

Pamporea: Emergence of a New Vernacular. Dance and Identity Performing with Aromanians (Vlachs) from Romania

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Vlahbei, Georgiana. 2025. "Pamporea: Emergence of a New Vernacular. Dance and Identity Performing with Aromanians (Vlachs) from Romania." *Martor*, 99-118. [DOI: 10.57225/Martor.2025.06]

ABSTRACT

In the mid-1980s, a new type of dance performed by young men emerged in a rural Aromanian community in the Dobrogea region, south-eastern Romania. Later adopted by a folk dance ensemble and adapted for stage performance in the early 2000s, *Pamporea* (Aromanian for "ship") quickly gained popularity in the community contexts and received media exposure far beyond them. Its staged, visual expression was emulated and aesthetically reinterpreted, making it one of the most popular Aromanian dances—and, in fact, one of the best-known Aromanian cultural exports to this day. As it moved across various stages and online platforms, the dance often retained the contested "traditional" emblem of an Aromanian identity marker, while much of its cultural metadata is, in fact, getting lost. Performed live, recorded on video, shared on social media, and taught via digital platforms by actors both inside and outside of the community, the creation and cultural evolution of *Pamporea* testify to the transformations of the living heritage of a declining ethnic group at risk of cultural absorption. *Pamporea* offers a lens to inquire into the propagation and consumption of vernacular dances and folk-derived elements of a minority culture on the internet, where various processes reshape how the dance endures and is transmitted. I write from a situated perspective, as a member of the Aromanian community.

KEYWORDS

Aromanian; performing identity; village dance; stage dance; new vernacular; digital folklore; crossmedia.

When speaking of Aromanians,¹ one cannot refer to us as a single, unitary community, but rather as several groups united linguistically and ethnographically through a consciousness of common kinship and belonging, living across the Balkans and in several other countries. Non-homogenous, shaped by plural identifications across time and space, and of a chameleonic² nature, we resist precise taxonomies, which has led to much controversy in historiography and national policies. We are often characterised as an example of "alternating citizenship," "transborder civic identity," or "extramural ethnicity" (Constantin 2014, 260).³ Neglected in mainstream history, geographically dispersed, and subject to oppressive policies of assimilation by nation states, Aromanians today face the imminent and internalised threat of cultural absorption.

The arrival of the Aromanians in Romania was one migratory process that altered the lives of around 6000 families (Hagigogu, Noe, Muși 2005, 168)—including my grandparents, who were displaced from their homes in northern Greece. From 1925 to 1943, a mixed Aromanian

population arrived in Romania, said to number around 30,000 persons.⁴ Among them, the first group of émigrés came from Albania,⁵ specifically from the village of Pleasa⁶ in the summer of 1925. The Plisoț finally settled mainly in two peri-urban areas of Romania: north of Constanța, in Palazu Mare neighbourhood, and in Pipera (now a neighbourhood of the city of Voluntari), situated north-northeast of Bucharest. Both places nurtured a strong, cohesive Plisot community, one of the most closely-knit among all Aromanians in Romania. The Plisot subgroup of Palazu Mare is the focus of this article, as this community is where the *Pamporea* dance was born.

...On a sunny day, barefoot on the hot stone tiles in front of the old adobe house in Tariverde,⁷ *teta* (aunt) Ița taught us—me and my urban bunch of cousins who were spending the summer in the countryside—the steps she used to rehearse with the local village dance group. Some were heavy and proud, others dynamic and alert. The quick *Paidușca*⁸ was our favourite. Our grandparents watched silently, amused from the porch, as we jumped aimlessly from foot to foot in rapid crescendo, stomping, stumbling into one another, and filling the courtyard with laughter. My first experiences of learning dance bear the mark of my skilled aunt, a geography and history teacher, but also a locally renowned keeper and transmitter of dance traditions. Of course, there was lots of dancing at weddings in my large Aromanian family. The 1994 wedding of my eldest cousin Nana, held in the lavish Constanța Casino with the music band of the time, Vlahos, imprinted in my five-year-old memory the vivid image of a ballroom dance. This time, however, it was performed by people wearing straight, fashionable modern outfits, pressed tightly together, and surrounded by the sumptuous art deco architecture—a peculiar transposition of the *dhipli* (dance rows) of the old village *coru* (circle dance). One after the other, my cousins kept getting married, while I kept ending up a bridesmaid—always an uncomfortable position, since it required me to be suffocatingly close to the bride at all times at the centre of the dance circle... It was much later that I came to understand the innate interculturality behind our beloved *Paidușca* and *Ștraca-ștraca*,⁹ and the fragile nuances one must adopt when making any claims of ownership in the Balkan dance realm—or any other, for that matter...

Thus, my interest in following the *Pamporea* phenomenon directly relates to my position as a member of the community. The perspective is equally shaped by belonging to a revival generation in Romania, marked both by the drive to recuperate dance traditions and by the explosion of information and connections brought by the internet, along with the broader transformations of the 21st century. My initial research aim was to reveal how Aromanian cultural identity is expressed through this dance and cultural phenomenon. In the end, the field carved a slighter different road: that of making sense of the cultural evolution of the dance, as it passes through literal and symbolic stages. Altogether, I argue this particular dance foregrounds a discussion on heritage as a process of continuation, dissolution, and reinvention—a perspective that I hope will be valuable not only to researchers but also as a contribution to greater Aromanian reflexivity.

Methods and frames

I drew on semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with members of the original folk dance ensemble, from the first practitioners to the current choreographer (aged 40 to 74), with the vocalists involved in the musical transmission and configuration of the *Pamporea* hit song (aged 71), and with various members of the community (aged 30-65). The

other part of my investigation involved internet-based research, focusing on video material shared on social media channels. This enabled me to compare the visual expression of the dance as recorded in both family and stage settings (around 80 clips posted by community members, ensemble performances, weddings, and other events), beginning with the first public record of the dance in the 2000s and continuing through to the present day (2025), including its expansion beyond the community.

In discussing *Pamporea*, I adopt the understanding of *dance-as-social expression* that stems from Anca Giurchescu's definition (2001, 109) and Bourdieu's (1977) view of dance as a cultural practice through which a community's past and present are managed and transformed symbolically in a dynamic way. To this, I add the layer of *dance as cultural text*,¹⁰ which have led me to interpret *Pamporea* as a *vehicle for negotiating cultural identity* and ensuring the *survival* of Aromanians under political adversities and strong pressures of identity dissolution. Here, I draw on the dance scholar Scolieri's analysis of how "[d]ance performs multiple and complex roles in refugee communities worldwide—as a form of cultural currency, survival strategy, movement therapy, political activism, and social service" (2008, XII). Likewise, I use Jane K. Cowan's framing of the *dance-event*, as "a temporarily, spatially, and conceptually 'bounded' sphere of interaction" (1990, 4). Ethnochoreological concepts inform the technical analysis, while the subsequent sections draw on cultural heritage and cultural transmission studies, recent digital folklore theories, media ecology, and platform studies to interpret how traditional and folkloric dances are diffused, practised, and consumed over the internet.

Brief literature review

The currently available ethnochoreological literature has important gaps left regarding Aromanian dance practices. To date, there is no comprehensive and integrative scholarly work dedicated exclusively to the vernacular forms of Aromanian dance or that accounts diachronically or synchronically as an updated contemporary perspective. Research in the 20th century relied heavily on ethnolinguistic and ethnohistorical approaches. By the 1970s and 1980s, anthological work began to emerge at the crossroads of Romanian and Greek scholarship. Socrates Liakos (1976) identified seven archetypal Vlach dances¹¹ in his 1976 study *Μακεδονο-Αρμανικά* (Macedonian Aromanians), while ethnomusicologist George Marcu's 1977 volume *Folclor Muzical Aroman* (Aromanian folk music) pointed to rhythms of Greek origin.¹² Achileas Lazarou, a prominent scholar of Balkan folk traditions, authored the only dedicated study, *The Dance of Vlachophones*, published in Thessaloniki in 1979. In the 21st century, analytical and interpretative anthropological perspectives have become influential, with authors such as Kalliopi Panopoulou and Vassilis Nitsiakos, prominent figures in cultural anthropology and comparative Balkan folklore, reframing scholarly debates. At the same time, voices from the first generations of practitioner-intellectuals also entered the debate, among which John Tsiमितros, a teacher of traditional dances.

Dancing in context: continuity and transmission

There can be no doubt that Aromanian dances form an integral part of the broader dancing practices of the Balkan peninsula. While they must always be analysed considering the multiethnic and multicultural context of the daily lives of their practitioners, some structural types of Aromanian folk dances can nevertheless be distinguished.



According to Lazarou (1976), they are recognizable because they have unique rhythmic patterns and step sequences that differentiate “Vlachophone” dances from other regional styles. Among these are the circle dances. Central to Aromanian traditions, these dances are performed in a closed, hand-held circle that testifies to unity and community. One of the earliest film recordings¹³ by Manaki Brothers,¹⁴ pioneers of Balkan cinematography and photography, depicts *corlu mari* (the great circle dance) on a vast plain at the base of the mountains in historic Macedonia—a large open spiral with a visible head and tail. The style of the dancing is frequently characterised as slow, or “movement in place with emphasis on the majesty and the upright build while the heavy foothold underlined” (Tsiमितros 2000). There are also line dances, prominent particularly in Greek and Albanian territories, and solo and soule dances that allow for individual expression and are often performed during specific ceremonial occasions. Lazarou identifies rhythmic signatures common across Aromanian dances, such as 5/8 and 7/8 time signatures, which are shared with other Balkan folk traditions.

By the early 2000s, Aromanian dance began to attract media coverage—first through Aromanian channels, and later at national and eventually international levels. The dissemination was exponential: within just a few years, Aromanian dances were entering mainstream stages, with the community folk ensembles being invited by majority groups to perform in television programmes and pop music festivals with growing audiences.

Where do Aromanians in Romania dance and learn dancing today? Plenty of dancing can still be seen in today’s luxurious ballroom weddings, christening feasts, and coming-of-age parties, especially in Constanța city, which hosts the largest Aromanians community. All of these are family-based contexts. Larger communal contexts include the intensely promoted and carefully organised Aromanian festivals involving community organisations and unions,¹⁵ and characterised by formal formats, such as stage choreographies, set structures, and fixed repertoires. Moreover, *serati* have become customary for urban partygoers, extending beyond the community. Large, renowned terrace bars and concert venues in both Bucharest and Constanța now host Aromanian dance parties with a mixed audience—sometimes predominantly Romanian or multiethnic.

When it comes to in-person transmission of Aromanian dances today (*Pamporea* included), it is important to note that modern dance schools have become the sole facilitators. Whether in rural or urban contexts, these informal dance schools have completely replaced any other agents responsible for passing on the dance. These dancing schools and the folk ensemble rehearsals are now the established institutions, vetoed and entrusted by Aromanian families to instil the spirit of Aromanian-ness in younger generations. It is important to remark that the ensembles active today are direct descendants of the formalised village dance groups of the communist period¹⁶. This continuity is traceable in a number of features, starting with their choreographic formalisation (the *stagification* of the dance), the performative structure they impose on body language, the materiality used (for example recovered or reinvented costumes and props), from micro to macro movement, and the selection of Aromanian “values” they intrinsically reinforce. Within these informal schools, learning of the dance is no longer part of a communal traditional experience, but rather a more formalised classroom experience, where teachers replace elders or family members. “The non-place” of the classroom (Panopoulou 2009, 177) is nevertheless infused with familiarity by imbuing it with an ethnic atmosphere. “Here,” confesses choreographer and dancer Mirela Goga, “it has to feel like a home.” The lived experience is transformed “into spectacle, through invented and revived situations” (Panopoulou 2009, 177). In fact, most of the young people and children attending today’s classes have little to no direct experience of the dance contexts in which their grandparents once participated—except the archived recordings available on the internet. They are, for the

most part, taught “second-existence”¹⁷ dances as if these were family events once witnessed in the village.

Proceeding, *Pamporea*'s context of emergence and its manipulation of the traditional kinetic-rhythmic vocabulary inherited by its practitioners should be understood in close relation to: a) first, the multi-cultural context of its chameleonic producers, shaped by their close contact with other ways of being and dancing both before and after their arrival in Romania; b) discontinuities in the intergenerational transmission of Aromanian cultural heritage (Plisoț included), including dance, across the last century in various socio-political contexts: armed conflict, ethnic erasure, displacement, migration, and political persecution; and c) its character as a product of a diasporic identity, marked by (re)attachment to elements of heritage as a means for grounding, anchoring, and coping with the new environment.

*I tell Cipans:*¹⁸ “We are the ones who created Pamporea, in Palazu!”
“No way, it’s been around since forever!” They don’t believe us!
(Adi Geambazu)

The birth of Pamporea

Almost all my partners in dialogue cite a group of young men in Palazu Mare as the initiators of a new, peculiar form of dancing. This moment is recounted by Adi Geambazu, a first-generation dancer born in 1974, and one of the youngest in the group, who was in his teens around the time the dance started taking shape:

The basis of the dance was created by some lads, *Decreții*¹⁹ or *Ceașeii*, as we called them. It was a prodigious generation, most of whom were born between ‘67 and ‘69. Maybe a few were born in ‘65. Before the revolution, they were not the most schooled, I am not sure they ever pursued jobs like engineer or doctor. But they were really united. And they danced a lot and sang a lot. Their most active period was right before and right after the revolution. One of them was Micu, the ‘mischief.’ He played the accordion and was also fond of books, he knew more about music—even music theory. He left for America right after the revolution. He was famous for his *ritournelles*.²⁰ The one you hear on *Pamporea* (ed. n. the dynamic sequence), that’s Babu/ Babașcu’s *ritournelle*. If that harmonic hadn’t been played, you had no way of dancing it. So around that time, I don’t know exactly how much earlier before the revolution, maybe it was ‘87 or ‘88, they were playing together with Ghiță Caraolani. He had previous connections to Palazu, maybe since ‘84 or ‘85, when he performed for the first time at a wedding there. Ghiță was looking for songs in Palazu Mare. He always asked around for old songs and learned many of them there. Among them, there was also *Treambură Pamporea*. It is a mournful, sad song, and slow-paced. And so, a connection grew between him and the Palazu group. They grew together. I’d say that Palazu Mare would not have been so famous without Vlahos band. That was because Ghiță was playing a lot more *aștirat* [slowly, seated—ed. note]. They used to play at a slower speed, and the Fârșeroț²¹ were able to dance to that. It was similar to our own style—like *Ceamcu*.²² Think about it like this—that generation needed something more jumpy, more alert than what had been danced to in Palazu Mare. I think what made it happen was the need of the young for something more lively. They were in their 20’s then. (Adi Geambazu, interview from February 2025)

Fortunately, the first steps of “proto-*Pamporea*” are vividly recollected:

If you know what the first step is, when you would dance it without putting your feet backwards, you hop on one foot and then jump backwards on the other foot. Starting with the left foot, you would hop

three-four times on the right foot, backwards. Just like *Ceamcu*. Now, that is the simplest form. You can imagine we started with something quite easy. That's how the first steps of *Pamporea* were ever made. No way you would raise the knee up or anything of that sort. That's something they brought later, the youngsters. So, basically it was a speedy variant of *Ceamcu*, a faster *Ceamcu*. We were good at *Ceamcu*, it's ours, after all. So, when you move the right foot, sometimes you can also make a jump on the left foot. If you have more time and the music is faster, you can land on the left foot, two-three times backwards. That was the first step. We did it all together, we were a lot of people, holding arms. But the very first steps we danced to some other song, I don't remember which song it was, maybe that one with "aeroplani multi, le le le"²³ ["Oh so many aircrafts"] and also another one I can't remember. That's the song we initially performed the dance on. How we got to *Treambură Pamporea* is hard to say. Maybe it was easier because the rhythm was similar. But the *Pamporea* song definitely came afterwards. (...) *Pamporea* is not an old dance, it's a new dance. But its fundamental structure lies within the other dances. (Adi Geambazu, interview from February 2025)

Therefore, *Pamporea* is to be understood as a creative act that emerged in Palazu Mare, within a small Plisot group. We also find that the village version—the "Palazu Mare original"—is still in circulation to some extent. Restricted by a slower tempo and to Plisot kin, it is now performed exclusively at family events:

All of us, the guys from Palazu Mare, excluding the ones who are members of Iholu, we all dance it the same way. As if we were an ensemble. If you take those born in the '65, '67, '68, if you take me, 50 years old – we all dance it the same way. And we only come together for weddings, baptisms (...) Me and GP, we always danced together. We still do, whenever we meet at weddings. When we go to Bucharest, my relatives await us anxiously: "the Palazu Mare guys will come and dance." There will be a fight if we don't dance. Sometimes they say we must dance. But what if I don't feel like it? Should I be a clown, dance whenever somebody wants me to? Either way, you have to dance. It's already an emblem: "The Palazu Mare has arrived." And generally, we do dance, because we love it. Nowadays, we could say we dance *Pamporea* 'since forever' (...) There is no wedding, gathering, baptism, Thursday evening without *Pamporea* in Palazu. If you don't dance it, the bride or groom will think you're upset with them. (Adi Geambazu, from interview in spring 2025)

Therefore, the dance is preserved outside of the spectacle and the stage.

My musician interlocutors point out that the lyrics are an adaptation of the renowned poem *Pri-Amarea Lae* [Across the Black Sea] by Nuși Tulliu, published in his 1926 anthology²⁴ The poem was transposed into a singing ballad accompanied by accordion, gaining some popularity and circulation in several villages of Dobrogea as it was performed by local rhapsodes. Hrista Lupci, renowned Aromanian rhapsod himself, encountered it in the '50s, played by an old accordion player from Palazu. The song's prior circulation in the local repertoire is confirmed by Gheorghe Caraolani:

I didn't make up the song, I learned it from Palazu. It was actually in the first years when I started singing. Around the '80s. Before '85. I started singing with them in Palazu. The lads from Palazu—not the old folk, but the youngsters—had already had this *Pamporea* [before him], and this was a top song, it was a big success. But it had another form. I gave the song a new shape. I arranged it in this new rhythm, and I was the one to release it, me and my band Vlahos, we had this idea to put it on some rhythm. But let's make it clear, the song was older. And so, the lads started dancing to it, after we gave it this appeal. It was 1985. Our instruments were *armonica* [accordion], guitar and keyboard, with me as vocalist. So, before releasing it with Iholu, at the community [FARA from Constanța-ed.

note], we had played it at every wedding in Palazu, at every custom. At each custom, *Pamporea* was number one. Then, the lads from Palazu started going to Iholu and we took it and that's where it got cemented. My time with it started heading to an end. Others came to play it. (interview from spring 2025)

The entrance of modern *Pamporea* into wide circulation was marked by its formal release by the in-vogue Aromanian band Vlahos in 1985 under the name *Treamburâ Pamporea* [The rocking ship], led by Caraolani. For nearly twenty years, it was performed on Aromanian stages, before becoming known simply as *Pamporea*.

To conclude, the village form of *Pamporea* was born within a continuum of intergenerational transmission and performance among the Plisoț community, yet it also represented an innovation—an adaptive expression intended to engage with modern times. Therefore, the Palazu Mare group had, in fact, generated what we may call a *dance type*, creatively employing recognizable “stereotype movement sets owned by the social group.”²⁵ The necessity to remain connected to the traditional model—with its strict limits—never disappeared. For the model to remain viable and accepted as a living model, it had to draw on a pre-existing movement vocabulary and adhere to a set of principles through which the community could see and recognise itself.

*I ask you this: do you believe we can still live today
as we once did, up in the mountains?*²⁶

Taking the stage

We have seen that “Palazu *Pamporea*” circulated for almost two decades at private family events and on village and city festival stages—at Aromanian celebrations, community gatherings, and village days—gradually gaining popularity within the community. At the beginning of the 2000s, however, a typical phenomenon occurred: the village version was gathered to be reassembled collectively for stage performance by the newly formed folk ensemble Iholu, a new generation of young people seeking artistic expression. The Iholu ensemble was founded in 2004 under the Aromanian Community of Constanța organisation, with the aim “to preserve and promote Aromanian culture, traditions, and customs.”²⁷ At its inception, the group also included young people from Palazu Mare who had grown up seeing and dancing the “Palazu *Pamporea*”:

The first generation of Iholu brought it to the state of the art. Some of them had this elegance in movement. It's like they were replicas of the lads of '67-'68. They all grew together, just like the old ones, together from kindergarten. It's a pleasure to watch them perform. Why? Because they dance *aștirat*, they individualise themselves, each of them brings his own style. All the others are like machines, they don't invest any soul into it. They dance because they have to. But Iholu—they studied, they looked at how Cypriots, Albanians danced. They took from all over and turned it into an art piece. They made the recognizable *Pamporea*, with the feet up, with the jumping. They took all of these from elsewhere. Our Aromanians did not use to dance like that. Maybe Albanians perform some kind of *Ceamcu* with jumps. I saw them on YouTube, how they bend backwards, how they jump like springs. Nobody else is going to dance it like Iholu, it's like they are the golden generation at the national championship. Their way is nicer. They used to train every day. Us, we know the simple *Pamporea*. But they learned from us and then turned it into art. Good for them! *Chapeau!* If they hadn't brought it there, it would not have become so famous. (Adi Geambazu)

With the inclusion of the dance in the repertoire of a folk ensemble, it was incorporated into a new set of rules and given a new identity. “Palazu *Pamporea*” became “Iholu *Pamporea*.” From its very beginning, the group was invited to perform on a morning show on a mainstream TV channel. From there, the dance grew into a hit phenomenon. In its rise to popularity, *Pamporea* first benefited from television, which gave it visibility and ensured wide dissemination, and later from the internet, which enabled reproduction and transmission. Within a year from the morning show, the dance went viral, moving beyond the community of origin and into the mainstream media and even the international public eye (TV shows, popular electronic music festivals, a victory anthem for a football team, and social media dance training) With its migration from Palazu to Iholu, the dance entered its screen era.²⁸

Graphic expression and some notes on stage arrangement

To outline the visual expression, I will note some particularities of the stage version performed by Iholu folk ensemble (as seen in the YouTube visual archive), since it represents the first stage model that was later disseminated across the Aromanian world and beyond.

The dance is performed exclusively by young men in formal stage performances. The dance is executed in one chain formation, an open circle with the dancers facing inward and moving counter-clockwise. They start the dance by clapping their hands at the beginning of the musical phrase. The dance follows the musical structure: the accompanying music in a 4/4 time signature. The binary rhythm supports the dance’s synchronised group movements and enables the execution of rapid footwork section. Two distinct sequences can be identified: a slower one, known as *sta tria*²⁹ [in three] and an alert sequence having a lively tempo with dynamic steps. The alternation between these sequences creates a dynamic rhythm, engaging both the dancers and the audience. Nevertheless, the rotating slow and fast sequences should not be confused with the pattern of a “classical” *sta tria* dance, such as that in *La valea di Ianina* [In the Valley of Ioannina] performed by Grămusteani,³⁰ where the steps remain the same throughout the musical score but are executed at double speed in some parts of the dance. The slow *sta tria* section may be considered the “traditional” form of *Pamporea*, as it is common to all Aromanian branches and among the oldest dances recorded.³¹ It takes the form of a resting sequence, an *intermezzo* between the alert sequences, with dancers relaxing their postures and breaking hand formation, sometimes clapping to the rhythm. The movement follows a cyclical three-step pattern aligned with the triple-meter rhythm typical of *sta tria*.

This pattern is executed without precise timing, as uniformity across the ensemble is not required in the in-between phases. On the contrary, during the rapid sequence, timing and precise execution are vital. The other sequence is, in fact, the reason for *Pamporea*’s fame, and what has become the recognizable element of the dance. At the beginning of a new musical phrase, dancers place their hands on each other’s shoulders to ensure cohesion and coordinated group movement. In contrast to the “classical *sta tria*,” this passage introduces rapid, spirited movements, increasing the intensity of the dance—an amplified *sta tria*. Dancers execute quick footwork, sharp turns, and dynamic, ample gestures. The second sequence can be performed in two ways: either with “steps to the front” or “steps at the back,” the former having a larger ambitus.³² The movement repertoire includes the equivalent of *pas de bourrée*—a quick, three-step movement executed in various directions that contributes to the dance’s fluidity; hops—small, energetic jumps that add verticality and emphasise rhythmic beats; and the equivalent of *chassé*—sliding steps that facilitate lateral movement and spatial reconfiguration within the circle.

Among the movement and gesture vocabulary, there are occasional “arm flourishes”—stylised arm movements that enhance the visual appeal and expressiveness of the dance—as well as interspersed moments of rhythmic emphasis, such as slight foot stamps or knee lifts. Gestures like facial expressions and eye contact between performers are integral, fostering the sense of connection among participants. Depending on the available performing space, the final position may sometimes end in a straight line, with a final crescendo of steps performed *sur place* and vertical foot movement executed with a large ambitus. Throughout, the upper body posture remains relatively steady, allowing the legs and feet to execute the steps with precision.

In terms of roles, the leader (*caplu*, lit. “the head”) is the first in the circle and stands out through movements specific to his position. He may break off from the formation to perform pirouettes during the alert sections, and do particular gestural improvisations, such as placing the right hand behind his head, using a *șamia* (white handkerchief) for embellishments, or stroking the foot or the lifted heel to add dynamic variation to the performance. During the slower sections of *Pamporea*, there is a switch in the formation, with each dancer taking a turn at the leading position and demonstrating his mastery in directing the group with each new alert phrase. The *coada*, the circle “tail” can augment the dynamism.

Structurally, the “stage *Pamporea*” relies heavily on the “village *Pamporea*”—built on pre-existent types of Aromanian vernacular dances such as *Ceamcu*, or *Featâ-armânâ* [Aromanian girl]. Based on the observed step patterns, rhythm, and formation, it can be assumed that the dance belongs to the family typified as *choros sta tria* dances. At the same time, it shares structural similarities with dances from other Balkan traditions—for instance, other Greek *syrtos* and the Serbian *kolo*, which also feature circular formations and alternating tempos. *Pamporea* can thus be understood as both a choreographic and cultural hybrid of different affiliations, a creative synthesis of structural elements of Aromanian regional choreographic repertoire of the Balkans, enriched with neighbouring Greek and Slavic stylistic and aesthetic influences.

The “cemented” *Pamporea* is synonymous to its stage appearance, which is usually performed on a raised, front-facing platform, with the dancers positioned above the audience. This viewing angle is built into the typical choreography plan. In large Aromanian gatherings (such as Aromanians’ Day), the performance of the dance occupies most, if not all, of the stage space—with the band standing either in the centre or, more commonly, to the side of the stage. On the other hand, on major TV sets and festival stages, the dance typically has the form of a supporting act for the vocal performer(s), who occupy the centre stage. In these cases, dancers provide a sort of “moving scenery” behind and around the singer.³³ The dance is then supportive act, its function being to provide animation and enhance that particular sense of “Aromanian-ness.” With this type of stage setup, the boundary between dancers and audience is clearly marked. On the other hand, in family contexts, the physical and conceptual distance between dancers and audience tends to be smaller. At times, it may even disappear, when wedding guests (only men) join in to dance together with the ensemble.

The dancing costume and its specific aesthetics, used as a “mode of representation” or as an expression of identity, would require a separate chapter. I only note that the choice of costume, styling, materials, and decorations have strong identity connotation and work to enhance the “uniqueness” and particularity of the Aromanian (male) identity. Costumes are typically remade today with close attention to the choice of cut, weight, and texture of fabrics and adapted to allow greater ease of movement compared to the older “authentic” village outfits. Costumes are a constitutive part of a larger training in stagecraft/stage behaviour or “stage dance art based on folklore” (Ivanova-Nyberg 2024, 4).

All of these are political instruments through which *Pamporea* inscribes the Aromanian body into a political arena, where conventionalised movement and visual appearance expressed through dance become an obligatory rhetoric of ethnic hyper-individualisation.

“(...) dance is not the repository of meaning
but produces meaning each time it is performed”
(Giurchescu 2001, 110)

From Plisot Pamporea to an all-Aromanian Pamporea. Variability, creativity, and improvisation.

Dissemination has produced multiple variants generated through the adoption by other Aromanian folk ensembles—the *Vanghilizmo* group of Mihail Kogălniceanu³⁴ being a good example. Although arranged as a rather fixed form, the dance is appropriated by each Aromanian (dance) group, who then claim their own version. With each performance, a new variant emerges, marked by particular stylistic variations. Nevertheless, one could identify a set of recurring features across enactments: the order and sequence of the steps, linkage, body postures, communication between dancers, exchange of the leader role, and some verbal cues such as shouts and calls.

Variability is a, if not *the*, form of existence of popular cultures. The dance has been—and continues to be—subject to transformation. In this sense, it offers ethnologists a rare opportunity to witness a contemporary production of folklore. This dynamic interplay of creativity and variation—central to the production of folklore elements—can be summarised through the insights of a few authors: “The dancing identity does not remain static and unchangeable during time. Dancing as a social phenomenon entails the possibility of readjustment to specific social, economic, historical, and political shuffle of local society.” (Pitsi and Filippos 2014, 207). Schechner suggests that, although over time the overall shape of cultural performances may not be recognizable, performances are “not dead repetitions but continuous erasing and superimposing” (Schechner 1981, 86). Giurchescu (2001, 164) sees aesthetics as a dynamic component of culture, where the influence of fashion brings about gradual, subtle changes:

Each new reproduction demonstrates a creative approach. Therefore, in a broad historical perspective, each actual performance is, in fact, only a “link” in the unbroken chain of all the creative enactments realised in the past by all its predecessors, and which are potentially to be continued in the future by the successors. (Giurchescu 1983, 23)

Therefore, if we zoom out from Palazu Mare and look intra-group, we begin to see a second migration: how a dance of one collective (Fârșerot Plisot) has become a dance *of* the entire Aromanian group in Romania, to speak *for* them. Based on my interlocutors and the overwhelmingly positive feedback observed on media channels (most exhibiting enthusiastic feelings of ethnic pride), it is safe to conclude that the stage composition has largely been accepted within the larger Aromanian community. Its appropriation by most Aromanian folk dance groups in Romania confirms that it has entered the dance repertoire of the entire community. With the professionalisation of folk ensembles and the incorporation of *Pamporea* into their core repertoire, the dance has also entered the arena of economic exchange. Dancing has become a trade, part of wedding service or televised appearance. The remuneration of the dance inscribes it in a new dimension—as artistic currency.

Social functions

Motivations for dancing have naturally differed among the various Aromanian generations performing *Pamporea* over the last four decades. What connects them, however, is the sense of novelty *Pamporea* brings, a break from “older” forms of dancing, which are tacitly or explicitly perceived as obsolete. One reason for *Pamporea*’s quick adoption among young Aromanians is that it is a dance *of the young* and *for the young*. Much like it did for the initial group of Palazu Mare in the 1980s, nowadays it gives shape and presence to young people’s need to individualise themselves, to express “their own artistic personality”³⁵ within and beyond the community, and to reflect on the evolution of the Aromanian world to which they belong. *Pamporea* may be considered, as Anca Giurchescu would say, an “instrument of change”—a choreographic creation that both enables social transformation and is itself affected by it: “A dance system changes because of changes in world view, need of expression, and socio-political and environmental conditions” (2001, 112). In this sense, *Pamporea* occupies a “goldilocks” position between tradition and innovation.

The generic “folk activities” promoted and developed within community associations—such as those of FARA Armânească—continue to provide some of the most important opportunities for social interaction among younger generations. These spaces make folk dances attractive primarily as sites of interaction, where learning dances, attending meetings, and participating in various community activities contribute to the processes of bonding same-age groups. The aggregating role of modern dance clubs is therefore essential to understanding *Pamporea* as both dance and social phenomenon.

On a local scale, *Pamporea* is the pride of Palazu Mare, a pride later translated to all other folk groups that have incorporated it into their repertoire. Because of its perceived difficulty, the dance has become a token of status, a “must have” for the repertoire of any folk ensemble who considers itself Aromanian. From local, community prestige came national and then online prestige. On a subjective scale, then, *Pamporea* is a great vehicle for personal status: any young Aromanian man who learns the dance becomes, to a certain degree, part of a tacit brotherhood of esteemed *Pamporea* dancers. Lastly, *Pamporea* widely serves a recreation and entertainment role, highlighting what John Tsiamitros, teacher of traditional dances, observed: “today, the character of traditional dance has to do more with entertainment than old customs and social function” (Tsiamitros, social media post).

“The fact that dancing is performed in a given context shows that this expressive modality makes sense for the performers and the audience as well.”

(Giurchescu 2001, 110)

Dance and identity

It is relevant that, roughly at the same time as *Pamporea* effervescently spread within community contexts, a rejuvenation of national awareness was taking place among Romanian Aromanians. In 2005, an organised group of Aromanian leaders and activists vocally demanded minority rights³⁶—a coordinated action that attracted considerable public attention. While there is no way in which the dance can be directly linked to the political program of this national re-awakening movement, it was, nevertheless, entangled in the political effervescence of the moment, becoming a cultural and media phenomenon that reinforced it culturally. *Pamporea* thus emerges as a product of the social, cultural, and political pressures faced by Aromanians in Romania and elsewhere. With the notion of heritage only fairly recently adopted into the

preservation vocabulary of activist Aromanians (members of associations demanding political rights and constitutional recognition), dance at large has become part of the rhetoric for urgent identity recognition and subsequent political demands at both the national and international levels. The way *Pamporea* enacts a negotiation of Aromanian identity is better understood within the framework of strategies for survival.

Pamporea offers a great example of how the community thinks of itself through dance, offering revelatory means for self-reflection. Its articulation to memory is illustrative. In discussions with Mirela Goga, the dance is described as an artifact for rekindling “ancestral energies.” This is expressed in one of the fundamental features of traditional Aromanian society: its patriarchal organisation. I remind the reader the movement pattern is ascribed to men only—young, powerful men. The virility of the dance places men at the top of the societal hierarchy. At its core, *Pamporea* preserves indicators of this pre-modern social construct: a male brotherhood of exclusivity, with virility demonstrated through dominance and strength, as other dances once did for earlier generations: *Ceamcu*, for instance. “Stage (Iholu) *Pamporea’s*” admitted intention is the perpetuation and reaffirmation of gender roles (Mirela Goga), as reflected in its staging composition and dynamism: even “the male aggressiveness” as she describes it. When considering the exclusion of women from the dance, *Pamporea* reveals another paradox: although evolution is frequently invoked as a motivation for the creation of the stage dance, this in turn reinforces pre-established community structures. So, *Pamporea* serves as a great social mirror for the processes of selection that the community employs in the present to define itself in relation to its past. Standing at this fertile edge between generations, between fragments of patriarchal society and a slightly more liberalised majority group, and between generational definitions of what folk dance is or should be, it produces confusion and turns out to be a strong stimulus for reflexivity on what Aromanian folklore productions are and even what folklore is supposed to mean altogether:

It’s a musical, artistic phenomenon that is not folklore. I don’t know what to call it. Folklore is that which is nailed down. Maybe that one disappeared. Is folklore a continuous thing? Can we call it as living folklore, even if it was invented 20 years ago? To call it traditional is a stretch. It’s exaggerated to talk about it as a traditional dance. No good. This dance is a commercial success. That doesn’t bother, it’s a good thing it’s performed at weddings, but to perform a new, dynamic dance in Aromanian traditional attire, that is not folklore anymore. It only seems to be. But it’s not. Our old shepherd songs had no such thing. But that’s evolution. With all those old garments, we now perform all sorts of dances, old and new. (Oani Nicolae, Aromanian activist from an interview in February 2025)

Repatching identity online. Community as media

As soon as it could, Aromanian culture found its way on the Internet: first, through chat groups, forums, and blogs in the late 1990s and early 2000s, then via the websites of regional associations and dance clubs in Romania and the Balkans, and later on social media: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and more recently, TikTok. Over the last two decades, internet has become the prevalent medium for debating, exchanging, and promoting Aromanian culture, as well as a much-valued agora for Aromanian communities historically separated by borders, migrations, and internal ruptures. With the rapid adoption of digital communication, testimonies from within the community claim to have rediscovered their

once borderless identity repatched through the internet, which has been described as “a sort of spring for Aromanians” (Pariza, social media post).³⁷ Beyond reconnecting with long-lost relatives across the world, the internet has offered Aromanians everywhere the possibility to expose, display, perform, and negotiate their identity beyond the constrains of national constructs.

A commonly used theory in digital folklore is that of media scholar Henry Jenkins, who in the early 1990s coined the concept “participatory culture” (Jenkins 1992, 24–7). The notion of “convergence culture” (Jenkins 2006, 2) was later supplemented with the concept of “spreadability” (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013) to describe the technological and cultural potential for the circulation of content. “Spreadability” was paired with “stickiness,” a term that shifts attention not only towards the process of spreading, but also towards the ability of content to stick where it has spread and to create lasting change.

Moreover, folklorist Merrill Kaplan’s (2010) observations on how online folklore not only passes on tradition, but also acts as a curating agency—collecting and annotating—is accurate here. “Social media algorithms are actors which simultaneously promote change and continuity, and as such take part in folk culture and the production and transmission of folklore” (Flinterud 2023). Vernacular/ folk dances too are created and sustained within this algorithmically governed communication, though they have received less attention in scholarly debate.

“Composability³⁸ has become an indispensable quality of the current media landscape, in which a community itself becomes a form of media, accessed through various platforms” (Busta and Internet 2023). Being part of this participatory culture, Aromanian folk elements too become processes subject to reinterpretation and reconfiguration by a variety of new actors, “screens through which all platforms are diffracted” (Busta and Internet 2023). This fluidity is something which vernacular culture could not achieve in the physical world alone. With the emergence of new technologies, another migration of folklore elements has taken place, along with a new type of transmission and production on and for internet platforms.

#viralvideos #views #viral_video
#intrend #Pamporea

Dancing in times of algorithms. Pamporea 2.0

Video-dances of Aromanian folk groups and domestic dance events from different parts of the Balkans were among the first media to be posted on the internet-as-archive. In the second part of the 2000s, a proliferation of web sites, forums, and blogs began avidly recovering Aromanian dances worldwide, by digitizing old cassette tapes and other analogue media, as well as by posting recordings of live dance events in an effort to *self-document the present*. Along with digital libraries created by NGOs³⁹ and institutions emerging at that time, the most impressive dance archives remain, nevertheless, the informal ones: family footage shared on social media and the countless YouTube channels.⁴⁰ To this day, the thousands of videos documenting Aromanians dancing over the last 120 years now available on social media represent the largest repository of Aromanian culture—a truly open, participatory digital library.

A recording of *Pamporea* from a 2015 Plisot wedding in Palazu⁴¹ has reached 24 million views and received about 3,000 comments. A single Google search for *Pamporea* yields ten pages of distinct results. There is virtually no social media platform where the dance has not been documented. Analysing *Pamporea* through the lens of spreadability offers valuable

insights. The replication, transformation, distortion, and repurposing of the dance as it passes from one *user* to another is a process of acceleration resembling that of memes and other viral genres ubiquitous in the network culture. As Jenkins (2009) writes, “if it doesn’t spread it’s dead.” In claiming that “content spreads memetically,” Phillips and Milner (2017) allude to a process that goes beyond human agency and echoes the gene–meme analogy. In becoming *content*, the dance first acquires the property of *likability*, which in turn enhances its potential for *shareability*. In this process, the dance relinquishes ties to its original context or any control over where it goes or what it does.

Once in the digital realm, *Pamporea* becomes embedded in new power structures: democratic, open-access processes of circulation, curation, and remixing, but at the same time being shaped by algorithmic hegemony and the ever-growing demand for innovative content. As curatorial practices are becoming increasingly intertwined with choreography, curators—whether human or algorithmic—shape the ways in which dance is presented, experienced, and understood. With each reiteration, the formula, structure, and movement pattern are expanded, simplified, or synthesised, along with the contexts and meanings of the performing event. So much so that online platforms are changing the very nature of the dance itself, as it is filtered and reinterpreted through digital interfaces. This form of *dance-as-content* challenges traditional hierarchies, allowing an expression such as *Pamporea* to become a collective creation, even performed by outsiders. With digital *Pamporea*, the lines between the originating community, choreographer, performers, and audience are blurred, leading to a natural loss of cultural metadata—that is, the embeddedness of the Aromanian cultural context and the erosion of authorship. For example, in a 2023 TikTok video⁴² posted by a young dancer in a German folk ensemble, the caption accompanying a video of *Pamporea* performed in a classroom reads: “Daily dose of cardio #Pamporea #traditional #traditionaldance #dance #timisoara #romania.” No other information is provided, and the example is far from singular.

One recently theorised concept is useful: “trans-platformisation”—the process by which digital artifacts such as memes and even dances move and evolve across different online platforms, often losing their original context and creator attribution in the process. This phenomenon is characterised by the “playful memetics, virality machine, and joyful oblivion” (Betlemidze 2025), which can strip content of its original cultural context, leading to potential appropriation and erasure of its origins. As content moves, it can become detached from its original creators, cultural background, or the specific platform where it first gained traction. And so, the originating community can be obscured or forgotten, especially as the content grows in popularity and acquires new meanings. Another equally relevant notion is that of “tokenisation” that offers both a method for safeguarding digital representations and new ways to monetise and share folk dances globally. Therefore, the movement, displacement, transformation, and translation of *Pamporea* across digital platforms carry political implications.

With trans-platformization, the question of disembodiment⁴³ also arises. The online environment creates a new type of bodily presence and movement, shaped by constraining visual formats (e.g., video length or screen size), all of which play an important role in how dance elements “spread” and “stick.” While performance theories describe and analyse the embodied self moving physically and spatially, in the online environment performers and audiences alike are disembodied entities, “electronically reincarnated” through the digital signs they choose to represent themselves. The receptors are now only “unknown audiences” (Boyd and Heer, 2006) shaped by the architectures of online platforms.

“(...) wrong, this is the more universal *Pamporea* we have started using, the real one is much harder.”
(*Pamporea* trainees over TikTok)

Becoming a learning object in the age of folk tutorial

Around the age of 17, right about the time my eldest *papu* (grandad) started fading away, I was realizing the urgent need to safekeep whatever I had been endowed with. So, I took up keeping a dictionary of my two parents’ Aromanian idioms and started teaching myself old words. Around the same time, in the mid-2000s, I was fervently searching obscure corners of the internet, looking into and listening to whatever Aromanian music and dances from abroad I could find. Days would pass with me hitting pause-repeat obsessively on YouTube, trying to match the folk dancers’ proud posture and elegance, while stomping in our Bucharest flat—to the obvious discontent of the neighbours downstairs. Each rewind got me closer. I was beyond proud when I finally decoded *Pamporea*, the famously difficult men-only dance. In truth, I represent a not-so-infrequent case of what one may call a *cultivated or reborn Aromanian identity*: while living in a profoundly Aromanian household—with reciprocal visits from extended family, stories, communal singing, rites, and glimpses of past lives always around—I had received a very mainstream education, keeping away from the community for most of the time. I only spoke my first Aromanian words at 17. But I had taught myself *the ways of being Aromanian*, with my two-column notebook, exhausting bedroom dancing, and YouTube being the pivotal components of my quest to repatch what I felt was slipping through my fingers, through remembrance, through history.

The number of people interested in folk dance has increased significantly as a result of the development of social networking and video-sharing websites, alongside the emergence of digital tools, new archiving technologies, and dedicated learning platforms (Blackler et al. 2019; Hong, Chen, Ye 2020). New ways of learning folk dances are being explored (Kico et al. 2018). In the age of *#folktutorial*, learning communities aggregate in cyber-based social networks that provide the support needed for individuals to appropriate, from the comfort of their homes, preserved and documented pieces of traditional dancing. This happens within dance groups, among students studying folk choreography (Portnova 2022), or simply among online enthusiasts. These platforms foster a sense of community sustained by an apprenticeship-based identity, connecting individuals across geographical boundaries and “creating a global village of dance enthusiasts” (Panova-Tekath 2022, 86). Such networks also enhance the visibility of marginal communities, small groups, and indigenous dances. All this accounts for a growing disparity between the in-situ and the online consumption of vernacular expressions of culture. What could this gap signify?

Today, *Pamporea* and other examples of vernacular dances that have become disembodied by their transfer into the digital space are experiencing a phenomenon of re-embodiment with the advent of folk dance tutorials. In the current phase of *Pamporea*, the internet dance tutorial itself has become the primary mode of transmission. This has created a novel affordance that would have been inconceivable for any vernacular expression even half a century ago: should *Pamporea* be abandoned by its original carriers in the future, it might still live on in some parts of the world—in a living room, behind a screen, or in a dance classroom halfway around the globe. Within this new paradigm, a noteworthy series of mutations continue to unfold.

First, the shifting of authority: the role of the dance instructor once dedicated to teaching the stage *Pamporea* is now altered, now individuals can learn from multiple sources—second-, third-, fourth-hand—and develop their own interpretations of the dance. This lays the

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groundwork for the multiplication of digital *Pamporeas* found across social media. Moreover, from the perspective of teaching and learning as a process, the original dancers or transmitting agents (community members or folk group) are no longer needed in the act of knowledge transmission—neither in their physical presence, nor even digitally. One important, even revolutionary effect is that dance-meaning is no longer ensured by the community—the traditional entity guaranteeing for the dance-event—but is instead decoupled from it. Second, digital platforms emphasise collaborative learning, which establishes another type of community around the dance – one not bound by kinship, heritage, or memory, but organised around shared interest and practice around a specific topic. Third, the collaboration of video-lesson technology and dance teaching produces the “screenisation” of performance space, the “fragmentation” of performance task, and the “montageisation of linguistic instruction” (Ladra 2024, 369). All techniques required for “tutorialising” a folk dance (use of platform analytics, knowledge of the ideal video tutorial length, viewer hooks, video tracking, and many other)⁴⁴ construct the packaged folk media product. And so *Pamporea* as a learning object cannot be understood outside its marketing dimension and, particularly, the internet economy. At this stage, it can generate revenue through advertising, viewer donations, subscriptions, and sponsorship. It is a living example of how a folk dance becomes an internet commodity.

As we have seen, while online diffusion renders vernacular expressions more accessible to wider audiences, it also creates a distance between viewer or consumer and the original customary context. This results in a disconnection: people may not engage with the dance as deeply or meaningfully online as they would in a physical setting. Yet nowadays, they have gained the ability to step in and configure their own interpretative framework of the dance—an affordance only possible with the advent of the internet. Paradoxically, while the gap between an “original” communal dance expression and its audience seems to widen, it also collapses into a new form of engagement in which the audience becomes the creator and traditional roles and power balances shift. Curators—any user who appropriates *Pamporea-as-content*—gain power over meaning, function, and visual expression by selecting, arranging, and presenting their dance work, thereby shaping public perception and taste.

Another concern emerges when looking comparatively at how other Aromanian dances are perceived or have been taken up by majority culture, if they ever reach the public eye. Stripped down to a meme, I posit that a major factor for *Pamporea’s* spreadability has been fuelled by a combination of the exotic presence of Aromanian men and the spectacular character of the movement pattern (which is exactly the element insiders find most controversial), further enhanced by the rhythm and the spellbinding *ritournelle*. In this sense, *spectacle as perceived authenticity*, is what has been embraced, amplified, and circulated, enabling the dance to carry the controversial emblem of being “traditional Aromanian.” In this sense, *Pamporea* illustrates the community’s relationship with the majority population, specifically the imbalance of power expressed through the selective consumption of the marginal culture’s perceived, or rather imagined, heritage. This process is called by Panopoulou, Papakostas and Douma a “projection of an imagined dance identity” (2013, 638). Nevertheless, the emphasis on the show features (the spectacular display) of dance elements is something that the minority itself constantly feeds, by perpetuating a triple performance: of Aromanianhood, of Aromanian manhood, and of Aromanian tradition—as a strategy for constructing difference. The competitive edge of *Pamporea* is brilliantly summarised by one of its earliest performers:

Pamporea is like Gică Hagi⁴⁵ in the world—that’s how you know there are Aromanians around the world. Like Nadia Comăneci⁴⁶ did for Romanians, *Pamporea* did for Aromanians. Not *Ceamcu*, which is several hundred years old, God knows how old, not other dances, but *Pamporea*. It even reached China (Adi Geambazu, personal communication, spring 2025)

Aligned with consumer economy and galloping capitalism, *Pamporea* needed to accelerate if Aromanians were to remain visible and, indeed, to survive.

Conclusions

From community-vernacular to ensemble-staged and commercial folkloric performance, and then into digital and pastime tutorial, the journey of *Pamporea* follows the sinuous trajectory of Aromanians' living heritage in Romania. It foregrounds the transformations and dynamics of vernacular dance practices as they are permeated by the digital environment. Here, the rules of representation and reception, the relationship between creators and receivers, and the dance expression itself undergo significant transformations. The forty-year arc encompasses a departure from community contexts, traditional movement patterns, and traditional environments of dance performance, towards new digital and hybrid modes marked by the acquisition of new rules altogether. Furthermore, *Pamporea* as a dance-event is unfolding in both physical and conceptual sites of tension: between older and younger generations of Aromanians, between what is perceived as genuine customary practice and its folkloric emulation, and within a political arena where Aromanian identity *must* perform its otherness in order to be acknowledged.

Pamporea shows what the age of *community-as-media* can generate, especially for a small community such as the Vlachs, whose heritage elements are neither sufficiently visible nor benefit from protection or preservation policies, while facing weak intergenerational transmission. Although the online environment offers the most accessible and intuitive means to safeguard such vernacular dance practices, it also changes them—both by distorting their embedded and embodied cultural connotations and by using its creative potential to break down and re-formulate the dance. With *Pamporea-as-content*, the internet as medium alters how this and other similarly emerged dances are perceived, learned, shared, and adapted to user-consumer tastes, aesthetics, trends, and, essentially, to the demands of the digital economy. When communal or folk dances transform into spreadable multimedia hybrid content of plural authorship and mixed affiliation, we enter the realm of another kind of vernacular: democratised, open-access, unrestricted, and free-to-use forms of pre-existing cultural dance material, growing organically across the internet, taught in informal dance classes to individuals of diverse backgrounds, evolving through digitally mediated interaction, and passed from one social media account to another as viral entertainment currency—with just enough sense of *difference* to keep it captivating and in circulation.

Pamporea becomes, therefore, a compelling illustration of how the internet is a vibrant generator of folklore: a hybrid phenomenon consisting of both *communal Pamporea*—instances of vernacular, spontaneous creation—and its digital counterparts modelled by algorithmic rules and consumer understandings and preferences. In this sense, *Pamporea* emerges simultaneously as *content*, *token*, and *learning-object*. Ultimately, it stands as an Aromanian epitome of the ever-shifting, ever-emerging vernacular of the now.

NOTES

1. Along with “Vlachs,” “Koutsovlachs,” “Tzintzars,” and “Macedo-Romanians,” this is an exonym, while the community calls itself *armânu/ armânâ* (pl. *armâni/ armâne*) and uses a collective noun to designate the entire population as *armâname* or *armâniyu*.

2. Term originally used by Irina Nicolau in *Les caméléons des Balkans* [1993], which essentialises the prevalent occult character of Aromanian people—especially in political life, but also across all other areas of social life, where they would blend until almost unrecognisable.

3. It is worth noting that today their minority status is recognised only in the constitutions of two countries where Aromanians reside—North Macedonia and, more recently, Albania.
4. There is still no consensus on the exact number of Aromanians who arrived in Romania during this process (1925-1943).
5. Bațu family, followed by another 70 families from Pleasa (Albania) in August 1925, according to Gica (2011).
6. *Plasë* (Albanian), *Pleasa* or *Pliasa* (Aromanian) used to be a village of large Aromanian population documented since the Byzantine era, situated in Korçë County, Albania, near the Albanian-Greek border. Its inhabitants, later migrants, bear the name of the settlement—Plisoț or Plisots (plural of Plisoț, Plisoatâ). Its history is marked by both cultural resilience and significant challenges during periods of persecution and emigration. Today, like many other Vlach villages in Albania, the village is depopulated. For more information, see the *Vlach map of Albania* published by Thede Kahl on the Society Farsharotlu platform, available online: <https://farsharotlu.org/vlach-map-of-albania/>
7. Village in central Dobrogea where *Pruian* (probable descendants of Pindus groups) Aromanian families settled during the population transfer. It was named after the village Poroia, situated in northern Greece, Macedonia province, near the border with Bulgaria.
8. *Paiduško*, *Paiduska*, or *Pajdushko horo* is a dance found in Bulgaria and North Macedonia. It is danced in an open circle with linear forward and backward movements.
9. An open circle dance, popular among Aromanians, of Bulgarian influence/origin.
10. Drawn from Yuri Lotman's foundational concept of culture as a "system of texts," but also enhanced by studies from Roland Barthes, Sally Banes, Brenda Farnell, and Judith Lynne Hanna.
11. According to the author, these are *Armatolikos* (a war dance of the *Armatoli*, military formations in charge with protecting community borders), musically accompanied by *Beratico* (or *Arvanitovlachico*) The pair (male and female) dances *Basha* (*Ballos*) or *Syghathistos* or *Kleftikos* (Gr. *Klefti*, Ar. *Foureskou*: "bandit" or "captain") in the rhythm of *Tsamiko*. These dances are connected to the carnival of the Twelve Days (Christmas to Epiphany): the *Sourouvarikos* (*Rogatsiarikos* and *Iskinarikos*), *Syrτος*, *Ziatzios*, and finally, *Hasapikos*.
12. Namely *syrto*, *sygkasto*, *karapataki*, and *tsiamiko*.
13. Manakis Fund, footage from 1905, pertaining to the Ethnological Archive of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Bucharest.
14. Milton and Ianaki, originally from Avdhela, an Aromanian village in the Pindus mountains.
15. For instance, the abovementioned *FARA Armânească* and its representative bureaus in different cities, as well as *Consiliul a Tinirlor Armanji* [Council of Aromanian Youth].
16. I am referring to one of the most important mutations to occur in south-eastern Europe starting with the '50s, namely the migration of dances from the countryside onto the stage. During communism, a new genre of dance was produced, that of choreographic creations of professional state-run folk dance ensembles, entrusted to represent identity of communities in front of the power. The moment has been given considerable research in ethnochoreography literature. For more see Dubinskas, Frank A. 1984. *The politics of tradition: Two eras of organized "folklore" performing in Croatia*. Research paper presented at the State and Folklore Conference, Bellagio, Italy in Giurchescu (1983).
17. Term coined by Felix Hoerburger in 1968 to designate dances which are no longer customary collective creations. Some of the major points that differ, in his view: a second existence dance is no longer integral part of the community life, as a first existence would have been, they are no longer a product of collective creation, but that of few interested or skilled. While first existence dances manifest as rather spontaneous phenomena, the others tend towards a definitive form, with fixed figures and movements. The natural, functional way of transmission in the first becomes a teaching context for the second, with dance leaders and choreographers influencing. While the view has had its critique (especially for advancing the notion of an "original dance"), it still helps to understand fundamental differences between the two dance models.
18. *Cipan*, *cipană*, pl. *cipani*, *cipane* are names used by Fărșerot Aromanians in Romania to describe Grămustean Aromanians, sometimes with pejorative connotations.
19. A colloquial term used to designate children born as a result of the Decree No. 770 of 1966 that prohibited abortion in communist Romania with the goal to increase the population. These children were considered to have been born out of patriotic obligation and were privately called "the little Decrees" or "little Ceșescus."
20. From it. *ritornello*, meaning an orchestral passage between verses.
21. The ethnonym comes from Frashër (also spelled as Frasheri or Frașa), a village and area in southern Albania's Përmet district. This area is a historic settlement and cultural centre for Aromanians, to which the Fărșerot Aromanians (the Fărșiroț) have strong historical ties.
22. This is an open circle dance for men, led by an individual (the "head"). It is performed in one direction and is known and performed among various Aromanian groups, with the Fărșerot group taking great pride in it.
23. The song is known as *Migidei vrute* [Beloved Migidei], referring to the village of Kefalovryso (Greek name of a mountain village and community in the Pogoni municipality of Ioannina, Greece), which has a significant Fărșerot population.
24. Originally published by Tache Papahagi and reissued by Predania Publishing House in 2012. The anthology is available online: <https://www.predania.ro/pdf/avdhela-nusi-tulliu.pdf>.
25. Lange, Roderyk, quoted by Giurchescu (1983, 24).
26. Mirela Goga, a dancer, dance teacher, and choreographer of Iholu folk ensemble from Constanța, in a conversation from January 2025.
27. Iholu YouTube page available online: <https://www.youtube.com/@iholuansambludedansuriarma7766>.
28. While "screen dance" is a more established term referring broadly to dance works created for the screen, "screened dance" has been recently suggested as a distinct term, to emphasise dances that are primarily transitioned from traditional live performance onto screens, rather than originally created as digital screen works. "Screened dance"

was suggested by scholar Janine Bower. For more, see Anderson (2021).

29. A generic dance found throughout the Balkans, typically performed in groups and involving steps and movements organised around a 3/4 rhythm, reflecting the “in three” timing implied in its name. The dance “choros *sta tria*” serves as a structural prototype for many other Greek folk dances, showing notable homogeneity with over 130 other dances studied. Culturally, it is a significant part of the Greek folk dance tradition and is often seen as a foundational or widespread type that connects many regional dance variations across Greece. In Slavic Macedonia and Bulgaria, it is known as *Lesnoto* or *Pravoto*. The Aromanian *sta tria* involves a sequence of three-step patterns: usually a step to the right, a step back or to the left, and a step forward—creating a cyclical flow that matches the music’s triple meter.

30. Another sub-group of Aromanians, actually the largest group. Its name originates from Grammos Mountain, its ancestral homeland located in modern-day Greece on the border with Albania. Up until the second half of the 18th century, Gramusti or Grammousta was a prosperous metropolis. Its destruction led to Vlachs dispersing throughout Ottoman Macedonia and western Thrace.

31. For the oldest dance forms recorded in the first decade of the 20th century, see archival footage material of Manakia Brothers from the Image Archive of the National Museum of Romanian Peasant or the Macedonian State Archive Funds.

32. The range of movement or action a dancer is capable of.

33. See *Vanghilizmo* group for Elena Gheorghe’s festival performances <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Agf51yfcU/>

34. Small town north of Constanța city, with a significant population of Fărșiroț origin (distinct from Plisoț, these are Șopan).

35. Mirela Goga, personal communication from spring 2025.

36. For more on the recent history of Aromanians in Romania and their political struggles, see Alexandru Gica (2011).

37. An excerpt of the social media post reads: “The emergence of the Internet, e-mail, discussion forums, social networks is providing a valuable impetus, in terms of finding the spiritual and emotional identity coordinates for a community as dispersed as that of the Aromanians.”

38. Term common in crypto circles, where it refers to building “protocols” rather than platforms and the portability of a community across platforms through token-based social graphs. Busta and Internet (2023) re-signify it to describe how communities are perceived in the new mediated interaction schemes.

39. See, for instance, Project Avdhela, Library of Aromanian culture <https://proiectavdela.ro/>.

40. Ippili and Koyye (2024) discuss further how the platform allows for the documentation and archiving of traditional dances.

41. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMzBCdKYfCI>

42. A list of similar Pamporea mentions on TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/discover/pamporea>.

43. More recently, it has been argued that disembodiment is not an adequate description. Instead, “shifted embodiment” would better explain how the internet doesn’t eliminate embodiment, but just transforms it. The debate surrounding disembodiment and embodiment in digital/screened dances is not simply about whether the body is present or absent, but rather about how the body’s presence is perceived and experienced within the context of digital technologies. It’s a dynamic interplay between the physical and the virtual, where the boundaries of the body are constantly being negotiated and redefined.

44. For more, see Jiahao, Wang et. al (2022).

45. World renowned football player of Aromanian origin, deemed to be one of the most famous Aromanians, a pride for the community of Romania.

46. Renowned Romanian gymnast, first to score a 10 grade at the Olympics.

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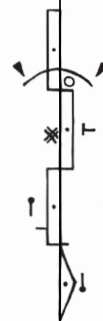
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