

THE ZURNA – HISTORY, DISTRIBUTION, STUDIES

The only music that came out of the centuries is the zurna.

After that the other instruments came out.

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The *zurna* and the instruments similar to it, having a conical bore and bilamellate reed, are among the most ancient and widespread traditional musical instruments. Nowadays the various *zurna*-like instruments can be heard over three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe. Since ancient times this class of instruments have been associated with a strong, shrill sound and exciting music. According Kurt Sachs, the bilamellate reed oboe might have been brought from the occupied territories of Southwest Asia as the most stirring instrument. It characterizes the change in the music culture of the New Kingdom in Egypt (ca. 1500 BC) [Sachs, 1978:98]. Today the Southwest Bulgarian *zurna* is an instrument of unique timbre and powerful sound, a marker of festivity just as it has been all over the world for thousands of years.

The observations on the origin, distribution and function of the *zurna* are based on information from historic sources (written, art, photographs), investigations of ethnomusicologists, and folklore texts.

THE ZURNA AROUND THE WORLD

Names

Vasmer's etymological dictionary explains the *zurna* as “a pipe resembling an oboe in sound”. The name *zurna* (*surna*) is borrowed in the Russian language from Persian *surna*, *surnai* via Turkish *zurna*. The etymology is derived from *sur* <a feast, and *naj* <flute [Vasmer, 1986:108-109]. The Persian origin of the word has been attested in other dictionaries but the etymology given is from *sur* repast and *naj* flute [Шипова, 1976:139-140]. Other authors relate the origin of the word to different Iranian roots: *zurna* <*zur*, *zor* power, might and *surna* <*sor* feast [Poche, 1984:905]. The version that *zurna* comes from Old Iranian **sru-nada* meaning bore-reed, which was later in Iranian *surna(y)* is also suggested. In the 17th century the traveler Evliya Celebi presented it as *zurna* [Picken, 1975:485].

The *zurna* is spread in different parts of Asia, Europe and Africa. It is known under various names. In China they call it *sona* or *suona*. Its name in Southeast Asia – Sumatra and West Malaysia – is *sarunai* (*serune*). *Surna* is the name of the instrument in Pakistan, *surnai*, *sahnai*, *soorna* in India. This instrument is also known in Middle Asia – Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan Afghanistan as *surnai*, *sornai* and *sorna*. In the Caucasus – Armenia, Dagestan, Azerbejdzhan and Georgia – it is called *zurna*. The Arab peoples use the names *mizmar* (Egypt), *zakra* or *ghayta* (Morocco, Algeria, Libya). *Srnay* is the name of this instrument in the countries of the Persian Gulf. In Iraq, Syria and East Algeria it is called *zurna*. In Europe (Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, etc.) instruments resembling the *zurna* are *salmaj*, *bombarde*, *charamela* (*chalemele*, *caramillo*), *piffero* [Poche, 1984:905; Hardgrave&Slawek, 1988:76-79; Sirola, 1932:48-49; Sachs, 1978:213, 288].

The most widespread name of the instrument on the Balkans is *zurna*. In Turkey it is