

## THE ROLE OF THE GREEK SANTUR IN GREEK TRADITIONAL MUSIC

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**Abstract:** In the present study, an attempt is made to present the role of the Greek santouri in Greek traditional music. The santur has become a key instrument in traditional companies and at the same time has been used in artistic folk compositions as well as in documentaries, theater and cinematographic works. The Greek santur is an instrument that, due to its morphological arrangement and playing technique, has the ability, depending on its role in the orchestra, to accompany a song or be used to play the melody. The spread of the instrument is mainly due to the Asia Minor Greeks who arrived in Greece with the exchange of populations in 1923. However, the santur was widely used on the mainland and island Greece before '22. Then an attempt is made to analyze the role of the instrument through some indicative pieces with the aim of highlighting some special characteristics of Greek traditional music. Greek traditional music contains a range of regions of Greece but also of the regions where the Greek culture was redeveloped (Asia Minor, Pontus, Alexandria, Constantinople, Lower Italy, Northern Epirus) but also in the current Greek communities in the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, etc. The main purpose of this study is in which regions of Greece the santur is existed, which was its role in the orchestra and which testimonies prove its existence. Therefore, the songs were selected on the one hand based on criteria derived from a literature search and on the other hand based on personal assessment. Although such sample analyzes and comparisons of works are not sufficient to give a complete picture of the characteristics of the role of the santur in Greek traditional music, they were considered necessary to give the reader an image of how the santur was used in orchestras depending on the region. nevertheless, From the results of the research we understand that the santur, despite being a basic instrument mainly in the island companies, also appears in other sound-geological landscapes, a fact that proves the changing and flexible nature of the instrument both in terms of timbre and in terms of technical capabilities of the instrument. The methodology used for data collection was qualitative and based on the methodological tools of ethnographic research. More specifically, the methodological tools that were chosen were the observation and the structured interviews with santur players were excluded.

**Keywords:** Greek santur, Greek traditional music, Greek santur players, traditional companies

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The santur is a stringed percussion instrument with a trapezoidal shape that is played with two wooden sticks called "baguettes" (Anogianakis, 1991). Among the peoples of Mesopotamia it prevailed with the name santir-santur. The santur went through a process of renamings such as sal-li-te-lu, santir, santour in order not to prevail as santur-santir. In central and eastern Europe, a family developed with the name cimbalon from the Greek word kymvalon. (Gifford, 2001).

The information collected about the presence of the santur in the Greek area comes mainly from travelers who visited Greece. The initial testimony of the existence of the santouri in Greece since 1793 comes from the Italian Allesandro Bisani during the visit in 1788 to the Turk aga in Athens where he attended a concert in which he describes the existence of an instrument that seems to speak of a cymbal type (Papandrikou, 2013).

From 1802 to 1870, due to the Greek Revolution, there is no mention of santur. From the second half of the 19th century, the presence of the organ began to be received through the newspapers of the time. One of the most important testimonies about the santur in Greece is that of the Turkish theorist Rauf Yekta Bey (Yekta Bey, 1922), who states that two species of santur appear in Constantinople. The first is the "santour a la franque" which through the blueprints the construction and winding resembles the present Greek santour and the second is the "santour a la tourque".

In 1873 in Athens there is a reference to the existence of the first "café adour". In 1874, the newspaper "Ephemeris" mentions the participation of the santur in a musical group that came from Smyrna. From 1876 the dulcimers were more and more involved in entertainment venues. From the decade of 1886-1896, the cafe-aman flourished with the santur as the main instrument. Artists from Smyrna and Constantinople came to the cafe-aman. (Kofteros, 2019) From 1880 the santur was also played in entertainment centers in Piraeus and the appearance continues in other Greek cities as in 1894 the existence of santur in Patras is mentioned in the press. In 1870 information mentions that a musician from Nisyros brought the first violin and the first small santur. Later in 1897 in Lesvos in the description of a book by the French engineer De Launay mentions the feast in an area of the island with the following company composition: lute, santur and violin (Kofteros, 2019)

After the Asia Minor disaster in 1922, those Greeks who arrived in Greece brought with them their musical paradise such as santouroviola. In “Kafe Aman” and “Kafe Sandan”, the santur was an essential instrument of the company. From the refugees of M. ASIA, the santur spread almost all over Greece. After 1950, the development of the santur is limited due to some basic events such as: urbanization, the establishment of rebetiko and folk song where the bouzouki had been established, the invasion of the radio and the gramophone, the integration of electric and electronic instruments and the lack of state folk schools musical instruments

The study of the santur and its role in various genres of the Greek repertoire falls within the framework of a more general need for exploration with a central starting point in the 21st century, as it has traveled a long way up to the present day. Both the development of the science of musicology, musical notation, and instrumental knowledge, combined with the use of technology, has enriched the knowledge of the santur players as well as the position of the instrument in the Greek repertoire (Kritsini, 2020). Although there are few universities that have special departments specializing in the Greek santur, both theoretically and at a practical-performing level, this is not an obstacle to the emergence of new musical performers and scientists of the genre who have experimented. At the same time, there is an ever-increasing current of recording disc production, the appearance of relevant websites, digital libraries and groups not only of the Greek santur, but also of various types of santur that exist worldwide. All this, combined with the ever-increasing exposure of the instrument in concerts both locally and at international festivals, have created new conditions for the exchange of information and musical experiences, resulting in the playful performance of the instrument both in terms of repertoire and playing techniques.

In our Greek tradition we have instruments from all instrument families: wind, strings, percussion and idiophones. According to scholars, folk music is divided into two categories: terrestrial and maritime or island. The mainland includes Epirus and Thessaly mainly, but also Moria, Roumeli, Macedonia.

The sea or island includes the islands, the coasts of Asia Minor, Thrace and Cyprus. In Greek Folk Music we find, depending on the region, some predominant combinations that are known in Greece such as:

1. The orchestra in the islands, consisting of: violin, santur, lute
2. The orchestra in the mainland Greece, consisting of: clarinet - violin - lute and santur

## 2. METHODOLOGY

When it comes to the analysis of traditional instruments, the matter becomes complicated as the researcher will have to evaluate not only the organocognitive approach of the instrument but also the space and time in which it developed and evolved (Baine, 1983). In the Greek territory, we notice that each geographical region has its own musical history, which is interpreted with a different composition of the orchestra and a different musical system. The method which is chosen for this particular study was the ethnographic as the ethnographic research design included the characteristic of the santur in Greek traditional music which displays a long history and a diversity in terms of its definition. The study based on the basic ethnographic research tools. The researcher's tools were observation, interview and data analysis. Therefore, the following objectives were set for the determination of this specific study (Liargovas & Dermatis, Komninos, 2019):

The research analysis came about through three stages:

- the control of bibliographic sources
- the utilization of "observation" methods and semi-structured interviews
- the examination of evidence through various theories

The first stage which included information (bibliographic sources) about the santur and its role in Greek traditional music was limited. Therefore, the researcher tried through the collection of material from the printed and electronic press (recordings, video, newspaper articles, etc.) to collect and cross-reference the data in order to proceed with semi-structured interviews with santur players from various regions of Greece. The santur players who participated in the semi-structured interviews were from mainland and island Greece and more specifically from Thessaly and the North Aegean.

In the songs of Thessaly and the general terrestrial repertoire, we chose to analyze the playing style of the santur players who were originally from mainland Greece, had studied the respective repertoire and we found recordings with their participation. In particular, we studied songs with soloists of the santur Theoharis Pantidis, Takis Lavidas, Alekos Garavelis, Vagelis Hatzis, Athanasios Megas, Mitsos Arapakis, Tasos Diakogiorgis, Aristidis Moschos, Nikos Karatassos, Ioannis Livaditis, Andreas Katsigiannis, Stella Valasi, Loukia Valasi.

The songs of insular Greece were chosen to be analyzed in the same way as we described in the terrestrial repertoire by choosing the following santur players from the insular Greece: Costas Zafeiriou, Giannis Sousamlis (Kakourgos), Dimitris Kofteros, Nikos Kalaitzis, Sotiris Leloudis, Damianos Tsiambikos, Pantelis Hadjipetros, Savvas Phylakouris, Valmas Giorgos, Dimitrios Vlachopoulos.

### 3. RESULTS

According to the study of musicological and folklore writings, recordings, field research, we understand that initially the santur had a presence in Aegean Islands, Central Greece, Thessaly, the Peloponnese, Aetolokarnania-Epirus as well as Western Macedonia. More specifically, based on the bibliographic sources that are testimonies and opinions, we report the following about the regions of Greece where the santur exists.

The form of the island orchestra (as named “kompania”) during the 18th and 19th centuries was shaped by the following traditional instruments: santur violin, clarinet, lute or guitar, doumbek. From the end of the 19th century due to urbanization in the Aegean, we observe a transformation in musical choices both in terms of repertoire and choice of musical instruments due to urbanization. The composition of the traditional orchestra is transformed into a new type of orchestra influenced by the standards of the Smyrna orchestra. This transformation marks the addition of instruments of European music. More specifically the clarinet, the canon or the santur, the violin, the lute, the guitar, the tambourine coexist with the trombone, the euphonium, the cornet (brass instruments, also known as “wind instruments”), the saxophone, the cello and even the banjo (influenced by American immigrants) and the piano.

Both in mainland Greece and in island Greece during the 19th century the main instruments in an orchestra were the clarinet, the violin, the violin, the santur the lute and the tambourine. (Drandakis, 1993)

In the analysis of the recordings, in mainland Greece, the santur players had the accompanying role which was based on the harmonic development of the song. At the same time, sometimes the soloist instrument, which was usually the clarinet, played the introduction of the song and continued the accompaniment or the organist enriched the accompaniment with melodic themes. In general, when the role of the santour was accompanying, the santur players usually played uncharacteristic chords (1st - 5th degree) in order to avoid the combination of confused and uncoordinated intervals.

In some cases their accompaniment was more like a tie, i.e. they kept the dominant of the scale so as to support the melody. The rhythms of the land music were mainly  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{7}{8}$ . His so-called “syrtoi” dances are found in both continental and island music. The “syrtoi” dances in continental music are slower than those in island music (Delopoulos & Bekri, 2015)

In island Greece, the role of the santur was dominant, especially in Lesvos, where it is considered a reference instrument (Kofteros, 2011). We note that the santur in island music has a soloistic character that is usually interpreted according to the ability of the santur players who uses a number of variations in the melodic line. Here, of course, the question of the aesthetics of the music arises. The art of the santur is sometimes interpreted by enriching the song, breaking up the melody, performing fast songs at a fast tempo following a more metronomic playing or even performing specific rhythmic forms. Many of the santur musicians uniformly adopted the process of melodic modal development. Many santur players were also masters of other traditional instruments, which gave them the advantage of understanding how to adapt the santur to suit the song. A. Berveris and S. Feygalas (Ververis & Feygalas, 2021) mention that the usual “ornaments” used especially by santur players from Lesvos to enrich the melody when they have a solo part is the “apoggiatura” which reduces the time from the previous note. They also observe the phenomenon of crossed notes in phrases where the melody follows the notes of the scale in ascending or descending order. Another element is the “trilia” in which the musician tries to give duration to a note where the melody stops. (Ververis & Feygalas, 2021) It seems that the islanders of the Aegean, due to their influence from Asia Minor, had a dense, step-by-step style of development; the performer often used one baton to play a melody and the other to enrich the melody with variations.

### 4. DISCUSSIONS

Through the results of the study, important research questions were born. Firstly, by examining the sound-geological landscapes from both insular and mainland Greece with representative players of the santouri from different places, we realize that there are differences of the role of the santur between mainland and insular company. In the terrestrial repertoire where the clarinet had a dominant role, the santouri had a strictly accompanying role and in island orchestra has an soloist role. We also encounter playing differences between the instrumentalists who belong to the various sound geological landscapes which differentiates both the style and the role they play in the orchestra. For example, in the North Aegean region and in general on the islands, the playing style of the santur player was exuberant and decorated with various “ornaments”. For this reason at a feast they chose the “zygia” (two instruments play together) the santur-lute or santur-violin known as “santourovioli”.

The santur often had the role of a wildcard in an orchestra and often covered roles in the orchestra, either the accompanying part either the melodic part. The study that resulted from the performances of songs of the 1950-1970 generation come to be differentiated in terms of the performances of the same songs in the 21st century where the composition of the company in some areas have undergone modifications either by the inclusion of instruments with

electric sound or the addition of classical instruments orchestra or with influences from other countries that join the performances such as the Balkans. The Newer Greek tradition which is based on Byzantine church music and popular music has retained some elements from ancient Greek music as well as other influences such as Italian influences mainly in the islands or Balkan influences and Turkish-Arabic-Persian influences in Northern Greece. The santur has a Persian origin. In the context of the evolution that the Greek traditional orchestra has undergone due to urbanization or technological development or the contribution of radio and television, we observe a differentiation in the identity of today's Greek traditional orchestra. Now, a traditional orchestra from either mainland or island Greece covers a wide range of repertoire and therefore for the needs of this repertoire the choice of instruments that will make up the orchestra changes with a fixed choice being the violin for the islands and the clarinet for land music.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The development of knowledge of the musical instrument players of the Greek santur is explored and evaluated by the constant search for the creation of expressive means, the sound balance and the ability to express without exaggerations that exceed the technical capabilities of the instrument. The role of the organ in the Greek tradition is twofold, i.e. it has an accompanying and soloist character. It is noteworthy that most of the names have Turkish or Arabo-Persian origins. Therefore it creates a confusion and doubt of the Greekness of the instruments and the authenticity of the Greek tradition. Scientifically we should not confuse the origin of a thing with the origin of its name. Through the ethnographic research that has been carried out, we realize that the santouri was one of the basic instruments of both orchestras in entertainment venues and in the level of recordings. The santur is considered a 'close' partner of the violin. References to bibliographical sources use the term 'santouria' to refer to the ensemble, which proves its prestige in orchestras. Several santur players mainly from the Eastern Aegean, due to their connection with Smyrna, which was the cultural crossroads between West and East, seem to have acquired a significant knowledge of the system of classical Western and Ottoman music. The proximity of the geo-cultural region of the north-eastern Aegean (mainly the four islands of Lesbos, Lemnos, Chios and Samos) to Anatolia played an important role in the influences and introduction of new musical elements diverse which merge with the local tradition. This pairing of terrestrial with island elements influenced both the composition of the orchestra and the repertoire.

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