ORIGIN OF THE SERBIAN GUSLE: FROM PRE-HISTORY TO THE MIDDLE AGES

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PREFACE

This article is a separate and revised article on the origin of the gusle from the study *The origin of musical instruments among the Serbs, based on archaeological, historical, ethnographic and other data* (2016). I tried to indicate the changes and reasons for transformation of the musical bow played with a wooden stick into the present-day gusle. Most of the text remained the same with certain conclusions revised, which was the aim of republishing it separately. I put a substantial effort in Chapter *Philology*, due to the complexity of conditions which resulted in the origin of its present-day name.

Here, I also present new depictions of Ancient Egyptians lutes with a horse’s head at the top as well as similar ones in Medieval Europe, thereby revising previous conclusions that this type of a lute, which was bowed with a horsehair bow in the 8th-9th centuries, was in fact the forerunner of the modern gusle.

While, bowing bigger, three-stringed lutes began and ended in the West between the 9th and 14th centuries, the Serbs adapted them to suit their epic poetry by reducing the number of strings to one, and thus saved them from extinction. So, this very feature makes the gusle a Serbian instrument.

Author

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THE GUSLE

Christmas as beautiful and sweet as described by Njegoš – the straw spread in front of the hearth, badnjaks (English: oak branches) laid on the fire crosswise, rifles, pastry, gusles, songs and toasts – is not a Christian holiday, but an ancient Serbian holiday.¹

Čajkanović was right not to have omitted the gusle. Undoubtedly, a bowed instrument used to accompany epic poetry existed among the Serbs in ancient times, long before the birth of Christ.² The question remains as to what shape it had and how it has developed its present appearance.

An unfortunate circumstance for the study of its origin was that the gusle had no pictorial representations in Serbian ecclesiastical art until the 17th century.³ In addition, the medieval data were rather vague due to the vagueness of medieval terminology in Church Slavic texts. Thereby, the terms gusli and gusle, referred to different string instruments. Also, the word ’gudeti’ did not have its present-day meaning ‘to bow’. It generally denoted the sound coming from the strings (see Chapter “Philology” below).

Fortunately, the Serbian gusle retained enough details in its structure for studying its layered development. Therefore the gusle itself, i.e. its individual parts, will be used for studying its origin. In our attempt to determine the time of its appearance, we will first compare the ethnographic data of other similar European instruments and then complement them with related conclusions from my previous book,⁴ philological and archaeological data, medieval materials, oral traditional knowledge and other available sources.

Bowing

² Čajkanović claimed that the genre of Serbian epic poetry and its relations with the ancestor cult belonged to remote antiquity, perhaps even Indo-European. Loma also contributed by arriving at the same conclusions. (Čajkanović, 1995, pp. 34, 131; Loma, 2002).
³ The Psalter by Gavril Trojičanin (1643), Morača Monastery, St. Luka’s icon (1672-1673) (Pejović, 2005, p.192). The author sees the reason for the late emergence of the gusle in the role it played in the rituals of the supreme Pagan God, which will be discussed later.
⁴ Đurović 2016.
Until recently, based on the oldest historical data and depictions, it was believed that the bowing practice began in Europe in the 8th-9th centuries after the advent of a horsehair bow. This information really confirmed that a sudden appearance of the bowing practice and a widespread use of bowed string instruments dated back only to the Early Middle Ages. Although this phenomenon was legitimately thought to have emerged under the influences brought by the Arabs from the east, it did not date back to an earlier time there either. The bowing practice was also considered to have abruptly reached inside Europe. The rapid adoption of a horsehair bow confirmed that some primitive bowed instruments had existed in Europe much earlier and that the bowing practice had already been widespread. However, the research did not go in that direction. European urban culture, first mentions and depictions were taken into consideration rather than the musical bow and ethnological records. Modern bowed instrument do not testify about the bowing practice of some simpler forms, which must have existed in Europe in prehistoric times.

*Musical bow*

The musical bow undoubtedly evolved from the hunting bow, when hunters across the world realized that the bowstring produced a tone. The hunting bow appeared in the Upper Paleolithic at the earliest. This was concluded from the findings of the arrowheads made of workstone,

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5 The depiction of bowed string instruments in the Utrecht Psalter from the 9th century and the records of Arabian travel writers (Sachs, 1940, p. 216; Farmer, 1931, p. 103; Remnant, 1978, p. 43). The scientists believed that a bowing skill had been invented among the skilful warriors of Central Asia, the Huns and the Mongols and later it spread across China, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans (Sadie and Tyrrell, 2001).

6 Remnant, 1978, p. 44.
which first appeared on Iberian Peninsula in the Upper Solutrean phase (17,000 – 16,000 BCE) – Parpallo arrowpoints.\textsuperscript{7}

There were several possible ways to produce a tone: by plucking the strings with fingers, striking the strings with a stick or dragging a stick across the strings, all of which were ethnographically known. At first, the player leant the bow against a container on the ground, which served as a resonator, or pressed one end of the bow against his mouth holding it tight with his teeth.\textsuperscript{8} The musical bow was recognized as a precursor of harps and lutes. Arched harps first added more strings to the musical bow, and then a resonator, whereas lutes straightened the bow and added a resonator.

In Europe, the existence of the musical bow can be traced far back into prehistory. There was some evidence of its existence in the Mesolithic and Neolithic Periods with reference to a depiction from the Paleolithic Period from Grotte des Trois Frères.\textsuperscript{9} Both the plucked and bowed variants of the musical bow undoubtedly existed in prehistoric Europe.

The plucked variant was preserved in its original form with the Finno-Ugric Maris on the Volga River (\textit{kon-kon}).\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Fig. 4} Kon-kon, the musical bow of the Maris on the Volga (Vertkov, \textit{et al.}, 1963, cat. 169). The practice of playing the musical bow with a wood stick has been known worldwide: in some regions of Africa, Australia and Asia (Vietnam).\textsuperscript{11} It was even depicted in the famous prehistoric African drawings on rock.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8} This might be the reason why violins are held against the shoulder in Western Europe: presumably they inherited the prehistoric tradition of being held against the teeth. While Byzantine lyres were held in an upright position, fiddles were held against the shoulder there. The roots might be seen in the positions in the depictions from Trois Frères. The proof might be seen in the position of the musical bow with the bladder from France in the 17th century (fig. 9).
\item \textsuperscript{9} Dauvois, 2002.
\item \textsuperscript{10} It measured about 40 cm in length. It was held at one end with the mouth serving as a resonator still used in the 20th century for performing songs and dance tunes. The Maris or Cheremis are the Finno-Ugric people who live along the valley of the Volga River in Eastern Europe, with numerous remnants of ancient, prehistoric beliefs and customs (Vertkov \textit{et al.}, 1963, p. 50, cat. 169).
\item \textsuperscript{11} In accordance with the ethnological data related to shamanic practice from Africa and Asia, bowing belonged to the ritual practice of music (Sachs, 1940; Basilov, 1991).
\item \textsuperscript{12} Vogels, 2010.
\end{itemize}
Fig. 5 Prehistoric drawings on rock: the musical bow bowed with a wood stick, South Africa, c. 3500-2000 BCE (Vogels, 2010, p. 181, fig. 7, 4, 3, 22).

Fig. 6 New Guinea, the musical bow (Abrashev, Gadjev, 2000, p. 67).

Fig. 7 Africa, the scraped musical bow nxoxoro (Vogels, 2010, fig. 22).

Organology of the Serbian Gusle

1. European bowed Musical Bow

The conclusion that the practice of bowing on the musical bow with a wooden stick was known even in North Europe in the Prehistoric Ages, was based on the state of preservation of the surviving instruments in modern practice. The smuigas (Lithuania) has the most archaic characteristics. It is a simple musical bow with a fibre string or cord, without a resonator, which leaned against a double chin and was rubbed with a bow (before the bow there was a stick). A few more primitive instruments listed in Table 1 indicate the stringed musical bow of Old Europe. It gradually added a bladder resonator, a more advanced bow, a wooden corpus, another string, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Resonator</th>
<th>Strings</th>
<th>Bowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spēles (Smugias)</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Musical bow</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1 red</td>
<td>Bow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūšļa vijoļe</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Narrow lath</td>
<td>Pig bladder</td>
<td>1 flax string</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dūdas</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Narrow lath curved</td>
<td>Bladder</td>
<td>1 or 2 red strings</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>at one end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūslinė</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Musical bow</td>
<td>Animal bladder</td>
<td>1 cord</td>
<td>Notched wood stick (before); bow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(at present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Põispill</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Narrow lath</td>
<td>Sheep bladder</td>
<td>1 sheep gut string</td>
<td>Wood stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>curved at one end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobyz (older type)</td>
<td>Mari region on the Volga, Russia</td>
<td>Musical bow</td>
<td>Bull bladder</td>
<td>2 horsehair strings</td>
<td>Bow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Primitive bowed string instruments in North Europe (based on the data: Vertkov et al., 1963).

Other instruments in European practice have more advanced features such as a resonator. Very often they are not only bowed with a wood stick but the stick is also used to strike the strings.
with it. The older form of the Estonian *põispill* retained its form of the bow and has only one string made from sheep intestine. At the bottom there is a bladder filled with air to serve as a resonator, with the bridge on it. It was played with a wood stick and used in wedding ceremonies to provide rhythm.\(^\text{13}\) More advanced than these are the *diabelskie skrzypce* (Poland), the *teufelsgeige* (Germany), the Estonian *mollpill* (or *moldpill*), the Latvian *diga*,\(^\text{14}\) etc.

The fact that these older forms (used as props in Pagan wedding and funeral ceremonies) were well-preserved until modern times indicates that bowing was worshipped as a ritual practice deeply rooted in history. On the other hand, it also indicates that bowing took priority over plucking in the ritual practices of the Slavs and Balts (as well as the Germans). It was associated with the squeaky sound which, according to Sachs, had a magical role of intimidating and banishing evil spirits,\(^\text{15}\) which is considered to be an older layer which belonged to distant past. As processions and weddings were considered to be rituals in which, according to old beliefs, the ancestors\(^\text{16}\) were most involved, we assume that bowing played an important role in summoning the dead or making connections with them. The younger epic layer can be seen in it as well as a new practice of bowing in a magic ritual, which certainly derived from modern social relations (weddings) which have been present among the Europeans probably since the beginnings of agriculture and building houses from solid materials in the Neolithic Period (6–4 million BCE).

The Slavic people have identical tradition of crafting an instrument called *maple gusle* denoting a musical bow. In fact, when both the Serbs and West Slavs cut a tree for a gusle, they, at the same time, took a shoot (i.e. a branch AA) from the same tree for a bow.\(^\text{17}\) In Western Slavic songs when a *guslar* (English: gusle player) sets out to cutting a maple tree, it speaks to him: \(^\text{18}\)

Rubajte, rubajte,
Len sedce nerante,
Ništ sa wy nebojte,
Ale si otnite
Na jednu husličky,
Na druhe slačjku.

“Cut down, cut down,
Just don’t hurt the heart,
Fear nothing
Cut it off for yourself
One for a little gusle,
And another for a bow.”

Does this common tradition of crafting the gusle not tell us again about the older layer of a custom which connects the gusle/little gusle with the musical bow? Even the excerpt from the quoted song speaks of not cutting down the tree (“don’t hurt the heart”), but only the branches (“One for a little gusle another for a bow”). This musical bow was what the first Slavic bowed instrument probably looked like. It was similar to the Lithuanian *smičius* or Latvian *smuigas*,

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\(^{13}\) Vertkov et al., 1963, cat. 244; http://www.rahvamuusika.ee/?s=206.

\(^{14}\) Vertkov et al., 1963, pp. 73, 78; cat. 169, 249-251, 301-2.

\(^{15}\) Sachs, 1940, p. 9.

\(^{16}\) Čajkanović, 1973.


\(^{18}\) Farmintsyn, 1980, p. 15.
whose names were derived from Proto-Slavic -smyk.\textsuperscript{19} This can easily be understood as the Slavs and Balts have lived in symbiosis since the Bronze Age.

Franjo Kuhač noted down that the tradition of crafting the musical bow continued among the Serbs and elsewhere in the Balkans up to the 19th century. He wrote that in Serbia, Srem, Bosnia and Herzegovina, “in order to train the children in bowing from a very young age, they craft a gusle from an ordinary broomstick”, whereas in Zagorje they made it from “arched wood”.\textsuperscript{20} The broomstick itself had the shape which only lacked an animal bladder as a resonator to look like the Lithuanian pūslinė.

2. Bow

\textit{a) Primal Slavic bow}

According to the linguistic data, Panslavic smičak, smičok (English: ‘bow’) originated from Proto-Slavic meaning *smykъ, smukъ – a stick or a peeled twig,\textsuperscript{21} which indicates that a wood stick was used for bowing in ancient times.

The justification for this viewpoint can be found in a musical instrumentarium of the conservative Slavic tribes: the Kurpies and Kashubians (Poland). A national bowed instrument named a devil’s violin (\textit{diabelskie skrzypce})\textsuperscript{22} was used in ceremonial processions. \textsuperscript{23} The Kurpies had a single stringed instrument with a prismatic body which was bowed with a wooden stick. It was actually a musical bow with an attached sound box.

However, this is only the tip of the iceberg as there are other similar instruments in European heritage. Their depictions are presented below as well as the most primitive ones in the table.

\textit{b) Bow with a string}

Another Pan-Slavic term for the bow lučac, luč, louč (church Slavic \textit{lučč})\textsuperscript{24} denotes a small bow, which was a Proto-Slavic meaning from antiquity.\textsuperscript{24} It referred to a stringed bow, which is clear from its name as it has an arch shape. As the term is definitely younger than smičak, it is difficult to precisely determine the time of its appearance.

On the one hand, the ethnographic data raise the possibility of its existence in the times before Christ, as different materials for the string, its main part, had already been known (animal intestines, flax, or cord), as evidenced by similar European instruments (\textit{Table 1}). Strings made of different materials on children’s little gusle had been in use even among the Serbs as they used to put “well-polished filament yarn, even on the bow”.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{table}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{20} Kuhač, 1876, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{21} Melnychuk et al., 2006, p. 320, smik-1. Kuhač cited Miklošić that allegedly Old Slavic \textit{смічак} had derived from \textit{смікъ} (English: ‘string’), which would indicate that the bow had a string. However, the previous conclusions that it derived from a wood stick were more recent. They also appeared in the Etymological Dictionary of Slavic Languages by Trubachev, and were therefore likely to be more precise.
\textsuperscript{22} Could the toponym from the region of Užice (Serbia) ‘Skržuti’ possibly denote ‘bowed stringed instruments’?
\textsuperscript{23} In 2014, the project of the Polish museums and the Institute of Music and Dance was realised as the Internet portal with over 250 musical instruments: http://ludowe.instrumenty.edu.pl/pl/o-projekcie.
\textsuperscript{24} *чёсъ, *чъкъ deriving from Proto-Slavic, *чъкъ (read: lonk) with Proto-Slavic diminutive suffix -ьсъ (read: -ac), (Trubachev, 1990, pp. 134-5; Melnychuk et al., 2006, pp. 301, 313-4). It was common in Ukrainian, Old Polish, Czech, Slovak, Bulgarian and Serbian.
\textsuperscript{25} Kuhač 1876: 9.
Corresponding to the time when the horsehair bow appeared (8th-9th centuries), the term could have appeared on the territory of the Slavic Great Moravian Principality in the 9th century before the Hungarian invasion.\textsuperscript{26} It could also have appeared individually on different Slavic territories in the Early Middle Ages as the name for the arched bow.\textsuperscript{27}

Therefore, these two Proto-Slavic terms for the bow reflect two horizons of antiquity: \textit{smičak} (far older), and \textit{lučac} (younger). However, the exact time of their appearance is unknown.

The Iranian tribes of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, judging from the discoveries of the Scythian harps, similar to the ones from Xinjiang and Olbia, they do not bring the bow, but have the marks caused by striking, which means that they were played with the stick (see Appendix).

As neither the old Turkish instrument from the 7th century (Mongolia) was found with the bow, it means that it was still played with the stick as many of them were found in the tomb. In the same tomb there were artefacts indicating cultural relations to the Avars who, at that time, inhabited Pannonia. It is thus very likely that the Avars did not use the bow either at that time as they were surrounded by the Slavs from 550 to around 800 CE. Consequently, they could not have taken it over either from the Scythians or the Huns or the Avars, as they still did know about it.

From what has been said, the most acceptable conclusion is that the Slavic arched bow dates from a much later date, namely the 8th-9th centuries, when the bowed string instruments spread around Europe.

c) Snake-shaped bow

Interestingly, the term ‘smyk’ has other meanings: ‘rat snake’ or ‘snake’, which explains why the horsehair bow among the Serbs took the shape of a snake. This presumably happened during the Middle Ages, when term \textit{smičak} was still widely used for the bow, and the word ‘posmicati’ denoted ‘playing with a bow.

3. String(s) on the gusle

The string on the gusle\textsuperscript{28} across which the bow was drawn could have been made from an animal tendon judging from its ancient use on the hunting bow.\textsuperscript{29} The use of animal intestines for musical instruments, dating back to the 3rd millennium BCE, proved to be more successful, though. This was confirmed by archeological evidence found first on the Sumerian lyres\textsuperscript{30} and later on the Egyptian lute.\textsuperscript{31} Table 1 shows that only the Mari \textit{kobyz} had horsehair strings, whereas other primitive European bowed instruments from the area of the hypothetical Proto-Slavic homeland had the strings made from animal intestines, flax or cord.

4. Resonator

\textsuperscript{26} It was assumed that the Slavic Language had been at the level of Proto-Slavic until the 9th century (Ivić, 1992).

\textsuperscript{27} The term ‘lučac’ often referred to not only ‘bow’ but also other bow-shaped objects (Trubachev, 1990, ibid.).

\textsuperscript{28} i.e. strings as in the two-stringed gusle.

\textsuperscript{29} It is considered that invention of a refined hunting bow in the 8th-9th centuries caused the appearance of a bowed string with a horsehair bow in Central Asia, from which it quickly spread toward the Middle East and Europe (Remnant, 1978). A resent find of the composite Scythian bow near Xinjiang dated back to by far earlier period (the first half of the 1st millennium BCE). It was composed of the layers of wood and deer antlers, with a tendon made of twisted animal fibres. (Karpowicz and Selby, 2010).

\textsuperscript{30} The fragments of the Lyre of Ur were preserved with plaster of Paris poured by Leonard Woolley who thus prevented the lyre from disintegrating. (Head, 2007, p. 16).

\textsuperscript{31} Discovery of the lute with gut stings in the mid-2nd millennium BCE. It was confirmed that the strings were made of animal intestines rather than plant fibres in Ancient Egypt (Head, 2007, p. 18).
The European musical bow added a resonator in the shape of an animal bladder in prehistoric times. This might be traced back between the end of the Paleolithic Age and the beginning of the Neolithic Age while diet was still largely based on hunting. Until recently, the neighbours of the Proto-Slavic community have used different instruments: the Estonian poispill, the kobyz of the Maris on the Volga, the Lithuanian pūšlinė, the Latvian pūšļa vijole and dūdas.32 Similar instruments were used by the Germanic tribes (bladder fiddle), as well as in the folklore of the Germans (bumbass), the French (basse de Flandre) and the English (drone and string).33 The bladder was probably the oldest resonator on earth. As the remains of this tradition, the first harps and lutes from the Middle East had strings made from leather membrane. From this viewpoint it seems obvious that this pattern was adopted by the Slavs, who used the instrument with a leather string in the shape of a membrane stretched over the wooden resonator. 34

Fig. 8 Smičius, a musical bow with an animal bladder, played with the bow, Lithuania (Slaviūnas 1939, p. 525, fig. 1).

Fig. 9 French stringed musical bow called basse de Flandre, 17th century depiction

5. Corpus

Over time the arch shaped body of the instrument straightened out and was replaced with a straight wooden lath with the resonator (bladder) placed at the bottom. Later it was added a resonator in a shape of a wooden box or a hoop with stretched leather as seen on the German teufelsgeige or the Georgian chianuri. In this respect, the diabelskie skrzypce and the teufelsgeige belong to the older stage dating back to the mid-1st millennium BCE. Since this period similar earliest known instruments of lute class were made of one piece of wood (finds from Xinjiang). It was at the end of the Old Era and the beginning of the New Era (probably under the influence of the appearance of the lute in Central Europe) that the corpus was made from a maple tree with

32 Vertkov et al., 1963, pp. 50, 73, 78.
34 The bladder was used for a type of bagpipes in the Serbian musical practice (Gojković, 1989, diple).
regard to the term ‘gusle javorove’ (English: maple gusle) widely used in the poetry of all the Slavic peoples.\textsuperscript{35} This was supported by the oldest archaeological find of the small lute with a corpus made from one-piece maple wood in the tomb of a woman in Greece (Attica) between 330 and 200 BCE. \textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Fig. 10-11} The Georgian \textit{chianchuri} and the Estonian \textit{põispill}, improved in the 20th century (Vertkov \textit{et al.}, 1963, cat. 473, p. 244).

\textbf{Fig. 12} Geographical distribution of maple trees (genus Acer)

The tomb belonged to a Greek princess, who held in her hand an instrument with a maple body and a fir-wood soundboard which later disintegrated. According to its description, and by analogy with the depictions of that period, it was clear that this was a small lute. Besides, there was no other similar instrument in Greece during that period.

As the maple (Acer) genus is distributed throughout the Old World, the European territory and most parts of the Middle East, \textsuperscript{37} this might have been ancient tradition of crafting, due to the find in Attica.

At the end of the 4th millennium BCE, the lute appeared on the territory of Mesopotamia, from which it gradually spread around the world. It is organologically identical with the Serbian gusle. The lute significantly influenced its shape which is still known today. In the mid-1st millennium BCE, this influence was also evident on the shape of the Scythian harp and the Chinese qin-zither.\textsuperscript{38} As far as the Serbian gusle is concerned this influence was questionable in ancient times but was certain in the Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{35} Farmintsyn, 1890; Kuhač, 1876; Bojanin, 2005.
\textsuperscript{36} The string was made of fir wood (Higgins and Winnington-Ingram, 1965).
\textsuperscript{37} https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr/Јавор
\textsuperscript{38} Lawergreen 2003.
Its breakthrough into the Proto-Slavic homeland, which took place after its late acceptance by the Greeks as late as the 3rd century BCE, marked the beginning of the influence which would affect the change of the instrument organology from the musical bow into the lute.

6. Soundboard

A skin soundboard indicates direct parallels between the Serbian gusle and the oldest lutes in Mesopotamia, which later served as a model for all later models in Assyria, Egypt, Greece, etc. It is understandable that some of these still existed in Europe in the 8th-9th centuries. Since the beginning of their bowing, this detail has remained.

It is difficult to determine which type arrived first among the Slavs: the one with a skin or fir-wood board. It is likely that they arrived at the same time according to the fact that both the long and short lutes appeared in the first ancient Greek depictions in the 3rd century BCE. The oldest type was the long lute with skin which existed in Europe in the 13th century (depictions from the Spanish Cantiga with bright white soundboard or pins along its edge, some of which were played with the bow).

As far as small lutes are concerned, based on the abovementioned data that the find from Attica in the 3rd century BCE had a fir-wood soundboard we can assume that smaller lutes, i.e. tamburicas, probably had a wooden soundboard. In addition to that we indicated that the Byzantine Lyra originated from them.

7. Ornamentation

A little cross and a carving on the back of the gusle can be traced back to the Avar period due to the Mongoloian parallel to a find dated back to the 7th century. This would mean that these details had been in use under the Avar influence from the moment the Avars joined the Slavic invasions in the Balkans (since the mid-6th century CE) to the end of the Serbian settlement around 630-640 or until the beginning of the 9th century when they were destroyed by the Franks in Pannonia.

This detail might have the root in the slots of a different shape, which could be noticed on older Scythian harps in 4th-5th centuries BCE.

However, it is most likely that these details originated from the lutes (and/or arched harps) from the Middle East which had influenced the Scythian and Old-Turkish harps. It is clearer when we realize that this Old-Turkish harp judging from its arch shape used to be a musical bow with a bladder, as indicated by its name (see Appendix). It obviously differs from the Scythian one. In addition, the Georgian panduri still has a fretwork on the back of the corpus.

The swastika motif or the rosette, as its replacement, is found, almost without exception, on the gusle’s neck, distaffs and cradles. The swastika is an old symbol of the sun revolving in the sky and the supreme Pagan god among the Indo-Europeans and so was the eagle. This is another proof of the old ritual practice of this instrument.

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39 Đurović, 2016, p. 41, and further.
40 The fragments of the shield found in the grave resembled those found in the Central Asian steppes and in the Avarian graves of the Carpathian basin dating to the same period (Törbat et al., 2009, p. 375).
41 The crescent, two connected triangles. If four triangles were connected, they would make a cross, but only as a decorative element unrelated to Christianity.
Fig. 13 The back of the instrument discovered in 2008 (see fig. below), the Zhargalant Khairkhan Mountains, Mongolia, dated back to the 7th century (Törbat et al., 2009, fig. 9).

What can the gusle itself tell us about their past when we have no other traces? Studying the head and the neck of the “proto-gusle” would play the key role in disclosing its past and its shape.

8 Neck and head

Fig. 14 The gusle from Lika (Gospić) with a straight neck and a human figure with a hat at the top, Ethnographical Museum (Mitrović 2014, p. 100).

Studying the neck and the head of the gusle will help us to determine the final stage of its development. It can be noticed that there are two types of the gusle in our tradition:

1 The gusle with a straight neck
The gusle with a curved neck and an animal head at its end

The first type had a straight neck and it ended either with a human figure at the top or without any ornaments. This type, which is very rare today, is probably the older one as the human figure (in fact, a head or a bust) at the top could have been an old deity or ancestor judging by its role in the cult of similar instruments. This is supported by one of the models of the Polish devil’s violin (diabelskie skrzypce) which has a human figure with a hat at the top. What added a little excitement was the depiction of a double-mouthed gusle from Lika, which had a human figure with a hat, like the one from Poland. It was similar to Svetovid Idol of the Zbruč River (Podolia, Ukraine). The Slavic cult items in the form of a real stick with a human head at the top also seemed quite interesting. The German devil’s violin (teufelsgeige) ends in the same way, with little horns added on the head of the human figure with the hat.

The final conclusion is that this is a depiction of the old supreme god and that these instruments had the role in his cult among the Slavs (Dabog, Svetovid) and the Germans (Vodan). Later, under the influence of the church in the Middle Ages, this Pagan god was proclaimed a devil and later banished. This way by the Kurpies and Kashubians (in Poland) and Germans these instruments got the epithet “devil’s”). This is probably the reason why the gusle did not appear in Serbian church art until the 17th century.

Pašćan might have found a historical trace of the gusle in the records from the 5th century.

Fig. 15 Zbruč Idol, 9th-10th centuries (Komar, Chamjako 2013). Archaeological site: The Zbruč River, Liczkowce Village (Ukraine). Kept in the Archaeological Museum, Krakow. Material: limestone. Height: 257 cm, sides: 29-32 cm. Four figures under a hat in the first row, women dancing the kolo in the second row and male figures in adoration in the third row.

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42 Mitrović, 2014.
43 Mitrović, 2014, p. 100.
44 Also St. Nichola’s figure (Mitrović, 2014, p. 119), to whom the attributes of old gods were often ascribed (Čajkanović, 1973).
45 Based on the attributes of Svetovid on Ruyan island (German: ‘Rügen’): a cornucopia, a horse and a holy sword located this idol statue (Farmintsyn, 2014 (1884), p. 203). Note that both Podolia and Volhynia were considered the oldest Slavic settlements based on the names of the rivers, where the most Slavic idols came from (Rusanova and Tymoshchuk, 2007 (1993), pp. 231-2).
47 To read more about replacing the Supreme Pagan Deity as well as many similarities to Germanic Wodan, refer to Čajkanović, 1973.
48 Pašćan pointed to the bowed string instrument ‘fides’, which was praised above all other instruments by Theodoric, the King of Visigoths in the 5th century (Pašćan, 1956, pp. 88-9; cited in: Lajić-Mihajlović, 2006). Pašćan cited Cicero’s mention of the instrument called ‘fides, fidibus’.
Fig. 16 The Kurpie bowed instruments (right) and the Kashubian (left) *diabelskie skrzypce* (English: devil’s violin). Used in ceremonial processions. Bowed with a smooth or notched wood stick.

Fig. 17-18 The German instrument *Teufelsgeige* (English: Devil’s violin)
Fig. 19 The Latvian *diga* with one string (*Vertkov et al.*, fig. 303-4)

Over time, the old type of the gusle was being suppressed by the new (different) one, which was naturally completed in the Middle Ages. The new type, the prevailing one today, is ornamented with an animal head at the top on the curve in the shape of the moon. The proof that it was younger lies in the fact that there was no such curve on the Serbian gusle, even the pin itself was placed below the curve on the straight part of the neck. Firstly, this comes from the fact that the
string was not to be tightened towards the neck but lifted from the neck since the neck did not have the function to change tones. Secondly, such curve was placed backwards together with an animal head, which was the characteristic of some medieval lutes and lutes. The curve is fully functional as the pins which go through the neck enable proper tightening of the strings along the neck. There was a channel cut inside with usually three tuning pegs on its sides. There is another fact which speaks in favour of this explanation. The Albanian gusle (completely identical with the Serbian one) was called lahuta or lahute. Namely, it derived its name from a medieval lute. As we will see, the Serbian gusle also took the name from the lute (see Chapter Philology).

The earliest pre-Christian depictions of the lute with the curve and an animal head originated from Egypt. As they dated back to the period when the lute reached Egypt, this detail is probably older and comes from the Middle East. Although this might be suspected for some depictions, we are unable to claim this, as we need an expert analysis of these old and damaged depictions.

![Fig. 20](image1.png) The Hittites, c. 1000-500 BCE. The Gate of Zincirli, Syria. A horse’s head at the top?
![Fig. 21](image2.png) The Maris, c. 2000-1600 BCE. The Little Lute. A horse’s head at the top?

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49 Interestingly, the gusle with a snake’s head (Ethnographic Museum, Belgrade) had a groove in the neck curve with no particular purpose (Mitović, 2014).

50 Gojković, 1989, p. 124. Also indicated by the names for the violin which were used in the area of Požarevac (‘laute’) and in the Romani language (‘lavuta’) (Ibid., pp. 125,129)
Fig. 22 The depiction of the lute with a horse’s head at the top. Painted plate. Egypt, c. 1400-1300 BCE. Rijksmuseum van Oudheder (English: National Museum of Antiquities), 1818, the Netherlands.

Fig. 23 Decorated spoon. Egypt, New Kingdom. The Museum in Berlin. A swan’s head at the top.

Fig. 24 A Spoon with decorations. The 18th Egyptian Dynasty, c. 1550-1295 BCE. The Louvre Museum.

Fig 25 Alexandria, Egypt, 13th century BCE. A horse’s head at the top?
We assume that this detail, despite the possibility of different interpretations,\textsuperscript{51} was in fact a general ‘trend’ of ornamenting lute-type instruments in the Middle East, which was then transferred to Europe. It is otherwise difficult to explain that there are its remnants both in East and West.\textsuperscript{52} Considering the abovementioned conclusions, it is pointless to go further in the past.\textsuperscript{53}

Famous Greek and Roman depictions of the lute did not have an animal head on the top. On the one hand, this could mean that they might only have reached Europe in the early Middle Ages.

The earliest medieval depictions of the instrument with this curve and an animal head were the lute (named \textit{citole}) from the 9th century from an Italian miniature, and the lute from the Byzantine mosaic from the 11th century. There are numerous depictions of such lutes and lutes from 13th-14th centuries in Western Europe. The depictions from Lady of Ljeviška cathedral and Novo Hopovo monastery (Serbia) proved that such instruments circulated around Serbia and the entire Balkans.\textsuperscript{54} The lute from the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade proves that they were crafted in this manner in Serbia until the 20th century (fig. 27).

\textbf{Fig 26} Cantigas de Santa Maria de Alfonso X el Sabio, Spain, c. 1260-1280. A horse’s head at the top, skin soundboard judging from the tuning pins.
\textbf{Fig 27} Ibid. Spanish Cantiga, 13th century, a lion’s head at the top of the lute, skin soundboard judging from the tuning hooks along the edge.

\textsuperscript{51} The Serbian gusle, had a carved horse’s head at the top of its neck. Similarly, the Russian ‘gudok’ from the 17th to 18th centuries had it as well. According to the ethnographic data, Basilov believed that it had been taken over directly from the Huns and Avars (the Turkish-Mongolian tribes). A Mongolian epic says that the ‘morin-khyr’ (a bowed string instrument with a rectangular corpus) was made by a mythical hero who wanted to honour his miraculous dead horse. He used the horse’s skin and hairs and decorated the top of the instrument with a carved horse’s head. (Basilov, 1991, p. 150).

\textsuperscript{52} We assume that decorating instruments with animal figures was probably rooted in the animal figures found on the lyres of Ur. The reasons for this can be traced back to a Scythian custom of decorating furniture, hats and flags with animal figures in the 1st millennium BCE, which is much closer in time (Han, 2008, p. 54). The archaeological finds of their lyres did not confirm this until the Sarmatian discovery of Olbia in the 1st century BCE and the Old Turkish discovery from Mongolia in the 7th century. We can therefore conclude that this practice on the instruments did not taken root until much later, probably under the influence of the lutes and harps from the Middle East. There was a noticeable impact of Egypt concerning the instruments in Central Asia: arched (or bow-shaped) harps and lutes, and probably different types of zithres, long labial pipes such as the kaval in Ancient Egyptian depictions. The ‘fashion’ of decorating instruments was later taken over by the Arabs, hence the numerous European depictions of lutes and lutes.

\textsuperscript{53} For example, a horse's head is an ancient Indo-European motif. A horse figure has been known among the Europeans since the Palolithic, as well as an ibex, a bison, etc. The culture bearers of Late (Phase II) Sredny Stog culture were considered to be Phase I Indo-Europeans while breaking into Europe from 4400 to 4200 BCE. They left behind horse head-shaped sceptres in tombs under tumuli from the Volga to Marica Rivers. Even their older ancestors from the Volga to Lower Ural Rivers (Khvalynsk culture), had drawings of horses in their horse sacrifice rituals at warrior burial Gimbutas, 1979, pp. 115-7). The ivory horse figurines from Central Europe in the Palaeolithic including an ibex, a bison and other animals. See Torbrügge, 1969.

\textsuperscript{54} Pejović, 2005.
**Fig 28** The lute. The Ethnographical Museum, Belgrade, Čajetina site, 1954. Length 71 cm, three tuning pegs and three slots on the bridge. The head decorated with two carved horse heads (Marković 1987, Catal. 53). This exhibit strikingly resembles the lute in the hand of a muse from Mantinea (3rd century BCE) in the narrow corpus with a triangular cross section.

The first familiar European depiction of a lute with the bow with an animal head is from the Utrecht Psalter (850 AD). It is still unclear if it was bowed with a very long bow or it was only a stick. Since it dates back to the 9th century and a cordar is present, it is very likely that this is a bow. This early depiction is two centuries older than the first depiction of the Byzantine lyre (cemane) which was bowed. Does this indicate that the long lute was the first type to be bowed in Europe?

**Fig. 29** Utrecht Psalter, Reims, France, c. 850. The lute played with a bow. A horse or ibex head at the top, a tripod and a cordar at the bottom, and a long bow in the hand (therefore a bowed instrument).

**Fig. 30** Lady of Ljeviš (left, Serbian church, Kosovo), 1307-1309; Saint George in Pološko (right, Serbian monastery, Macedonia), 1609 (photographs supplied by courtesy of the National Museum in Belgrade)
PHILOLOGY

I Is the Slavic bowed musical bow called ‘skripka’?

According to the linguistic data Panslavic *smičak, smičok (bow) had original Proto-Slavic meaning *smykъ, smukъ (a stick or a peeled twig), which was a prehistoric tradition. The Balts named the whole instrument after it: smuigas (Lithuania) and smičius (Latvia). However, the instrument was not named after the bow among the Slavs as it had a different name from an earlier period. This will be shown in the analysis.

The Slavic peoples have used the word smičak as the name for the bow ever since the Middle Ages. In other words, when more developed bowed instruments started to appear in the 8th-9th centuries, the name for the bow was inherited from the earlier times.

Try as we might, we are unable to decipher the medieval name for today’s gusle as the Serbian inscription from the 13th-14th centuries still remains narrow and only informs us about the division between the plucked and bowed instruments.

35 Melnychuk et al., 2006, p. 320, smik-1. Kuhac cited Miklošić that allegedly Old Slavic smičak had derived from smyko (English: string), which would indicate that the bow had a string. However, the previous conclusions that it derived from a more modern name for a wood stick were more recent. They also appeared in the Etymological Dictionary of Slavic Languages by Trubachev, and were therefore likely to be more precise.
“The gusli therefore have two names. The one who plays with fingers is called ‘gudac’ and the other who plays (skriplet) by rubbing the horsehair bow (loučcem) is called ‘smičak’ (смычком).”

Here the author uses the word gousli collectively for string instruments, which is not an isolated case. The instruments are divided into the ones plucked with fingers and the others played with the bow. Therefore the names for the musicians were twofold: the one who plays with fingers is called gudac, the other who plays with the bow is called smičak.

The author who made an effort to better explain all the terms related to the instruments played by the bow used the modern (medieval) word lučac for the bow instead of the word smičak. To describe the action itself he used the verb posmicati derived from the word smičak. The playing itself was called skriplet (English: creak), which dates back to prehistory and refers to the Slavic tradition of a bowed musical bow.

Concerning the string instruments, in the 13th-14th centuries, on the territory of Serbia the situation was as followed: the lyres were long gone; the psaltery had a separate name and was rarely bowed; the harp had the epithet ‘Greek harp (árpa)’. It was rarely depicted and played and was never bowed. Therefore the most common were only lutes (the bigger or smaller ones), which were dually played with the fingers and the bow. In Serbia, the word smičak refers only the gusle (a bigger bowed lute) and cemane (a smaller bowed lute) as they were the only string instruments in use at that time. Even today bowed instruments are called “smičkovi instrumenti” in Russia.

The finding clearly indicates that the whole group was named after a bow (smičak), i.e. bowing (posmicati), and not after a bowed musical bow. Although it was expected, the Slavs did not follow the example of the Latvians and Lithuanians (smičius, and the like). In the Slavic languages the term retained the meaning of the bow from the Middle Ages. It was the same among the Serbs, which is proved by the finding that the term smičac (смичац) was used for the bow of the gusle in Crmnica in Montenegro. Today this word has the meaning of a “fiddle’s bow”, in Polish smyczek, in Russian smičok (смычок), Ukrainian smičok (смичок) and Czech (smyčec).

The question remains: what was the name of the bowed musical bow of the Slavs? Judging from the examples in other Slavic languages, the bowed musical bow was called skripka, skripica. It is used as a Polish term for the musical bow (!) and the violin (skrzypce) and as a term for the violin in Russian and Ukrainian. We also saw that it was used as a Serbian term for bowing (skriplet) in the Middle Ages. The term derives form Proto-Slavic *skripěti, which denotes the

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57 For example, Russian chronicler Isaac (1064 r.) classified musical instruments into three groups: wind instruments (Russian: ‘сопели’), percussion instruments (Russian: ‘бубны’) and stringed instruments (Russian: ‘гусли’) (Pisnak, 2005).
58 In the aforementioned book, we have already indicated that the cemane and the gusle originated from the lute (Đurović, 2016).
59 For example, in his book Muzika (1606), Hieronim Morsztyn stated: “Serbin zalosny dlugi smyczek wlecze” (English: “A sad Serb is drawing a long bow”), reciting about heroic deeds against the Turks (Bojanin, 2005, p. 304).
imitation of sound: *ckpunimu* (Ukrainian), *ukpunamuj* (Serbian), *skrzyp*, *skrzypac* (Polish), *křupač* (Upper-Sorbian), *kšipaš* (Lower-Sorbian).  

2 Historical and geographical context in which the term gusle or gusli appeared

In medieval written material and modern tradition of the Slavic peoples, there were three names for string musical instruments: *gusla*, *gusle* and *gusli*, derived from the Proto-Slavic root *gâl* (read: *gond*).  

In order to reveal what instruments are hiding behind these terms, it is necessary to separate the Church Slavic texts from the national tradition of each region and different periods in which the instruments appeared and disappeared.

In Church Slavic *gusli* (ръчна, plural) is a cithara (ancient Greek lyre). In Old Russian and Russian Church Slavic *gusla* (една, singular), *gusli* (гоусли, plural) is also a cithara. In Modern Russian gusli (цирна) is a lyre-like psaltery. In Macedonian and Serbian *gusla* (singular, feminine) is a Byzantine lyre (cemane). In Serbian the word *gusle* (plural) refers to a national bowed instrument. In Polish *gesl* (singular), *gesli* (plural) refers to a violin. Lower-Sorbian (Lusatian Serbs) *husla* (singular), *husle* (plural) is either a violin or a harp. In Czech *gesl*, *gesli* is a violin. In Slovakian *husle* is a violin. In Slovenian *gosli* is a violin. In Ukrainian *gusla*, *gusli* (гусла, гуслі) is either a lyre-like psaltery or a violin.  

To sum up, there was a perceptible historical difference in the change in the meaning of the term *gusli* (plural) from medieval cithara (a type of the lyre) into lyre-like psaltery on the territory of Russia and Ukraine, which is explicable and understandable from the disappearance of the lyre and the appearance of the psaltery in the 10th century. As there was no such instrument among the Western and Southern Slavs, the form gusli was used as the plural form for the violin.

Most importantly, it is noticeable that today the form gusle, husle predominantly denotes bowed instruments: the Serbian gusle, the Byzantine lyre (cemane) and the violin. As we explained earlier that the Byzantine lyre had evolved from a smaller lute and the Serbian gusle had evolved from a bigger lute, which had begun to be bowed in the 8th-9th centuries, it was clear that the gusle had been named after the lute! Similarly, the violin replaced the Byzantine lyre and it only inherited its name.

This was markedly the case among the Western and Southern Slavs, whereas the violin was called *skripka* among the Russians and the Ukrainians. Therefore it is believed that the lute was not called *gusle* in the East, despite the indications. The term *bandura* was more commonly used for a similar string instrument, which probably indicates the Byzantine origin from Greek *pandura* (lute).  

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63 Lower-Sorbian ‘gudeti or gusti’ (Old Slavic *gɔd<ti*) means ‘to bow a string instrument. In Old Slavic texts, the term *gɔd<ti* generally referred to the sound that came from a string regardless of the way it was produced. There were also parallels with Lithuanian ‘gaudžiu or gašti’ (English: ‘to sound, to bow’). In the vernacular, the word ‘gudeti’ also denoted the sound produced by strings which were either struck or played with a bow (Farimtyn, 1890, pp. 2-3). The word ‘guslar’ in the Middle Ages generally denoted a player a string instrument.
64 The Byzantine lyre was called ‘gudok’. Secondly, Farimtyn indicated that, in the Early Middle Ages, the word gusle’ still referred to playing the three-stringed gusle with fingers among the Russians (Farimtyn, 1890, pp. 13-5). It was less likely that it referred to lyres or psalteries as lutes were the only three-stringed instruments.
Fig. 34 Miniature “De Universo” by Rabanus Maurus (780-856), a German theologian and author. This depiction which was created in the first half of the 9th century proved the hypothesis that the Byzantine lyre (cemane) was at first a small lute, which had been bowed since 8-9th centuries. These instruments shared both the morphology and the number of strings.

3 Gusle – the term for lute

As the word form gusleh (гоуслехъ) appeared in the early Slavic translations of the Bible (11th century), we suspect that this was already been its name at the time when the lute reached the Slavic territories toward the end of the Old Era.

We found the evidence in the depiction of the 150th Psalm of the Munich Serbian Psalter (kept in the Bavarian State Library in Munich) dating back to the period between 1370. and 1390. The verse: “Хвалите јего (Господа) в глас труби, хвалите јего в псалтири и в гоуслехъ” (Praise the Lord with the voice of the trumpet, praise him with the psaltery and with the gusle) was accompanied by an illustration. The verse mentions trumpets, psalters and gusles whereas the illustration shows trumpets, psalteries (small size book-like instruments held in hands) and three-stringed lutes (played with fingers). If we omit psalteries and trumpets, we conclude that lutes were called gusleh (гоуслехъ).
Other proof is in folk songs where lutes where played with striking („Ударало у тамбуру ђаче“ /„In the lute struck the pupil“). Same is in medieval Psalms where lutes were also strucked („Ударам ти у гусле свече Израиљев“/„I strike to you in gusle Holy God of Israel“). It is clear that this is medieval tradition, from the time when lute strings where made from the gut.

4 Gusli – the term for an ancient lyre

In the first translations of the Psalters into Old Slavic dating back to the 11th century and in other Bible quotes, the term cithara (of the Ancient Greek lyre class) is confused with the terms гоусли and гоуслех (gusli, gusleh). As we know that гоуслех is lute, it follows that гоусли is the lyre. In Medieval Latin texts, gousli is defined as cithara, which was also proved by the linguists.

According to historian Simokata at the end of the 6th century, we know that the Slavs from the Lower Danube region played the lyres (κιθάραι and λύραις verbatim). The lyre probably reached the Eastern Slavs via the Blacksea Greek colonies very early and the Scythians back in the 4th–3rd centuries B.C. and even the Western Slavs judging from the archaeological finds of the lyres among the Germanic tribes in the 6th century and later. So, the Slavs, who settled in the Greek territories in Thrace and around Thessalonica, where Saints Cyril and Methodius lived, owned the lyres, but only for a short while, as the lyres disappeared from the European continent.
around 9th–10th centuries. Understandably, there were no changes introduced in later transcriptions of the same texts.

Table 2: Parallel Psalm translations where the forms gusleh or gusli appear in the Septuagint and the Vulgate (according to Duev, 2011, Tab.1).

<table>
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<th>Table 1</th>
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<td>Ps. 81 : 3</td>
<td>κιθάρα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 92 : 4</td>
<td>κιθάρα</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps. 98 : 5</td>
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<td>Ps. 108 : 3</td>
<td>κιθάρα</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps. 137 : 2</td>
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<td>Ps. 147 : 7</td>
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<td>Ps. 149 : 3</td>
<td>σαλτησιῳ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps. 150 : 3</td>
<td>κιθάρα</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This word confusion was started by Thessalonica brothers, who, besides the lyre, introduced the lute in their early translations of the Bible into Old Slavic. Although the lyre had disappeared, the word was still being rewritten. Hence, there used to be the conceptual difference between the lyre and the lute in the Slavic texts very early - гусляхъ was the lute while гусляхъ was the lyre. Now we can go a step further and say that Russian гусли was not only the name successor for the ancient lyre but was also the successor of the lyre itself. In terms of organology, they are identical (extended corpus, as in the Germanic and Scythian lyres with a slot toward the tuning pegs).

All this is culturologically clear as the terms гусляхъ and гусли could only stand for the lute and the lyre, of all the string instruments from the period of the first translations by the Thessalonica brothers. On the other hand, the psaltery, which appeared as late as the 10th–11th centuries, received a separate name in the medieval texts, as well as the harp which had not reached the Slavs before the migration, and was later called “Greek harp”.

Therefore, the researchers into these texts had no chronological framework for the appearance and disappearance of certain instruments although they had a clear differentiation in the early translations by the Thessalonica brothers.

5 Gusla – prehistoric plucked musical bow

To sum up, we can now draw a conclusion which delves deeply into the past. In other words if a bowed musical bow was named after the term denoting sound (skripka) produced by rubbing a wood stick i.e. smičak, then the plucked and bowed musical bows were not one and the same.

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71 This is another proof that the lute was frequently used among the Slavs back in those times, as the brothers from Thessalonica did not fail to mention it.

72 Here we can add the pictorial representation of the psaltery in the previous illustration featured in the Munich Psalter. It was depicted on the left, next to the lutes, while the player was tuning it. It was held in an upright position, like the lyre, and resembled the Russian gusli (trapezoid shape, the way the strings were tied to its bottom).
instrument among the Slavs in prehistory. Since the one which was bowed had a different name, there must have been another name for the plucked musical bow, which is now lost, or perhaps not? It is very likely that it was called *gusla* (singular) because of a single string. The linguists suggest that the word *gusla* which derived from Proto-Slavic *gǫsļь* was a feminine singular noun with *gusle* or *gusli* as its plural forms, denoting different instruments in different territories. This situation points to the possibility that the name of the bow survived in its singular form in the Slavic languages.

According to Oleg Trubachyov, the Polish word *gusla* (here plural, also derived from Proto-Slavic *gǫsļь*) – enchantment, bewitchment – had the most archaic meaning. Even the Old Polish word 'guslnik' meant ‘magician’. By adding the ethnographic findings that the African musical bow was associated with enchantment and bewitchment, the conjecture quoted above is proved certain. Consequently, the plucked musical bow was not completely displaced by lutes and lyres, which had appeared among the Slavs a few centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. Instead, the names of the lute (*gusle*) and the lyre (*gusli*) were derived from its name.

6 What was the name of today’s gusle in the Serbian Middle Ages?

In response to all these findings we can state with certainty that the gusle of the shape it has today was called *gusle* in the Middle Ages. It is though possible that it was named *skripka* or *škripica* after the stringed musical bow. However, we believe that there was no such confusion in the Serbian territory, i.e. that today’s gusle was named after the medieval lute. It took over not only its name but also the whole organology from it. The tradition of singing was taken from the instrument whereas both the name and the instrument itself were new.

*Historical data from Medieval Serbia*

The historical data on the Serbian gusle is rare and often unclear as the medieval term *gousli* (plural) generally denoted all string instruments. Secondly, these records do not provide a description of an individual instrument which would help us understand what instrument this was. Therefore we will only point to the most important records.

In the 9th century, Cosmas the Priest, accused the bogomils “that Christians are not those who drink wine, play the gusle, dance and sing devil’s songs”. It is evident that lutes and cemanes are actually the gusle accompanied by dancing. On the Serbian court in peaceful times, according to Hagigography of St. Sava by Teodosije, King Stefan the First-Crowned “when he sat at the head of the dining table, he cheered his noble guests with the timpani (тимьпани) and the gusli (гоусли) as was the custom of monarchs”. In these records dating from the 13th-14th centuries, the term *гоусли* (pl.) included bowed and stringed instruments. It is most likely that it here denoted only string instruments accompanied by revelling (lutes, lutes and Byzantine lyres) rather than gusles as they are usually “sadly played”. This is not necessarily imperative, as it depended on different occasions. For example, Priscius wrote of the epic poems sung to the joy of the guests at the dining table on the court of Atilla, the king of the Huns.

In the 15th century, a punishment was significantly severer for a monk who attended the revels than the one who played the gusle or listened to profane performance. As the plural form *gousli*...
was used, the information obviously referred to a group of instruments denoting all string instruments.

The information that the Serbian gusle players were first mentioned at the court of Polish king Władysław Jagiełło in 1415 did not reveal the instruments. In the second half of the 15th century, Martin the Bishop from Ulcinj believed that the feasts where songs of heroic deeds were sung to musical accompaniment were very educational for the youth of his Serbian compatriots. In 1554, in Hungary, Dimitrij Karaman from Lipova was known to “pluck his violin (Hungarian: egede) in the Serbian style with the bowed head”. Polish poet Kasper Miaskowski (1622+) knew about the Serbian gusle and bagpipes (serbskie skrzypki i dudy). Unequivocally clear records dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries specifically referred to the gusle. In 1606, Hieronymus Morštin stated: “Serbin zalošny dlugi smyczek wlecze“(The Serb sadly drags the long smitchak (bow)) reciting poems about the heroic deeds against the Turks. In the 17th century, Križanić recorded that the warriors had sung about heroic deeds behind the backs of the invitees at the feasts in the houses of Serbian and Croatian noble families. Although none of the medieval Serbian epic songs reached us, it was not proved that they did not exist. The first record dated back to the 16th century. The stories by Mihailo Konstatinović from Ostrovica were presumably inspired by the songs he listened to in his youth. There were no mentions of it in the Serbian poems from the period before Nemanja and St. Sava.

Igil and Scythian harp

The closest counterpart to the Serbian gusle was a Tuvan musical instrument igil, known as ikili in Western Mongolia. The corpus was made of a single piece of wood. It had a horse’s head at the top of the neck, a skin soundboard, a horsehair bow. However, according to the previous conclusions, the horse’s head of this instrument might have been part of the fashion trend of ornamenting the lute in Late Antiquity, and thus any similarity to the gusle was purely coincidental.

As there were almost no other instruments besides two-stringed80 musical instruments in Central Asia, we can assume that the Turkish and Mongol tribes took over an older two-stringed musical instrument from the Indo-European Skythians or simply replaced their musical bow, with the traces found in its name. The 13th-century Turkish texts mentioned a bowed instrument ikliği (Turkish ik - arrow, lig - with the bow),81 whose word root was obviously the same as in Tuvan igil (igil, Turkish speaking area) and Western Mongol ikili. Unsurprisingly, the Turks from Central Asia reached down to the Caucasus in 6th century, passed through Armenia by the 11th century and started expansion towards the Middle East.

Having classified the archaeological and ethnographic data, Russian ethnographer Basilov thought that the Scythian instrument served as a model. It had its role models in older Assyrian and Old-Babylonian harps.82 He assumed that Scythian harp from the Pazyryk kurgans was a

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78 Bojanin, 2005, p. 304.
80 Besides the ‘kobyz’, there were other similar instruments: the Kyrgyz ‘kyl kyyak’ and the Karakalpak ‘girjek’. Egg-shaped corpus: the Tuvan ‘igil’, the Georgian ‘chianuri’, the Upper-Altay ‘topshur-ikili’, the Khakassian ‘khomus’, Buryat khuur, etc. Most of these instruments are two-stringed apart from the Tuvan ‘byzaanchy’ which is a four-stringed instrument with a piece of bamboo, and has actually evolved from the Chinese ‘erhu’ (Vertkov et al., 1969, Cat.172, 669, 620, 749, 473, 704-706, 709, 740, 736, 726, 712, 718). Basilov was again right to have claimed that the Scythian string instrument was probably two-stringed.
81 Gazimihal, p.128.
82 There were several discoveries of the Scythian or ‘Steppe’ harps in the mid-1st millennium BCE. They were modelled on the harps depicted in the Assyrian places 850-650 BCE, which might have been modelled on some Old Babylonian harps around 2000 BCE (Lawergren, 2003, fig. 11), in war scenes (Dumbrill, 2005, pp. 27-30). The Assyrian Army was joined by the Scythians mercenaries around 700 BCE. The construction of the Scythian instrument might have remained in the folklore. In
bowed instrument.\textsuperscript{83} Although there were no bows, the traces of strokes were found. Therefore it can be assumed that this type of the instrument was played both by bowing and striking it with a stick. Basilov believed that the Kazakh kobyz with a curved neck, evolved from this type of the harp.\textsuperscript{84}

The archaeological finds from the Zhargalant Khairkhan Mountains (the Mongol Altai Mountain Range)\textsuperscript{85} in 2008 justified this viewpoint as it had a curved neck.

\textbf{Fig. 36} Mongolian archaeological find dated back to the 7th century CE. Western part of the Altai Mountain Range (Törbat \textit{et al.}, 2009, fig. 11).

The instrument was found as an inventory item of an Old Turkish tomb on Zhargalant Khairkhan Mountain in 2008.\textsuperscript{86} The Old Turkish runic inscription on its neck reads: “We proudly bow”.\textsuperscript{87} The instrument was taken to Germany to be analysed and conserved. As a result of its restoration, the instrument was classified as a harp. On the other hand, the Chuluunbaatar has presented it as a bowed instrument.\textsuperscript{88} So, it could be a harp bowed with the stick.

\textbf{Fig. 37} Scythian harp. Archaeological find from a tumulus of a Scythian warrior from Pazyryk (Төрбат и Эрдэнэбат 2014, p. 156, fig. 1). Basilov thought that it only had two strings.

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\textsuperscript{83} Pazyryk in the Altay Mountains, Siberia, Russia. Basilov assumed that it was a string instrument. He thought that the smoothed part round the middle of the instrument was the result of a tight grip. Also the cracks across its corpus had appeared due to striking with the bow. As the bow had probably been made of gold, it was assumed that it had been stolen. He made similar assumptions for a Sarmatian instrument found in a kurgan outside Olbia, near the Black Sea (Basilov, 1991).

\textsuperscript{84} Basilov linked them as their necks were noticeably curved and their stings were wider apart from their bodies. Also their corpuses had similar shapes and were covered with animal skin. Similar instruments were the Karakalpak ‘girjek’, the Kyrgyz ‘kyl kyyak’ and the Nogay ‘kobyz’ (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{85} Törbat \textit{et al.}, 2009.

\textsuperscript{86} Törbat \textit{et al.} 2009: fig. 11.

\textsuperscript{87} Chuluunbaatar 2016: 241, 242.

\textsuperscript{88} We will also make our observations: 1. A dent on the soundboard indicates the pressure rather than a bulge which would appear on a harp. 2. There is no constructional reinforcement of the soundboard, which would be mandatory on a harp, not even a small longitudinal beam most commonly used on steppe harps from the mid-1st millennium BCE. 3. Harps have no bridge (!), which was found here near the instrument. 4. The shape of the soundboard indicates transversal pressure of the bridge closer to the bottom part of the instrument, which would be created on instruments of bowed string or lute class. Yet a lute must have a perfectly straight neck. 5. A tripod or a spike at the bottom of the instrument indicates a bowed string instrument and the place where strings are tied. 6. The channel on the head of the instrument could have carried a rectangular stick with two strings, which is the characteristic of most Central Asian bowed string instruments, as well as the finds from Pazyryk, as reconstructed by Basilov.
**Fig. 38** The Steppe harp near Olbia on the north coast of the Black Sea. It belonged to the Samaritans. The animal figures carried certain symbolism (Төрбат and Эрдэнэбат, 2014, p. 157, fig. 2).

**Fig. 39-41** Scythian harps from Xinjiang, dating back to 400-200 BC (Төрбат and Эрдэнэбат, 2014, p. 157, fig. 3-5.). Xinjiang is an autonomous province of the Turkic Uyghurs in China on the southern rim of the Tarim Basin.

**Fig. 42** Assyrian harp from the time of Nimrud, Iran, 860 BCE (Lawergreen, 2003, fig. 11)
Fig. 43 An instrument found by the Chinese Archaeological Institute in a tomb of an Aryan (Indo-Iranian) necropolis of Zarathustrian religion nearby Xinjiang, Kashgar Prefecture, Tajik District, in 2013. The finds dated back to about 500 BC. There was a tripod in the lower part. As the neck was not massive, it might have been held in an upright position. The uneven surface of the upper part of the neck indicated that this was not a lute. Due to the narrow leaf-like head with an integrated stick for holding the strings it could not have supported more than two strings. Therefore this might have been a two-stringed bowed instrument (harp?).

Fig. 44 Apherca – Abkhazian bowed string instrument (Vertkov et al., 1963, fig. 491)

Fig. 45-46 Kazakh kobyz (Vertkov et al., 1963, Cat. 687, 689)

Another class of Scythian harps, whose archaeological finds dated back to around 500 BCE, had a corpus covered with skin, known in western Chinese province of Xinjiang (the Taklamakan Desert). The bowed string instruments with straight necks such as apherca probably originated from this form which had apparently developed under the influence of the lute.

Unfounded Connections to the Illyrians

It was an unfounded tendency of some Croatian scientists to associate gusle with the Illyrians. First, the translation of the original text was inaccurate: a segment from Strabo’s mention of Dardanian musical instruments was translated by Stipčević as follows: “they always cared for music and used both wind and bowed string instruments”. The section which reads: “μονακής δ’ ὄμος ἐπεμελήθησαν ἀλη χρώμενοι καὶ αὐλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἐντατοῖς ὑγάνοις” was translated by Fanula Papazoglu as follows: ”They always cared for music and had both flutes and instruments for a string (i.e. string instruments, AA)”. Therefore there was no mention of any bowed instruments. Moreover, the term aulos cannot be translated as a flute as it represented an ancient Greek pipe with a reed. Knowing about their significant connections with Ancient Greece, since it was the 1st century when Strabo recorded this information, there could only have been the lyres and lutes.

According to the Serbian archaeological results the Dardanians were not the Illyrians as they differed completely, which was also confirmed by Papazoglu on the basis of historical data.

Secondly, obviously not having read the description and the dimensions, Krešimir Galin classified an archaeological discovery from Ripač near Bihać (a settlement dating back to the late

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89 Who were considered an Illyrian tribe (Papazoglu 1969)
90 Stipčević 1989, p. 188
91 Papazoglu 1969, p. 394.
92 Donnegan 1836: Εντατά.
93 Their material culture indicates that the Dardanians were the people who had significant Old Balkan features and shared ancient ethnocultural unity with the Triballi, Moesi and Dacians. However, they differed significantly in economy. The Dardanians were predominantly farmers unlike the Illyrians from the Drina and Lim valleys, who were mostly cattlemen, and the Thracians to the east of the Isker and Struma rivers, who were hunters and skillful warriors (Srejović 1994, p. 52; Papazoglu 1969).
Bronze and Iron Ages) as a fragment of the gusle or lute. Vejsil Ćurčić (who had excavated and published these findings) explained that this find represented a small shallow bowl for colouring with a diameter of 7 cm with a handle. It is obvious that such a small object could only have been a ladle or even a spoon and certainly not the gusle, etc.

For the time being, there are no grounds to search for the origin of the gusle (in the shape that was preserved by the Serbs) among the Illyrians. Yet it would not be surprising if there was a musical bow which was bowed with a wooden stick or plucked with fingers or even had a primitive resonator in the shape of a bladder or a hoop with the skin.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, we can conclude that the development of the Serbian gusle, from prehistory to the Middle Ages, was divided into several stages. Here, we will attempt to reconstruct them in chronological order.

1 In ancient times, the musical bow was bowed with a wooden stick in Europe. It resembled the Latvian smuigas (spels), which, as we have witnessed, had derived its name from Proto-Slavic as well as its form and use. It was a simple wooden bow made of a bent branch with a fibre string, without a resonator, leaning and pressing against a double chin, and thus changing the tone pitch. The wooden stick used for bowing was called smičak among the Slavs. The bowed musical bow itself was named skripka, skripica.

2 In prehistoric times (probably before the beginning of the Neolithic Period), the European musical bow added an animal bladder as a resonator. Although Kuhač did not mention a bladder as a resonator on the Balkan musical bow in his notes (19th century), it is hard to believe that it did not exist among the Slavs as such resonators were known even among the Balts and Germanic tribes.

3 Adding a bladder as a resonator resulted in lifting up the string and straightening the body of the instrument in the shape of a stick (lath).

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94 Srejović1997: Ripač
95 Galin 1988, p. 138
96 Ćurčić 1908, p. 161, fig. 6; i.e. pt.8 / fig.6
97 Vertkov et al.,1963, p. 73.
98 When first lutes, harps and lyres appeared with a more developed and improved resonator made from either wood or wood and skin in Mesopotamia.
4 Straightening the body of the instrument led to the occurrence of figural depictions at the top of the instrument. The depiction of the Pagan supreme deity (Dabog and Svetovid) originates from the Proto-Slavic period, as confirmed by the fact that it also appeared in the Balkans. The possible date of its appearance was between the 1st and 5th centuries, when the Slavic pantheon was increasingly being developed under the influence of Roman culture. Seen from the aspect of the history of religion, the depictions of a deified ancestor are older. One of the depictions in the collection of gusles kept in the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade particularly stands out. Although the elements of the ancestor cult reached far back to prehistory, the emergence of these depictions should not be dated earlier than the stage when the body of the instrument was straightened in the shape of a lath, which provides the freedom for such a depiction. It is significant that the instruments of this type (e.g. Estonian põispill) were used as props for Pagan rituals – funeral and wedding processions. According to old beliefs, these rituals involved ancestors.

5 At the next stage, straightening the body of the instrument provided the replacement of a resonator held high (bladder) with a lower resonator (a box made of slats, or rather a wooden hoop with skin stretched over). It was impossible to tighten such a low resonator to the musical bow.

6 The use of maple tree for making the lute in Greece and its probable penetration into the Proto-Slavic homeland to the north of the Carpathians (3rd-2nd centuries B.C.) brought in an innovation: they were carved out of a single piece of wood, considering the popularity of the Proto-Slavic phrase „gusle javorove“ (English: maple gusle). From that period until the emergence of a horsehair bow, the gusle might have been played in two ways – by plucking with fingers and by bowing with a wooden stick. This situation enabled a gradual transformation of the musical bow, accompanied by epic poetry, into the lute, as indicated by the fact that it had survived until the 19th century as an instrument used to teach children to bow.

7 A cross-shaped or similar slit and a carving on the back of the gusle probably originated from the ancient lute. For the time being, we should not exclude a possibility that they were of Avar origin as the Avars inhabited Pannonia from the mid-6th century to the beginning of the 9th century.

8 A horsehair bow appeared in the 8th-9th centuries, and bowed string instruments were spreading rapidly around Europe. Since that period, lutes had been played with a horsehair bow. The bigger ones were considered to be the direct forerunner of the Serbian gusle.

9 Such an instrument existed throughout the European territory from the 9th to 13th centuries, judging from the depictions in the Utrecht Psalter and Spanish Cantigas. While it had 3 strings there, the Serbs adapted it to suit their epic poetry by reducing the number of strings to one (rarely two), thereby giving it a personal touch, which was the main factor in its survival to the present day. In other parts of Europe, it was gradually being replaced by three-stringed and later even four-stringed bowed string instruments (lyres, fiddles, violas and violins), whereas, in the Balkans, it was preserved and given the epithet ‘Serbian’ by Polish poet Miaskowski (serbskie skrzypki) in the 17th century.

99 A sitting figure of a naked man with a fez on his head and an erect phallus (Mitrović, 2014, p. 107).
100 They were noticed in the Mesolithic culture of Lepenski Vir (the Danube valley). The cult dates far back to the Neanderthals (Bogdanović, 2016, pp. 90-92, 123)
10 Replacing the pictorial representations of the Pagan god began in the Middle Ages under the influence of the Church. This is the reason why the gusle started appearing in Serbian Church art as late as the 17th century.

11 Along with this process, in the Middle Ages, it added a curve with a pictorial representation of a horse or ibex on at the top of its neck, similar to lutes, which were widespread in Europe from the 9th to the 14th century, or later.

12 The Serbian gusle derived its name from the medieval lute in Serbia (гоуслех), regardless of whether it was bowed or plucked. The plucked instrument had begun to be called ‘tambura’ ever since the time of Ottoman rule, whereas the bowed instrument kept the old name, i.e. ‘gusle’. As the word form ending in -е: gusle, husle, etc. was known as the name for the Byzantine lyre or violin among the Western Slavs, we feel that the lute had most likely been named ‘gusle’ among the Slavs since the invasion of the Proto-Slavic community at the end of the Old Era due to the fact that the Byzantine lyre used to be a lute which had begun to be bowed since the 8th-9th centuries.

13 The organological similarity between the Serbian gusle and the Mongolian igil or Moroccan sousi was coincidental. We assume that these instruments originated in the same way as the Serbian gusle, by taking over the organology from the lute. While the igil inherited a pictorial representation of a horse with a half moon curve from the lute, the sousi obviously imitated the older type of lutes, which has been known in the Middle East since the 4th millennium BCE. It has no ornaments at the end of its neck, whereas the neck itself has a circular cross-section, similar to the abovementioned lutes.

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