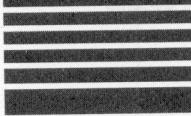


LA PLURIDISCIPLINARITÉ
EN ARCHÉOLOGIE MUSICALE
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VOLUME II

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Textes réunis et publiés par le comité éditorial constitué de :

Annie Bélis, Ann Buckley, Catherine Homo-Lechner et

François Picard

On the use of the musical period in archaeological analysis

On the true and false types of lyres, the unreliability of string representations, the definition of panpipes and multichords, and

the significance of ancient harps

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**Les grelots en métal chez les
slaves occidentaux**
*Metal rattles
of the Western Slavs*

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Maison des sciences de l'homme
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METAL RATTLES OF THE WESTERN SLAVS
LES GRELOTS EN MÉTAL CHEZ LES SLAVES OCCIDENTAUX

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Summary : This paper presents the richest material for musical instruments of the Western Slavs: the metal rattles found mainly in Central European regions. Musical instruments of this type have mainly a signalling function. They are present in Slavonic findings from the 7th century. Surrounding shapes and the factors having influence on sound which in some cases are typical for some centuries (for instance: anthropomorphic rattles for the 8th century, rattles with vertical ribs for the 8/9th centuries, and so on) will be described and compared with the formed corpus of the recent existing Slovak folk instruments.

Résumé : *Cette communication présente l'objet sonore le plus répandu en Europe centrale chez les slaves occidentaux: le grelot en métal. Cet objet se caractérise avant tout par sa fonction de signalisation. Il semble apparaître au VII^e siècle. Les aspects extérieurs et les facteurs déterminant le son, avec les caractéristiques propres à certains siècles (grelots anthropomorphes au VIII^e siècle; grelots à côtes verticales aux VIII-IX^e siècles, etc.), sont décrits puis comparés au matériel populaire slovaque actuel.*

Mots-clés : Idiophones - Grelots - Haut Moyen Age - Slaves - Slovaquie - Sépultures.

Among the present-day folk instruments of the Slavs there are many whose origin can be traced back to the remote past. Nevertheless archaeological findings of musical instruments from the 6-10th century are rare and few when compared to the numerous folk instruments of today.

The reason for this is not only the state of the research of this topic in research on the Western Slavs but also the soil quality of archaeological locations in Central Europe in which organic matter decomposes very quickly and is not preserved up to the present day. This is why we cannot expect significant changes in this situation in the future.

Up till now we lack at the Slavic locations, especially in Central Europe, documentation of e.g. wooden chordophones, aerophones or membranophones. A great part of the findings are simpler instruments with either strong cultic significance or signal function. Taking the metal rattles as an example I shall shortly mention possibilities of their interpretative function.

Rattles are known among the Slovak as well as Czech folk musical instruments as instruments with a cultic significance (Leng 1967, p. 54-55; Kunz 1974, p. 35-36). In Central European archaeological findings which can be connected with Slavs they can be traced from the 7th up till 15th century.

From the beginning of their occurrence in archaeological findings in Middle Europe -i.e. 7th-8th century- they are found only in graves of inhumation cemeteries from the time of the Avar Empire. There are usually one or two pieces of metallic rattles in the grave.

They are made of colour metals (an alloy of copper, tin, lead or silver; gold or iron or an alloy of iron and bronze, sometimes gold plated). Their size is approximately 1,5/4 cm in diameter. They are ball-shaped and have a small loop with a crossed or a single cut at the lower end which sometimes ends in small openings. Inside the rattle there is a piece of metal or a small stone. According to the Hornbostel and Sachs systematics of musical instruments they belong to the category of simple idiophones (H-S 112.13) (KELLER-KOPECKÁ 1977, p. 11-13).

If all the finds of rattles from excavated sites in Central Europe are taken together, they amount to a collection of many hundred pieces. In the cemeteries with hundreds of graves we find rattles only in some graves, without any distinction as to age or sex. So, for example, out of 883 researched graves in Devínska Nová Ves there were only eight graves with a rattle (EISNER 1952, p. 26, 48, 92, 161, 168, 170, 180-183); out of 524 graves from Nové Zámky there were five graves with a rattle (CILINSKÁ 1966, p. 185-186); out of 262 graves from Záhorská Bystrica there were three graves with a rattle (KRASKOVSKÁ 1972, p. 185-186); out of 266 graves in Pilismarót-Basaharc, there were four graves with a rattle (FETTICH 1965), etc.

This observation is valid also for the later period (9th-11th century) and for all locations in Central Europe (Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia).

Graves with rattles are found throughout the period of burial at the cemeteries (7th-8th century) and they usually belong to the graves with the richest furnishing. They are not accumulated at one place but are found all around the cemetery. In the grave the rattle is placed in the region of the waist or near the head. Explanations of the purpose of rattles vary widely and researchers have not yet come up with an agreed theory. Through analysis of typological and chronological relations, and with the comparison of acoustic characteristics, we can reach conclusions concerning the relation of rattles to cultural and political life and at least roughly explain the development of sound perception as related to cultic customs.

For this type of research especially suitable are colour metal rattles which have been preserved in a good condition and we can examine their shape and listen to their sound. Each rattle is a unique piece -with regard to its shape and its sound. Through comparison I have verified that this difference is intentional. For example, two rattles from the grave 79 in Devínska Nová Ves have different cuts and a different number of openings which have influence upon their sound. Similarly it is also with the finds of pear-shaped rattles in Záhorská Bystrica and Devínska Nová Ves that different material was used to stress the difference. All this influences the sound of the rattle. I have not found two rattles with the same sound from the same level of graves. I have come to the conclusion that this is not a coincidence but was done on purpose: the sound of the rattle was characteristic of its bearer.

The oldest rattles are ornamented only with small cuts (Fig. I-3a,b). Sometimes the end of a cut is enlarged in an opening (Fig. I-2a,b). From the decorative point of view, most picturesque are rattles with anthropomorphic decoration, often with details of face and hat (Fig. I-1a,b). This type of rattle was characteristic for the 8th century. The openings influence the sound of the rattle which becomes more clear when more openings are used. Generally rattles with anthropomorphic decoration are found at cemeteries which have many graves of fighters. Gradually towards the end of the 8th century the anthropomorphic decoration of the rattles becomes more symbolic and vanishes completely. It may only be traced in the shape of openings at the end of cuts.

The next chronologically significant type of rattle is made of iron, sometimes gold plated. This is characteristic of the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century in locations where there was not a powerful influence of Avars (e.g. Pobědim). Because of corrosion we cannot perceive their sound any more. According to their shape and material we can conclude that their sound was different than that of bronze rattles.

In the 8th-9th century we observe a change in location. If in the 8th century the rattles are in the graves without as distinction to age or sex, in the 9th century the rattles are mainly in the graves of children.

At the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century there is a significant change in the political situation in Central Europe. The Avar Empire is falling apart and Great Morava, the first state of Central-European Slavs, is being formed. The change related to rattle finds can be connected also with these changes - new customs influence the life of

people, the bearers of rattles are different and this brings about a change in the significance of the rattles.

In the 9th century many rattles are found in settlement from the biggest centres of power concentration, e.g. in Mikulčice, Staré Město-Pohansko, Spišské Tomašovce, Mužla Cenkov, etc. Typologically they represent a continuation of rattles from the previous period. The shape and the material of the rattles have an influence on their sound and a rattle of a different material and a new shape means a new sound. A new type of rattles was brought to Central Europe by the old Hungarians. These rattles did not influence local development by their shape or ornamentation and they vanish together with the level of old Hungarian graves.

In the 10th-13th centuries the rattles of the Central-European Slavs acquired the shape which they have as folk musical instruments today - round, with a crossed opening. The context of findings is more magic-decorative (when, for example, they form a part of a necklace). After the 11th century rattles occur only among settlement finds. The findings in the graves end in the 11th century (STEFANOVIČOVÁ-FIALA 1967, p. 183).

I have briefly mentioned some aspects which for archaeology and musical science introduce such humble musical instruments as rattles. They record the acoustic and aesthetic feelings of old Slavs and react sensitively to political and social changes. To understand the original significance of the sounds means to understand the context in which the sound was used.

Discussion (résumé) : Tadeusz MALINOWSKI fait remarquer le décalage existant entre le contenu de la présente étude, essentiellement composé d'objets d'origine tchèque et slovaque, et le titre général, qui ne laisse pas entrevoir les limites géographiques de cette présentation. Le matériel de ce type existe en Pologne et en Allemagne orientale, mais à des périodes différentes. Pour le haut Moyen Age, la Pologne n'a répertorié que trois grelots dans le sud de son territoire, c'est-à-dire près de la Tchécoslovaquie¹.

Bathja BAYER relie l'absence de ce matériel sonore sur le territoire Avar à la christianisation, qui interdisait et condamnait les dépôts funéraires.

1. Depuis cette discussion, T. MALINOWSKI a recensé les grelots découverts en Pologne et présenté ces recherches en décembre 1992 au colloque de Liège «*Sons originels : Préhistoire de la musique*».

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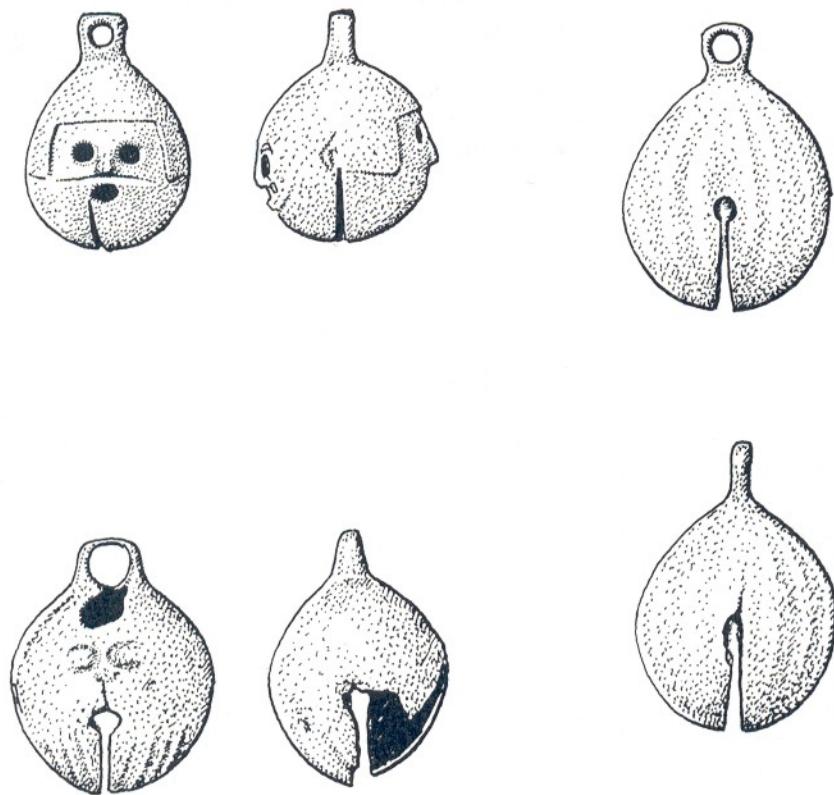


Fig. I : Rattles from the 8th-9th century. 1 - Žitavská Tôň. 2 - Prša. 3 - Nové Zámky.