Basic Issues in Folksong Research

Cultural Parameters of Musical Similarity

Basic Factors in Folksong Research

- **Format** considerations

- **Repertory** considerations

- **Cultural** considerations

Three Examples

- Format-driven: **Essen** folksong collection

- Repertory-driven: **Cretan** traditional music

- Culture-driven: **Samoan** traditional music

Three Examples

- Format-driven: **Essen** folksong collection

- Repertory-driven: **Cretan** traditional music

- Culture-driven: **Samoan** traditional music

One parable

George List: "The Hopi Concept of Musical Similarity" (JAMS 1975)

From resources to methods

SYMBOLIC DATA

- **Limited quantities**

- **Structured**

- **Quantized**

- **Easy** to parse

- **Many parameters** accessible for processing

AUDIO DATA

- **Abundant quantities**

- **Unstructured** (unencoded)

- **Unquantized**

- **Difficult** to parse

- **Few parameters** accessible for processing

Resources for (digital?) folksong research

- Orally transmitted material changes constantly;

- So do transcription, recording, and storage methods

Cardfile database started in 1950s.
References to written sources.
Digitized around 2000.

NVA

Interrelations and trade-offs

IMPINGEMENT

- **Technical needs** encourage data uniformity

- **Data uniformity** may compromise
  - cultural perspectives
  - musical content

- **Musical variety** thwarts use of a single general approach

EXAMPLES

- **German folksong**
  - **Data uniformity**
  - Suited to symbolic analysis
- **Cretan traditional music**
  - **Heterogeneity** of musical practices (parallel diversity)
  - Suited to audio analysis
- **Samoan traditional music**
  - **Uniformity of musical tradition**
  - Cultural contamination

Case 1. German folksong
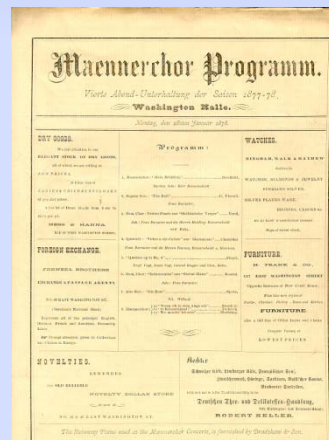
Symbolic Data: EsAC

- Essen Associative Code (EsAC)


```
(1) F[BALLADE
CUT[Schloss in Oesterreich
    Es ligt ein schlos in Ostereich,]
CNR[das ist gar wol erbawet]
REG[Mitteleuropa, Deutschland]
SRC[1, S. 250
    1549 gedruckt in Nuernberg]
KEY[Q0024A 08  F FREI]
MEL[1_  1_2_3_  4_  5__3_1__0_
    1_  3_4_5__1_  1__-7-6-7_1_-6__  -5__0_
    5_  5_5_6_.56_  5__4_3__0_
    6_  5_2_3_1_  -7_1_2_3__  212__  1___ //] >>
FCT[Ballade, Gefangenschaft, Hinrichtung, Tod, Vergeltung]
CMT[Kleinere Melodievarianten aus anderen Quellen abgedruckt.
    Refrainartiges Anhaengsel an der letzten Zeile.]
```

Value of symbolic data

Tracing and comparison of variants


```
(1)  F[BALLADE
CUT[Schloss in Oesterreich
     Es ligt ein schlos in Ostereich,]
CNR[das ist gar wol erbawet]
REG[Mitteleuropa, Deutschland]
SRC[1, S. 250
     1549 gedruckt in Nuernberg]
KEY[Q0024A 08  F FREI]
MEL[1_  1_2_3__4_  5__3_1__0_
     1_  3_4_5__1_  1__-7-6-7_1_-6__  -5__0_
     5_  5_5_6_.56_  5_  4_3__0_
     6_  5_2_3_1_  -7_1_2_3__  212__  1___  //] >>
FCT[Ballade, Gefangenschaft, Hinrichtung, Tod, Vergeltung]
CMT[Kleinere Melodievarianten aus anderen Quellen abgedruckt.
     Refrainartiges Anhaengsel an der letzten Zeile.]
```

Fixed-meter versions (below)

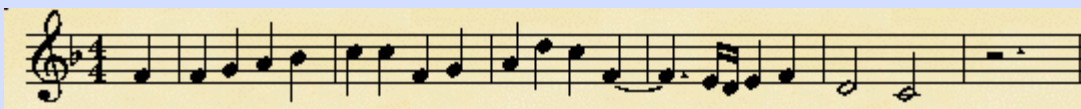🔊 Art-song arrangement (varied melody)

A free-meter version (above)

(Titles treacherous in folksong research)

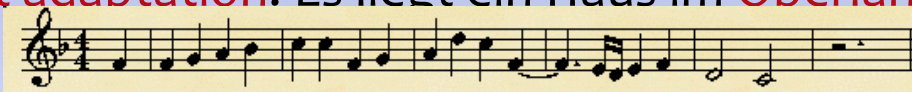# *Themefinder* matches for "Es liegt ein Schloss in Ősterreich"

- Text match: "Es liegt ein Schloss…."

- Text adaptation: Es liegt ein Haus im Oberland" ⟶

Themefinder matches for "Es liegt ein Schloss in Österreich"

- Text match: "Es liegt ein Schloss…."


- Text adaptation: Es liegt ein Haus im Oberland"

- Meter/contour match; different text: "War einst ein Riese Goliath"

```
(1) F[BALLADE
CUT[Schloss in Oesterreich
    Es ligt ein schlos in Ostereich,]
CNR[das ist gar wol erbawet]
REG[Mitteleuropa, Deutschland]
SRC[1, S. 250
    1549 gedruckt in Nuernberg]
KEY[Q0024A 08  F FREI]
MEL[1_  1_2_3__4_  5__3_1__0_
    1_  3_4_5__1_  1__-7-6-7_1_-6__  -5__0_
    5_  5_5_6_.56_  5__4_3__0_
    6_  5_2_3_1_  -7_1_2_3__  212__  1___  //] >>
FCT[Ballade, Gefangenschaft, Hinrichtung, Tod, Vergeltung]
CMT[Kleinere Melodievarianten aus anderen Quellen abgedruckt.
    Refrainartiges Anhaengsel an der letzten Zeile.]
```
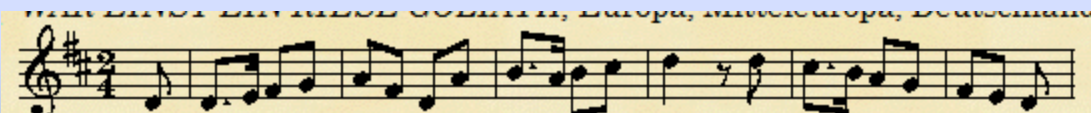
Aanalogous data (EsAC code in typescript)

- Germany (DVA, Freiburg): numbers and metadata changing

- Austria: number unknown; organized by state (14)

- Slovenia: c. 50,000 items

- Serbia: c. 70,000 items

- Croatia, Hungary: ??

- Poland: facsimile of file-card version (66,000 items)

- Netherlands: 500,000 items in different code

  - (mainly text content)

Heterogeneous materials, many goals

- **Germany** (DVA, Freiburg): robust scholarly enterprise
- **Austria**: many states favor audio sales
- **Slovenia**: intended for "monuments" print series

- **Croatia, Serbia, Roumania, NY:** archives on which Bartók explored systematic groupings according to "lexicographal" and "grammatical" principles (his aim was to understand families rather than create finding tools; interested in rhythmic variants)

- Hungary: recent research
  - by Juhacs (on global music)
- Poland:
  - facsimile (66,000 items), 1966

Bartók comparison of two melodies

$$-2 \quad +2 \quad +2 \quad -2 \quad -3$$
$$-2 \quad +2 \quad -2 \quad +2 \quad -2$$
$$-2 \quad +2 \quad -2 \quad +2 \quad -2 \quad -2$$
$$-2 \quad +2 \quad -2 \quad +2 \quad -2 \quad -2$$
$$-2 \quad +2 \quad -2 \quad -2 \quad +2 \quad +2 \quad +2$$
etc.

Case 2: Cretan traditional music

Eleanor Selfridge-Field

Traditional Cretan vocal/choral music

TULLIA MAGRINI

EXS. 1 (FIRST STROPHE) AND 3

RIZITIKO

- **Sectional** song
  - Ex. 1=bipartite
  - Ex. 3=tripartite
- Sometimes accompanied by *laoto*
- **Text:** non-symmetrical phrases
- Relatively **independent parts**
- Balkan modes
- **Additive rhythmic modules** e.g.
  6+6; 8+4; 8+5; 8+6; 8+8 beats
- **Progressively more elaborate melody**

Cretan folk dances

MAGRINI, EX. 16, DANCE

MALEVIZIOTIKO (DANCE)

- Group dance from Western Crete
- Introduced in **free** rhythm
- Core work **metrical** (duple)
- Accomp. (3-stringed) **violin and** *laoto*
- Performance: **Progressively faster** (like a tarantella)

Maleviziotiko (for traditional Cretan bagpipe)

MAGRINI 17, BAGPIPE MUSIC

- Free rhythm

- Not appropriate for

symbolic or audio analysis

Pentozalis

LYRA CRETE

COPYRIGHT 2007 JOHN PAPPAS   GREEKFOLKMUSICANDDANCE.COM

- 5-step jumping dance
- Men only
- Meter = 2/4
- Melody played on lyra, accomp. on *laoto*
- Possible Minoan origin (?)

Cretan traditional flute

MAGRINI 18, FLUTE MUSIC

PIDICTOS

- From center-west of Crete
- For traditional flute
- Probably introductory
- Binary meter usual
- Elaboration of single tones

common

THIAMBIOLI CRETE

COPYRIGHT 2007 JOHN PAPPAS   GREEKFOLKMUSICANDDANCE.COM

Case 3. Samoan traditional music

General characteristics of Samoan music

- Mainly **choral**; also **group drumming**

- Much **antiphony**, responsorial singing

- Overwhelming **tonal**

- **Collaborative adaptation, improvisation**

  - **Spontaneous harmonization** (Tonga, too)

- Instruments imported (guitar, ukelele, harmonium)

- Text phrases **treated metrically** but have **no poetic "foot"**

- Celebrate aspects of Samoan **tribal**, **religious**, and **family** life

- Influence of London Missionary Society evident (n.b. dress)

Cultural contamination (classic case)

TRADITIONAL

- Notation not usual

- Lyrics not codified

- Natural performance

- Little recording (music free to change)

- Limited dissemination

- Spontaneity

MODERN

- Notation not usual

- Lyrics often written

- Electronically enhanced performance

- Much recording

- Broad dissemination

- Rehearsal, preparation

Samoa: siva performance (top), drumming

Eleanor Selfridge-Field

Cultural Contexts: German folksongs

- Easily handled symbolically
- **Social function** usually **stable**

- **Content variable**
  - Melodic
  - Textual

- Narrative refers to:
  - captivity
  - execution
  - revenge
  - Death
- **Moral function**

Cultural contexts: Cretan traditional music

- Rizitiko
  - Matrimony
  - Patriotism
- Syrtos
  - Local, territorial import
- Mandinades
  - political import
- Pendozalis (group dance)
  - Festive occasions

Social functions stable
Content somewhat **unpredictable**

Cultural contexts: Samoa (Western)

- **Group identity**
  - Family
  - Clan
  - Religious institution
  - Nation (recent)
- **Social function**
  - Weddings
  - Baptisms
  - Funerals
  - Selection of new chief
  - Patriotic holiday

- **Rehearsed choirs**
  - Churches
  - Schools and colleges
  - Army companies
- **Informal music groups**
  - Homes
  - Gardens and beaches
  - Work crews
- **Commercial substitutes**

  …too numerous to mention

Fundamental contradiction

THESIS

- **Music** exists only in **sound**

- **Symbolic data** is **stable**

ANTITHESIS

- **Sound** is its **least stable** element

- **Folk music** is necessarily **fluid**

Partial resolution

THESIS

- Music exists only in sound
- Symbolic data is stable

ANTITHESIS

- Sound is its least stable element
- Folk music is necessarily fluid

SYNTHESIS

Use **symbolic data** to encode salient aspects

in the evolution of single works and genres

Resolution?

THESIS

- Music exists only in sound
- Symbolic data is stable

ANTITHESIS

- Sound is its least stable element
- Folk music is necessarily fluid

SYNTHESIS

Use symbolic data to encode salient aspects in the

evolution of single works and genres

Cultural function more stable than musical features

Musical feature evaluation

ENDURING FEATURES

- Meter
- Mode

"Social Cognition and Melodic Persistence: Where Metadata and Content Diverge" ISMIR2006

TRANSIENT FEATURES

- Title
- Lyrics
- Key
- Tempo
- Intonation
- Timbre
- Melodic detail
- Ornamentation
- Articulation

Cultural analogues

ENDURING MUSICAL FEATURES

- Meter
- Mode

"Social Cognition and Melodic Persistence: Where Metadata and Content Diverge" ISMIR2006

ENDURING CULTURAL FEATURES

- **Social meaning**
- **Persistent functions**
  - Dancing
  - Feasts
  - Rites of passage
  - Group identity
- **Migratory tendencies**
  - Melody
  - Lyrics
  - Progressive elaboration