arónova was visiting her at the time, so after having a bite of lunch, the two of them did some singing for me. I didn't remember what we'd recorded that day, but I did have a dim memory of having later studied very closely a recording of Ménka and "someone else" singing that song, working very hard to reproduce the vocal ornaments that they were using. "Aha," I said, "maybe they did the solo harvest melody that day!" And it turned out to be exactly the recording I'd been looking for!



Ménka Arónova and Dánče Ovnárska
singing for me in Danče's kitchen, 9
March 1985

От пладне се мома провикнала (*Ót pladne se momá proviknála*),
recorded in Bístritsa, Sofia region.

<http://marthaforsyth.fasterthan20.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2016/07/Bistrica-85-005-solo-harvest-Ot-pladne.mp3>



Pánka
demonstrating
reaping with sickle
and palamárka

At the end of the song I left our discussion for you to hear. It's a rather juicy song, this one! They tell me that they used to sing this song right after they got up from their noontime rest to start reaping again. These solo harvest songs were sung *while they were bent over reaping* (one woman singing, another answering with the same words). (Try singing this way some time....it's amazing how the position almost seems to pull the voice out of you!) Were the singers working close to each other? "Ah! They might be, but they also might be far apart" —and Dánče told me how she would sing with her aunt, the aunt working and singing in her own field, and Danče answering as she worked in hers!

Song text:

От пладне се мома провикнала—
да би защо, моме, за низащо!
Ке промина една лудо младо,
ке промина, мирно не замина,
на везело моми свилна китка.
Викна мома, викна колку може:
“Де сте да сте, мои девет брайкя,
де сте да сте сега тука да сте,
да фанете младо неженето!
Ни го бийте, ни младо губете—
при мене го вързан докарайте,
да го тури мома вечна мъка,
летен дено под зелена сенкя,
зимен дено ю ‘ладна одея,
да седне мома срещу него,
да го гори мома с църни очи,
да го бие мома с бели ръце,
да го петни мома с медни уста.”

After noon a young girl cried out—
as if she had a reason, but she had none!
Because a crazy young lad had come by,
had come by and had not passed on peacefully
but had snatched her bouquet of jasmine.
The girl cried out with all her might:
“Wherever you are, my nine brothers,
wherever you are, come quick!
Come and catch that young bachelor!
Don’t beat him, don’t judge him—
just tie that young fellow up and bring him to me
so I can torment him forever—
in the summertime in the green shade,
in the wintertime in the cool house.
I’ll sit opposite him
and burn him with my black eyes,

I'll beat him with my fair arms
and bruise him with my honey lips!"