

# The Greek Popular Modes

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This article aims to shed light on an issue which has been troubling musicians and musicologists for many years: the issue of Greek laikó [popular] modes. Initially, an effort is made to draw attention to the gaps within knowledge on, and problematic facets of, this issue. Next, explanations are given as to how an orally transmitted and erroneous terminology creates vague oral rules and standards that are maintained today. By presenting and analyzing several theoretical systems which find expression in the Greek popular modes, the article tries to show the way in which the modes developed (two popular modes are used as examples). The article is part of my ongoing PhD research project at the University of Leeds. It deals with the analysis of the recording career of the Greek songwriter Vasílis Tsitsánis (1936-1983).

## Historical Background

In 1923, as part of the treaty of Lausanne (signed on July 24, 1923), a great exchange of populations took place, and approximately 1.5 million Christians of Turkish citizenship moved from Turkey (mainly Asia Minor) to Greece, while approximately five-hundred thousand Muslims of Greek citizenship moved from Greece to Turkey. The criterion of the exchange was the respective religions of the populations.<sup>i</sup> This sparked off modern Greek urban-folk, the so-called '*rembétiko*' musical style, for the refugees from Asia Minor took with them their musical traditions.

To give an idea of the prevalent discourse surrounding the history of *rembétiko*, Greeks consider and call the music style that came with the refugees from Asia Minor in 1923 *Σμυρναίικο* [Smirnéiko = from Smyrna]<sup>ii</sup> and, hence, they consider it the very first stage and the forerunner of the *ρεμπέτικο* [*rembétiko*] music style. Furthermore, according to common beliefs, *rembétiko* has its roots in Piraeus with pieces very much based on the style of Smirnéiko but also with many great differences, such as the usage of a completely different orchestration and a different lyrical theme.<sup>iii</sup> After *rembétiko*, with Márkos Vamvakáris as its major representative (often called by *rembétiko* enthusiasts 'the Patriarch of *rembétiko*'), the Greeks speak of the new *λαϊκό* [laikó = popular] music style with its greater representative Vasílis Tsitsánis. In fact, even Tsitsánis himself speaks and refers to himself as a laikó composer and always avoids using the word *rembétiko*.<sup>iv</sup> I use the terms *rembétiko* and laikó in the way that they appear in the colloquial language, even though as terms they have proven to be rather insufficient and problematic.<sup>v</sup> Risto Pekka Pennanen and Conway Morris subdivide *rembétiko* into the following periods: the first period consisting of the music of the cafés (what the Greeks call Smirnéiko), and the second consisting of the teké style or bouzouki-based Piraeus style.<sup>vi</sup> *Λαϊκός* [laikós] stands for popular,<sup>vii</sup> of the people.<sup>viii</sup> A very good approach for understanding the term laikó is contained within the 'rebetika' chapter of Peter Manuel's book (1990, p. 127). Manuel describes Greek popular music as

being Modern Greek working class music. Manuel also gives a very good description of the *rembétiko* style: ‘urban Greek lumpen proletarian music of the early twentieth century’ (1990, p. 269).<sup>ix</sup> For Pennanen, *laikó* songs are generally ‘post mid-1950s Greek popular songs’. However, he points out that the term ‘is used for urban Greek popular music in general as distinct from the rural *dimotika* music’ (1999, p. 67, footnote 1).

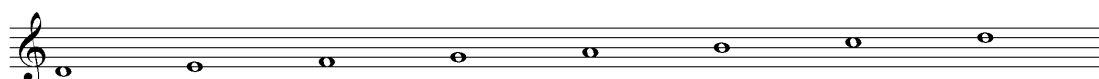
### The Dhrómi: The Root of the Problem

*Δρόμος* [dhrómos] means road or street (plural *δρόμοι*, dhrómi). The issue of the Greek *laikó dhrómi*<sup>x</sup> is a multi-faceted and long-standing problem in rebe-tological field study.<sup>xi</sup> The *laikó dhrómos* is nothing more than a communication code used by Greek musicians. This code is clearly empirical and is passed on by oral tradition. It is based however on modal theoretical systems, whose most contemporary version seems to be the system of the Arabic-Persian *maqams*, and more specifically in their Ottoman version.

Hitherto, I have not been able to find a thorough study about the *laikó dhrómi*. Generally, two kinds of publications exist: a few practice-based books, written by bouzouki players that basically cite the *dhrómi* in the form of western scales and accompanied by a few lines of commentary (Paghiátis 1987 and 1992; Nikolópoulos n.d.). The two major problematic issues with these publications are that they lack in-depth research and academic methodology, and that there are many mistakes with regards to the names and the structure of the *dhrómi*. For instance, Paghiátis gives *dhrómos kiourdí* as follows:<sup>xii</sup>

Figure 1. Dhrómos kiourdí as given by Paghiátis (1992, p. 57)

Dhrómos Kúrdi



On the other hand, Nikolópoulos’s *kiourdí* is different (Figure 2). It should be mentioned that Nikolópoulos does not include any comments at all.

Figure 2. Dhrómos kiourdí as given by Nikolópoulos (n.d., p. 34)

Dhrómos Kiourdi



Turning now to the other category, it consists in the main body of books written by scholars who are clearly aware of the subject. However, apart from Dhímítris Mistakídhis’s publication (2004), the rest deal with Arabic-Persian *maqams*, rather than with the Greek *dhrómi*. The study made by Evghénios Voulgcharis and Vasilis Vandarákis (2007) is very special; after citing and analyzing the *maqams*, they transcribe songs from the *café* and the *rembétiko* pe-

riods (1922-1940) according to the Ottoman form of the maqams (see below regarding the problems that can occur in these kinds of transcriptions).<sup>xiii</sup> Mistakídhis presents the Greek dhrómi in a similar way to that of Paghiátis and Nikolópoulos. However, he sheds light on many problematic issues such as the incorrect use of the names of the maqams in Greek popular music. Furthermore, he mentions many idiomatic characteristics of the dhrómi, such as combinations with other dhrómi, basic chordal harmony and more. Kiriákos Kalaitzídhis (1996) analyzes the Ottoman maqams in a way similar to Vouílgharis and Vandarákis (2007), although not to such an extent and without so many details. Finally, the attempt made by Mários Mavroidhís (1996) can be considered as being the cornerstone of all research made on the modes. Not only does he examine Arabic-Persian maqams, giving important details and critical comments, but he also deals with Byzantine music theory<sup>xiv</sup> and its modes, the *ἠχοί* (íhi), showing the close connection between these two systems.<sup>xv</sup> However, he too does not refer to the structure of the Greek laikó dhrómi.

There are various reasons why the issue of the Greek popular dhrómi is an obstacle to this specific research; the most prominent is the erroneous association drawn between them and the Arabic-Persian maqams. A crucial difference is that, contrary to the instruments of Greek laikó music, Arabic-Persian music mostly uses instruments without frets.<sup>xvi</sup> We are, therefore, dealing with a comparison that is false from the very beginning, since we are discussing musical systems with two very different theoretical backgrounds, the use of micro-tones on the one hand and, on the other, tones and semi-tones only.<sup>xvii</sup> Even if it is the case that we can accept that the maqam system can be applied to vocal parts of Greek music because it uses micro-tones, its application to the instrumental part, especially in that of the bouzouki (which is the major solo instrument of the genre), is problematic. Due to the aforementioned problem regarding the erroneous parallelism of the dhrómi and the maqams, it cannot be stated for example, that song A is making use of the ousák dhrómos for, despite the fact that Greek musicians accept, use and (above all) understand each other when using this terminology, it is impossible for the Greek ousák to be the same as the Ottoman uşşák, due to the aforementioned issue of the micro-tones and the commas.<sup>xviii</sup>

Moreover, the strangest part of this issue is that although Greeks kept the maqam names, the names of many dhrómi are mistakenly used for they do not correspond to the original maqams. This problematic use of names has created a bizarre situation where Greek musicians communicate on the music stands by actually using incorrect names to refer to the dhrómi. Having seen such situations from the inside (as a musician),<sup>xix</sup> I believe that it will be rather difficult to change this situation. There are, of course, musicians who have studied maqam theory and who are aware of this problematic situation, something that makes it even more complex because they cannot communicate with other un-trained musicians during the work and therefore also have to make use of the false names even though they know that they do not correspond to the truth. This raises a simple yet critical question: is it not enough that the musicians communicate? Should one have to care whether one uses a word, a phrase or a term correctly, since the one to whom they are talking understands them?

The problem of categorizing the songs according to the dhrómi they are based on is a further issue that tackled in my research. For example, when the majority of the musicians refer to, play or teach the song *το βαπόρι απ' την Περσία* [to vapóri aptin Persía = the boat from Persia],<sup>xx</sup> they speak of dhrómos ousák. An examination of the maqams, though, shows that the correct maqam (or dhrómos, if the terminology was correct) is maqam kürdí.<sup>xxi</sup> On the other hand, dhrómos kiourdí is considered to be something completely different in Greek music (see Figure 3). As Pennanen points out, “the confusion existent in Greek terminology derives from the deficient knowledge of the Ottoman music culture” (2004, p. 10).

Figure 3. Dhrómos ousák; maqam kürdí; maqam uşşák; dhrómos kiourdí

Dhrómos Ousák

Corresponds to maqam Kürdí

Maqam Uşşák

Dhrómos Kiourdí

F Nikríz 5-chord

I hereby suggest that the deeper understanding of Greek popular modes should involve the study of all elements combined in their construction as a system. These elements emanate from the maqam system, the Byzantine system and the western tonal system and harmony. Each of these systems has been created to serve a particular repertoire and, most importantly, have been created according to, and out of, the repertoire they serve. When a characteristic of theirs cannot find its proper place in laikó music, it has to be changed or excluded. For example, the musical notation of Byzantine music would be difficult for Greek musicians to read because very few of them have studied it.<sup>xxiii</sup> Therefore, it is rather difficult to use this notation in order to transcribe laikó songs. For this purpose, I too use the system that the scholars who undertook a study of the dhrómi and/or the maqams have also used. This system is based

on staff notation, notes and accidentals. However, there are other theoretical norms in Byzantine music that can be used and can be comprehended by Greek musicians and foreign scholars, such as the idioms (see further below).

### **The Maqam Tradition**

During its formative process a new style somehow detaches itself from its predecessor and, wittingly or unwittingly, emerges as a reaction to the older style. Ordinarily, this reaction to and breaking away from the older style is not clear-cut. In fact the new style usually borrows and/or adapts some element from the older style. After the formative process, the new style becomes crystallized and establishes itself, and its audience begins to recognize the boundaries of it.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Evidence suggests that there is a possibility that many musicians of the Piraeus school thought that they were actually playing the 'authentic' maqams, whereas the evidence (that is, the actual recordings) points to the fact that they were 'creating' a different version of them. The situation became clearer when chordal harmony was introduced to the style (examined below). During the years of the music of the cafés and the first years of the rembétiko (or the bouzouki-based) period, the way that Greek musicians used the maqams was similar to the way in which the maqams were used in the Ottoman repertoire. Obviously, the turning point should be sought somewhere around this moment, when the refugees were performing their music which was very close to the 'authentic' maqam style, while the Greeks at Piraeus were trying to learn and perform it within their context (ethos, aesthetics, lyrics' theme). The moment that the bouzouki – a fretted instrument – became mainland Greeks' basic and leading instrument, is perhaps the moment when the change of style took effect. In fact, it was unavoidable that confusion like this would occur. If the first rembétes who created a new repertoire by using the 'sounds' from the Ottoman style that they either heard or with which they were already familiar are borne in mind, the changes that occurred can perhaps be better understood. Under discussion here are native Greeks who were affected by the refugees' music (Márkos Vamvakáris, for instance), or refugees (Spíros Peristéris) whose style changed from the Smirnéiko (café) music style to the rembétiko (Piraeus style). The major difference was the use of the bouzouki as the rembétes' primary instrument instead of instruments without frets that the refugees used. It seems that the rembétes tried to produce the same 'sound style' by using the bouzouki instead of other instruments; they tried to fit as many elements as possible of the refugees' 'authentic' maqam style into their bouzouki-based style.

Most of the mainland rembétes were uneducated people, not only musically, but generally. Somehow, this apathy on the part of the musicians (especially bouzouki players) towards examining or asking themselves about vital musical issues has become common phenomenon in the ranks of Greek musicians and exists even today. Some examples from my personal experience follow, in or-

der to depict the degree of penetration of certain problems in performance practice and oral tradition.

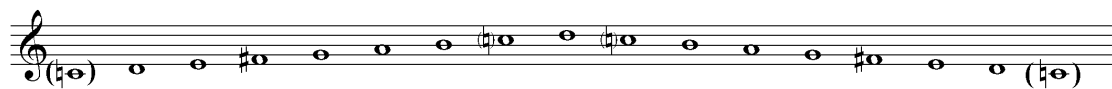
One night we (the band) played a song which sounded complex and, in terms of its modal construction, sort of weird.<sup>xxiv</sup> Instantly, I asked the bouzouki player whether or not he knew what this particular dhrómos was. His response was ‘it’s a *ματζόρε* [matzóre].’<sup>xxv</sup> The song was in D tonality, but it used the VII natural major chord, that is, a C (natural) major, instead of the V major, that is, an A major, in its cadences. Basically, the melody in the introduction sounded like this:

Figure 4. Introduction of *min kánis ónira trelá*



If one was to present this particular mode as a scale, it would be as follows:

Figure 5. Scale of the mode of *min kánis ónira trelá*



I should underline that the VII natural major chord in the matzóre dhrómos is very rare in Greek songs. Everything became clearer only when I confirmed that this particular song is one of the songs from the so-called Indocracy period, that is, a Hindi movie song recorded with Greek lyrics and a Greek style popular orchestra.<sup>xxvi</sup> In other words, during the night at the venue, we were playing a song based on a Hindi raga (another Eastern modal system). After the first response of the bouzouki player, I continued: ‘this is a matzóre? What about the C major (chord)? Do you know other songs in matzóre dhrómos that use this chord?’ Although many bouzouki players are familiar with the basic chordal harmony used in every dhrómos, they do not bother themselves with searching for proper chords or wondering about the correctness of them. The final response of the fellow bouzouki player was something like: ‘come on, why are you bothering yourself with such things?’

Another indicative example consists in considering the way that bouzouki players inform the rest of the band about the song they are about to begin playing. In many cases, at venues with live music, and during the so-called ‘laikó part’ of the program which is a two to three hour dancing program, some bands prefer to improvise the order of the songs and not make use of a carefully planned program. In almost every venue where I have worked or went as a customer, the bouzouki player was the one ‘responsible’ for determining the order of the ‘laikó part’. Due to the need for quick changes with virtually no gap between the songs, the bouzouki player has to be as succinct as

possible when telling the rest of the band what is about to follow. Thus, he indicates only the song's tonality, its *dhrómos* and its rhythm. So, he will say for example: '(let's go) D minóre zeimbékiko'.<sup>xxvii</sup> With the term 'minóre', he is actually referring to the very first chord of the song and not to the actual *dhrómos* on which the song is based. Therefore, he may play a song based on any of the following *dhrómi*: a D *ousák*, a D minóre *armonikó*, a D minóre or a D *kiourdí*.<sup>xxviii</sup> The rest of the band will have to follow him either by identifying which song it is (if they know it), or by recognising the song's modal structure, that is, understanding what *dhrómos* it is based on.<sup>xxix</sup> Basically, the word 'minóre' or the word 'matzóre' is used to indicate the first chord of the following song, which, in turn, varies according to the *dhrómos* on which the song is actually based. Interestingly enough, regardless of the prevalent terminology which is based on *maqam* names, his instructions are based on a rather western concept and not a modal one.

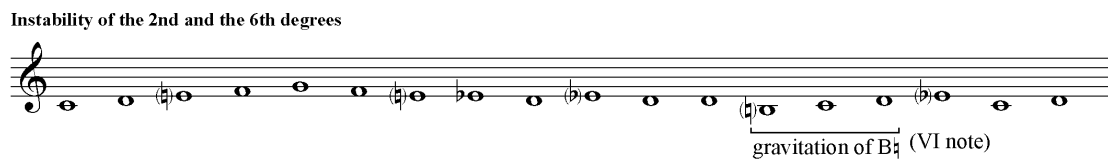
In Greece, a considerable part of the audiences, as well as of the musicians who are involved in playing *rembétiko* and *laikó*, believe that *laikó* style has been created by the *laós* (the people) and it must thus continue to 'belong' to the *laós*, remaining simple in form and function, and kept away from schools, research, and academies. This is also confirmed in Pennanen's thesis: 'for most Greek musicologists, urban memory-based music has been the Low Other that is not worth researching: the analysis of Greek popular music has been largely left to Western ethnomusicologists' (1999, p. 11).

Another problematic issue is the fact that Greek musicians think of the *dhrómi* as being scales of eight notes, that is, octachords. They teach them in this way and they also communicate on the music stands in this way. Having a look at the few books published by *bouzouki* players verifies this problematic point. All the *dhrómi* are presented as being scales. However, the main element of the *maqam* system is that it emphasizes the utilization of the tetrachord and the pentachord rather than the octachord.<sup>xxx</sup> The importance of the tetrachord and pentachord is true for Byzantine music as well. Obviously, the way Greek musicians treat the *dhrómi* reveals a tendency towards western musical thinking.

Although great differences between the two systems exist, they still have one thing in common. This is the general concept under which both systems work. For instance, there are plenty of examples where the cadences are identical or at least very similar; dominant notes that create a particular 'sound' are also similar; furthermore, many instances which are called *éλιεις* [*éλι* (singular), *éλις* (plural) = gravitations] in Byzantine music can be observed in both the system of the *dhrómi* and the system of the *maqams*. There is a central/dominant note which draws/pulls/attracts peripheral notes towards itself. This is called *éλι*.<sup>xxxi</sup> A characteristic example (drawn from performance practice) could be the case of *dhrómos ousák* where two idiomatic behaviors can be observed: i) the instability of the second degree of the scale, which sometimes sounds flat and sometimes natural, depending on whether the melody is ascending or descending; ii) the other idiom is observed in the sixth degree which tends to gravitate towards the seventh in ascending melodies that revolve around the tonal note, in our case D. Figure 6 shows a typical 'opening' melody of a *taxími* based on *dhrómos ousák*. The *taxími* (plural

taxímia) is a non-rhythmic improvisation based on the dhrómos of the particular song or on a combination of dhrómi. It is played at the beginning of the song. The other instruments may play the *íso* [íso], which is a single sustained note. The role of the taxími is either to show a musician's talent, imagination and skills, to emphasize the tonality and the dhrómos of the song or both. A taxími could also be played inside a song with the orchestra continuing to play the *ad libitum* of the song and the soloist improvising either based on the rhythm or not. Since we are dealing with melodies which are played 'senza tempo' (the taxímia), I preferred to use semibreves.

Figure 6. Idioms of the ousák dhrómos



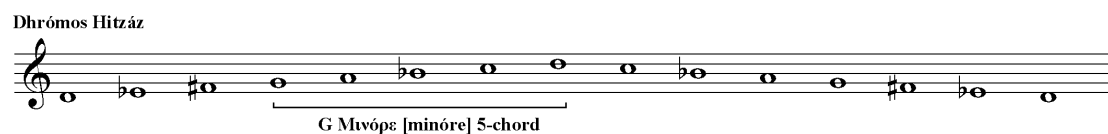
## The Byzantine Tradition

The elements of Byzantine music that were deemed necessary in *rembétiko* are: the idioms (*ιδιωματισμοί*, *idhiomatismí*), the dominant notes (*δεσπόζοντες φθόγγοι*, *dhespózontes fthóngi*) and the cadences (*καταλήξεις*, *katalíxis*). The idioms are some idiosyncratic 'behaviors' or simply specific movements of certain notes within particular modes. For instance, in the *ousák* and *hitzáz* dhrómi, it is highly likely that an ascending movement in the *rast* or *matzóre* pentachords below the tonal note (in our case D) and towards it will be found (G-A-B-C-D is G *rast*/*matzóre* pentachord. See Figure 7).<sup>xxxii</sup> This should be considered an idiom of *ousák*/*hitzáz* rather than a modulation to the *rast*/*matzóre* dhrómos.

Figure 7. The *rast* idiom of the dhrómi *ousák* and *hitzáz*



Figure 8. Dhrómos *hitzáz*





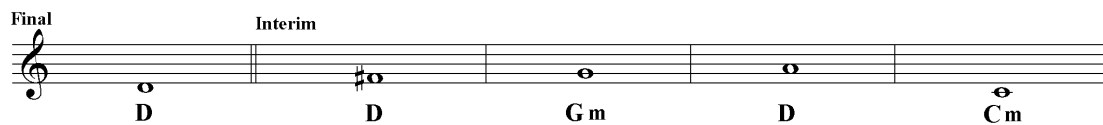
The dominant notes, as described by Hrísanthos from Mádhita in his book are the notes that ‘the íhos enjoys more to go in for’ (n.d., p. 134). In other words, the dominant notes are the notes that are heard more than other notes and thus create a particular ‘feeling/sense’, ethos, aesthetic and general sound style for every popular mode (see Figure 11 for an example of dominant notes).

Finally, in Byzantine music, cadences in each mode (íhos) are specific and different from those in other modes. This is the same as in the dhrómi (see Figures 9 and 10). I have never heard of a term used for the cadences from Greek musicians and this is the reason that I borrowed the names of the cadences from Byzantine theory, due to the fact that there is no written theory for Greek rembétiko-laikó music. Therefore, I call ‘interim cadences’ those cadences which occur during the pieces and ‘final cadences’ those which occur at the end, just as they do in Byzantine music. I should point out that while the main concern of the Byzantine cadences is the lyrics, the main concern in the cadences used in Greek dhrómi is the music. More clearly, Byzantine interim cadences are divided into two categories, the *ατελείς* [atelís = incomplete] – where there is a cadence or simply a pause in the music, but where a sentence in the lyrics has not yet finished (in other words, when a comma or a semicolon is reached) – and the *εντελείς* [entelís = ending at a full stop], where the sentence is finished along with the melodic line (within the hymn). However, when we discuss Byzantine music, we are talking about a strictly vocal music. This accounts for the emphasis on the lyrics.

Figure 9. Cadences with accompanying chords in ousák dhrómos



Figure 10. Cadences with accompanying chords in hitzáz dhrómos



## The Western Tradition

[...] a recipient culture may adapt foreign elements in distinctly idiosyncratic ways that substantially alter their function, context, and meaning. The uses of harmony, for example, in Greek, Balkan, and Turkish popular musics could not be called functional in the Western sense, since the chordal vocabularities derive not from European common practice but from the tonal resources of the modes used.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

[...] rather than by Westernisation alone, musical change in Greece can be more readily analysed through the concept of modernization. According to Bruno Nettl (1985: 20), Westernisation may be described as the substitution of central features of non-Western music for their Western analogues, thereby sacrificing essential facets of the tradition. [...] Modernisation, on the other hand, is the incidental movement of a system or its components in the direction of Western music and musical life without requiring major changes in those aspects of the non-Western tradition that are central and essential. Western elements are viewed in the culture as ways of continuing the tradition rather than changing it.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The introduction of characteristics from western music, or from what (according to the above quotations) appears to be western music, was perhaps the most important reason for the transformation of the ‘authentic’, maqam-based style (that is, the music of the refugees), to a new one, the *rembétiko* (Piraeus style). More specifically, the role that chordal harmony played in the development of Greek popular music was of major importance (see Figure 11 regarding chordal harmony and the *dhrómi*).<sup>xxxv</sup> Manuel writes that “from the 1940s on, particularly under the influence of Vassilis Tsitsanis, European influence increased, with even more emphasis on harmony” (1989, p. 83). It is true that after the World War 2 the songs recorded by Tsitsanis were more sophisticated in terms of both their virtuosity and their harmonic structure. Many of the Greek amateur music historians that have published books about Tsitsanis call his post-war recording period ‘the classical period’. Nevertheless, it is this period that seems to justify claims such as the one about the conversion from the *rembétiko* to the *laikó* style; and the establishment of specific chordal progressions is clearly part of Tsitsanis’s work. However, it should always be borne in mind that “most successful popular music recordings are the result of teamwork, and such collective creative practice tends to undermine the still somewhat prevalent romantic notion of the single, artistic genius” (Warner 2009, p. 136). For instance, Evangelía Margharóni was responsible for transcribing many of Tsitsanis’s songs. From published interviews of Margharóni, as well as from an interview I personally conducted with her, it is

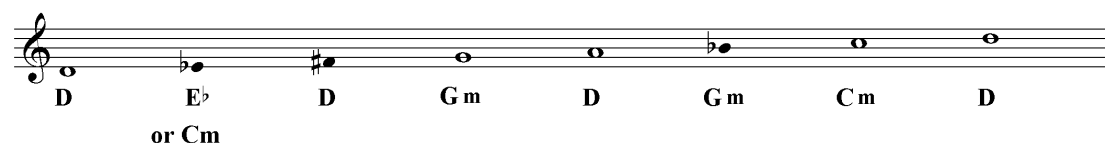
known that Tsitsánis trusted her with regards to many aspects of his music, such as the harmonization of his songs, the arrangements, and even changes to the melody. She, as well as other people who knew Tsitsánis, say that he used to call her and play melodies on the telephone while she would propose the harmony and give her opinion on the melodies. Furthermore, the same sources give evidence of Tsitsánis's yet another habit. Many times during his evening work, when he was particularly struck by an improvisation of his, he would turn around and ask Margharóni to write down what he had just played so that he would not forget it. Margharóni (who was a classically-trained pianist) remembers that she used to write down these notes in a personal notation 'language' on packs of cigarettes. I should mention here that an extended analysis of the role of chordal harmony, as well as of the way it works, cannot be made within a publication of this type. Chordal harmony is one of the fundamental, most complex and profound characteristics of non-western musical traditions, because it reveals how and to what extent musicians adapt to Western influences and contribute to musical syncretism. As Bruno Nettl cogently argues:

Urbanization, the interaction of various culture groups, Western technology in music and elsewhere, secularization of musical culture—all of this came about because of the impact of Western culture, and so the music that might best symbolize this state of society would almost have to include Western and native elements side by side.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Ultimately, if we also consider the fact that many Greek islands were under Italian rule for many years, it becomes clear that the 'importation' of western elements was unavoidable. Worth mentioning in this regard is the case of Márkos Vamvakáris, the man who, in some senses, gave birth to the Piraeus rembétiko style. He was from the island of Σύρος [Síros]. Venetians, Greeks and Turks lived on the island, for example. Venetians declared Catholicism the dominant religion in 1204. Turks ruled the island from 1579 but gave many privileges to the citizens of Síros, one of them being their religious freedom. The population of the island raised from around 4,000 people at the beginning of the Greek Revolution in ca. 1821 to 14,000 in 1828, and finally reached 22,000 around 1889. Moreover, a high school was built as early as in 1833, and a theatre as early as 1864. Manuel adds that 'Syra, for example, with its important port of Hermoupolis, hosted an opera house from the 1820s' (1989, p. 7). This suggests a mixture of Italian-style songs, the so-called *καντάδες* (kantádes), Turkish maqam-based music, Greek folk music, opera, Catholic religious music, etc. Although Vamvakáris left the island at the age of 12, it is obvious that every sound which he remembered may well have influenced his bouzouki music during his life in Piraeus. Finally, if we add the 'μάγκας world' (mángas = street-urchin, thug, toughie) that clearly affected his way of living as well as his songs (see Vamvakáris's hashish songs), it becomes clear that the musical style he introduced was a jumble of heterogeneous cultural traditions.

Figure 11 shows the common chordal harmony as well as the dominant notes of dhrómos hitzáz, which here appear as whole notes.

Figure 11. Common chordal harmony and dominant notes of dhrómos hitzáz



### Presentation of Dhrómos Ousák and Hitzáz

All the examples are given with D as the starting note. Since the old / traditional bouzouki – the three-string one – is tuned in D (D-A-D) the bouzouki players always prefer to speak of the dhrómi by giving examples using this particular tonality. The examples in the maqam system, however, are given in their traditional form. The first staff of the examples presents the laikó dhrómos as the majority of Greek musicians think of it and some Greek authors present it in the books they have published. The second staff in Figure 13 shows the maqam to which dhrómos ousák corresponds (dhrómos hitzáz does correspond to maqam hicâz). Then follows the maqam form of the dhrómos, that is, the tetrachord/pentachord using the appropriate accidentals (third and second staff in Figures 13 and 14 correspondingly). By adding other maqams to the end of each of these tetrachords and pentachords, the way a maqam can develop beyond the given tetrachords and pentachords it can be shown. The idioms follow (staves 4-7 and 3 respectively), as do some popular combinations with other dhrómi, whenever applicable (staves 8 and 4 correspondingly). Finally, the common chordal harmony used in each of the dhrómi is given along with the dominant notes and the cadences (staves 9-10 and 5-6 correspondingly). Figure 12 shows in commas the values of the accidentals used in the maqams.

Figure 12. The values of the accidentals in maqams

♭ = one comma flat
♭ = four commas flat
♭ = five commas flat
♯ = four commas sharp

Figure 13. Dhrómos ousák

Dhrómos Ousák

G Mivópe [minóre] 5-chord

Corresponds to maqam Kürdí

Kürdí 5-chord  
F Çárgâh 5-chord  
G Büselik 5-chord

Maqam Uşşák

Uşşák 4-chord  
G Büselik 5-chord

**Idioms**

Below base (ascending)

G Matzópe [matzóre] or G rast 5-chord

Below base (descending)

G Matzópe [matzóre] or G rast 5-chord

or

G Mivópe [minóre] 5-chord

Instability of the 2nd and the 6th degrees

gravitation of B<sub>3</sub> (VI note)

Popular combination: dhrómos Kiourdi

Common chordal harmony & dominant notes

Cadences

Figure 14. Dhrómos hitzáz

Dhrómos Hitzáz

Maqam Hicáz

Idioms

Below base (ascending)

Popular combination

Common chordal harmony & dominant notes

Cadences

## Conclusion

The laikó dhrómi constitutes a major chapter in Greek popular music. The fact that a thorough analysis and examination has never been carried out makes writing a history of the style complex. The few attempts by scholars to write on the topic have clashed with the oral tradition of the musicians, and instead of solving the problem, have created two ‘camps’, one of which follows the rules of the music stand, and the other the proposals of the scholars. Therefore, well-organized and in-depth research is urgently needed in order to at least prevent the continuation of this problem. There is also a pressing need for the Greek university schools and conservatoires to begin adding programs of studies on such issues, the continuing absence of which keep popular musical studies at an embryonic level.

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- <sup>i</sup> Cf. Blanchard (1925); Valaorás (1960); 100 years Greece (1999, pp. 176-77); Pentzópoulos (2002); National Geographic (2007, p. 30); Isiz (2008).
- <sup>ii</sup> The use of the term is problematic and misleading, for there were songs from several other origins, such as Constantinople and Adrianople, which were part of the repertoire that Greeks address as Smirnέiko. Risto Pekka Pennanen discusses this problematic use (1999, p. 68; 2004, pp. 3-4).
- <sup>iii</sup> I should also mention at this point the derivative *ρεμπέτης* (plural *ρεμπέτες* [rembétis – rembétes]). Apart from the musical style, the word also covers a more general and broader life stance, connected to people living in the underworld, such as criminals and drug-addicts, who had their own ideology, appearance, idiolectic and moral rules. Regarding rembétes, see Dimitri Monos (1987, p. 111) and Pennanen (1999, p. 67, footnote 1).
- <sup>iv</sup> See Despina Michael (1996) regarding the tendency of Tsitsánis to avoid the term rembétiko as well as regarding the negative attitude of society towards the word and everything that allegedly represented (members of the underworld, musicians, music style, instruments).
- <sup>v</sup> Cf. Pennanen (2004) for rembétiko.
- <sup>vi</sup> Pennanen (1999, p. 68); Morris (1980, p. 81).
- <sup>vii</sup> Although the correct phrase would be *λαϊκή μουσική* [laikí music] I only use the neuter type of the word, that is, laikó, in order to prevent confusion.
- <sup>viii</sup> *Λαϊκός* [laikós, masculine], *λαϊκή* [laikí, feminine], *λαϊκό* [laikó, neuter].
- <sup>ix</sup> A similar approach can also be found in Státhis Dhamianákos (1994).
- <sup>x</sup> I use dhrómos for singular and dhrómi for plural. The Greek letter ‘Δ, δ’ (Dh, dh) sounds like the ‘th’ in the word ‘there’.
- <sup>xi</sup> Although I write rembétiko, I choose to write rebetology without the ‘m’ and the accent because this is the way that the term has been established within academic circles.
- <sup>xii</sup> All musical examples are given in D tonality. Examples from other authors are given as they appear in their texts. See p. 13 for the role of the D tonality.
- <sup>xiii</sup> The title of the book contains the term which was discussed at the beginning of this paper, Smirnέiko.
- <sup>xiv</sup> With the term ‘Byzantine’ music, Greeks refer to Greek orthodox ecclesiastic chanting.
- <sup>xv</sup> Ἦχος, íhos (plural ἦχοι, íhi) are the Byzantine modes. The word íhos literally means sound or tune.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Obviously some exceptions can be found in rembétiko as well, such as in the case of the violin.
- <sup>xvii</sup> The observation of Voúlgharis and Vandarákis is extremely important in that “the above system (of the maqams) arises as an encoding of the corpus of compositions by literati musicians, extensive and fine in their progression” (2007, p. 11). However, when talking about rembétiko, they discuss an urban-popular musical form.
- <sup>xviii</sup> In Ottoman music, one tone is divided in nine commas. In order to mark the difference between dhrómi and maqams, I write the former using the Latin alphabet (ousák, hitzáz) while I write the latter in their original form (uşşák, hicâz).

- <sup>xix</sup> I have been working as a professional rembétiko-laikó musician (pianist and singer) on music stands since 2000.
- <sup>xx</sup> Recorded in 1977 (MINOS-EMI [COLUMBIA] 7YCG 6314 - 2J 006 70529/II).
- <sup>xxi</sup> See Voúlgharis and Vandarákis (2007, p. 51). Mistakídhis also points out the issue of kiourdí (2004, p. 225).
- <sup>xxii</sup> A similar point is also made in Voúlgharis and Vandarákis (2007, p. 11).
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Byrnside 1975, p. 219.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> The song is entitled *μην κάνεις όνειρα τρελά* [min kánis ónira trelá = don't dream of crazy dreams]. It has been recorded by several artists and is a popular song today.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Matzóre dhrómos is very close to the western major scale.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> For the Indocracy period cf. Abadzi and Tasoúlas (1998).
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Minóre is a dhrómos very close to the western minor scales. Zeimbékiko is a 9/4 laikó rhythm/dance.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> All of these dhrómi use a minor chord as the tonic.
- <sup>xxix</sup> This process is often called by Greek musicians *παίζω με το αυτί* [pézo me to aftí = playing by ear]. They basically mean that one should rely on their experience and musical skills rather than on a musical score. In a sense, it is a matter of musical instinct and alertness on the part of the musicians (See Lilliestam 1996 regarding 'playing by ear').
- <sup>xxx</sup> This does not mean that maqam theory does not include and use the octachord.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Every maqam and dhrómos has its own élxis.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Rast is another maqam/dhrómos. It is often used by Greek musicians as a synonym for the matzóre dhrómos.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Manuel (1990, pp. 20-21).
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Pennanen (1999, pp. 7-8). See also Bruno Nettl's statement (1985, p. 156) regarding Westernization and modernization in the Middle East.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the development of chordal harmony in Greek popular music see Pennanen (1999, pp. 67-118).
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Nettl (1985, p. 85).

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