

PRAVO TRAKIJSKO HORO

(Bulgaria)

"Pravo" (PRAH-vo) in the Balkan Slavic languages means "straight" or "direct." Thus, a "pravo horo" is a circle dance that moves "directly" in a particular direction. The term is applied to a certain group of simple dances that (1) move steadily in one direction, usually to the R, and (2) usually have a 3-meas move-ment pattern.

There are many "pravi hora;" one widespread fast 2/4 Pravo is a dance identical to the Greek Hasaposerviko and Romanian Șirba. Another Pravo, from Macedonia, in 8/8 or 7/8, is relatively slow (U.S. and Canadian dancers know it under its West Macedonian name, Lesnoto). The Pravo described here is from Thrace (S.E. Bulgaria). The Thracians themselves call it simply Pravo or Pravoto; outsiders add the word "trakijsko" (trah-KEE-sko, "Thracian") to distinguish it from other Bulgarian dances called Pravo.

Pravo trakijsko horo is, even today, the most popular dance in Thrace. At celebrations, the folk will dance it for literally hours on end, interspersed with an occasional Ručenica, Pajduška or Trite pūti. Often Pravo is danced by women only; in this case they sing their own accompaniment: several women sing a verse, then several others repeat the same verse, etc., back and forth. Such a women's Pravo is always slow in tempo. More often, however, the Thracian Pravo is accompanied by folk instruments, begins slowly, and gradually speeds up. As the music accelerates, the men begin to improvise with highly complex steps; at this point the women either stop dancing, step back and watch the men, or continue dancing a simple fast variation of the basic Pravo. The fast Pravo thus becomes, in fact, a separate, independent dance done by men only, and this is the origin of most Thracian men's dances U.S. and Canadian folk dancers have been exposed to -- Cestoto, Čapraz, Mužko trojno, Kazanlūžko mužko, Kermensko mužko, etc. -- all local or regional versions of one and the same dance, the Thracian men's fast Pravo. Their titles serve to identify the dance either (1) by naming one of the men's figures ("često" means "thick-and-fast", "čapraz" means "criss-cross"), (2) specifying "men's dance" ("mužko" means "male"), or (3) indicating the region ("from Kazanlūk", "from Kermen").

Recordings: Excellent available recordings for this dance are:
 (a) XOPO 322, "Pravo trakijsko horo",
 (b) Folkraft LP 26, "Pravo trakijsko horo", and
 (c) Balkan Arts MK 6G 1B, "Gergebunarsko horo".

Meter and Tempo: The Thracian Pravo is conventionally notated in 2/4 or 6/8. The distinction is not clear--sometimes the melody seems to be in 6/8, while the drum ("tupan") appears to be beating 2/4! The tempo, as mentioned above, moves from slow to fast; however, even at its fastest, the Thracian Pravo (and Thracian dances in general) never achieves the speed of, say, the dances of the Shopes in West Bulgaria.

Formation: Present-day Thracians dance their Pravo in a mixed, open circle, using belt hold ("za kolàn") or with hands joined down at sides ("V" pos). Rarely does one see today the older, segregated formations (men on both ends, women in the middle, or 1 man at R end, then all the women, then the

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rest of the men, etc.) which in former days were governed by strict village traditions regarding sex, marital status and age. One tradition that has remained steadfast in Thracian villages, however, is that the R-end leader, the baš (BAHSH, "head") and the L-end man, the kujruk (kooy-ROOK, "tail") must both be good dancers, since their job is to take turns curling the ends of the horo in and out, encircling the musicians, etc.

Basic Steps:

THRACIAN STEP ("trakijka"): The slow, first part of almost all Thracian Pravos consists entirely of a 3-meas step sequence called, in Bulgarian, "trakijka" (tra-KEE-kah, "Thracian step"):

Meas 1	ct 1	Step R ft)	
	ct 2	Step L ft)	
Meas 2	ct 1	Step R ft))	in various directions (see below)
	ct 2	-)	
Meas 3	ct 1	Step L ft)	
	ct 2	-)	

There are four main variants of the basic Thracian step, distinguished by the direction the dancer moves while doing the above step sequence:

(1) Thracian step fwd in LOD

Meas 1-3 Basic Thracian facing R of ctr and moving steadily fwd in LOD.

(2) Thracian step R and L

Meas 1-2 Facing very slightly R of ctr and moving in LOD.
Meas 3 Step L ft sdwd L.

(3) Thracian step R and bkwd

Meas 1-2 Facing very slightly R of ctr and moving in LOD
Meas 3 Facing ctr, step L ft bkwd, away from ctr.

(4) Thracian step alternating diag fwd and diag bkwd (the most common variant)

Dancer does 1 basic Thracian moving diag fwd/R (circle contracts), and the 2nd basic Thracian moving diag bkwd/R (circle expands), etc. alternating thruout. This linkup of 2 consecutive basic Thracian steps in different directions produces a 3 meas + 3 meas = 6 meas unit.

All the above 4 variants may be found in the same village, even during the same dance! Any of them may be used for the women's singing Pravo; variant 4, however, is by far the most common thruout Thrace, especially in the mixed-circle, slow-to-fast Pravo.

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TAPPING STEP ("tropoli"): One of the most important elements of the men's fast Pravo is a pattern reminiscent of tap dancing. It is called "tropoli" (tro-po-LEE). In men-only Pravos, it serves as an interlude between other figures. In the mixed Pravo, individual men "throw it in" now and then as part of fast variations on the basic Thracian step. Of several variants, the following 2-meas Tapping step is the most common:

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| Meas 1 | Step in place, with accent, on full R ft (ct 1); tap L toe beside R ft, raising R heel off ground (ct &); bring R heel down sharply and audibly, taking wt on R ft (ct 2); tap L heel (small scuff) beside R ft (ct &). |
| Meas 2 | Same as meas 1, but with opp ftwk. |

MeasPattern

Note: Unless otherwise specified, body is oriented predominantly twd ctr or very slightly off-ctr throughout, even though movements are diagonal.

PART I - Slow Pravo

All do Thracian step alternating diag fwd and diag bkwd as long as the music plays in slow tempo (Variant 4 above).

PART II - Fast Pravo

When the music speeds up, dancers have a number of choices: they may continue the movements of the slow part in a generally lighter style, or, individually, introduce variations such as the following (these are by no means exhaustive!):

(A) 3's and step-hops (M and W):

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| 1 | 2 light steps, R-L, diag fwd/R (cts 1,2). |
| 2 | 3 light steps in place, R-L-R (cts 1,&,2). |
| 3 | 3 light steps in place, L-R-L (cts 1,&,2). |
| 4 | 2 light steps, R-L, diag bkwd/R (cts 1,2). |
| 5 | Step-hop on R ft diag bkwd/R (cts 1,2). |
| 6 | Step-hop on L ft diag bkwd/R (cts 1,2). |

(B) Thracian step with chug (M only):

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|-----|--|
| 1 | Facing ctr, 2 steps, R-L, diag fwd/R (cts 1,2). |
| 2 | Still facing ctr, step R ft diag fwd/R (ct 1); slight hop (cukce) on R ft in place, beginning to turn slightly R of ctr (ct 2). |
| 3 | Step L ft out to own L, finishing slight turn R (now facing about 45° of ctr), leaving R ft in previous pos and sharing wt on both ft (ct 1); still facing 45° R of ctr, chug onto both heels <u>twd ctr</u> , twisting them both twd ctr and keeping ft apart (ct 2). |
| 4-6 | Thracian step diag bkwd/R. |

cont

PRAVO TRAKIJSKO HORO (cont)(C) Syncopated Thracian step (M only)

- 1 Torso very erect, knees bent, stamp onto R ft diag fwd/R (ct 1); knees still bent, close L ft up behind R ft (ct 2); stamp R heel a bit diag fwd/R, no wt (ct &).
- 2 Stamp onto R ft diag fwd/R (ct 1); hop on R ft in place, beginning to turn slightly R of ctr (ct 2).
- 3 Chug, same as in meas 3 of Variation B above.
- 4-6 Thracian step diag bkwd/R.

(D) Thracian step with Tapping step (M only)

- 1 Two strong stamping steps diag fwd/R, R-L (cts 1,2).
- 2-3 2-meas Tapping step (see above under Basic Steps) in place.
- 4-6 Thracian step diag bkwd/R, OR, 2 steps R-L diag bkwd/R plus a 2-meas Tapping step in place.

Note on variations: The above variations are purely a matter of individual, personal spontaneous choice; a dancer can do any one of them while his/her neighbor is doing a different one (though in Thrace, W do not do those marked "M only" above). Sometimes, two or three neighboring dancers may "coordinate" their variations for greater enjoyment. In places where the W leave the dance when it accelerates, the men's variations become more elaborate, disregard the 3-meas unit, are "called" by a leader, etc., and the specific men's dances referred to earlier are created.

Presented by Dick Crum