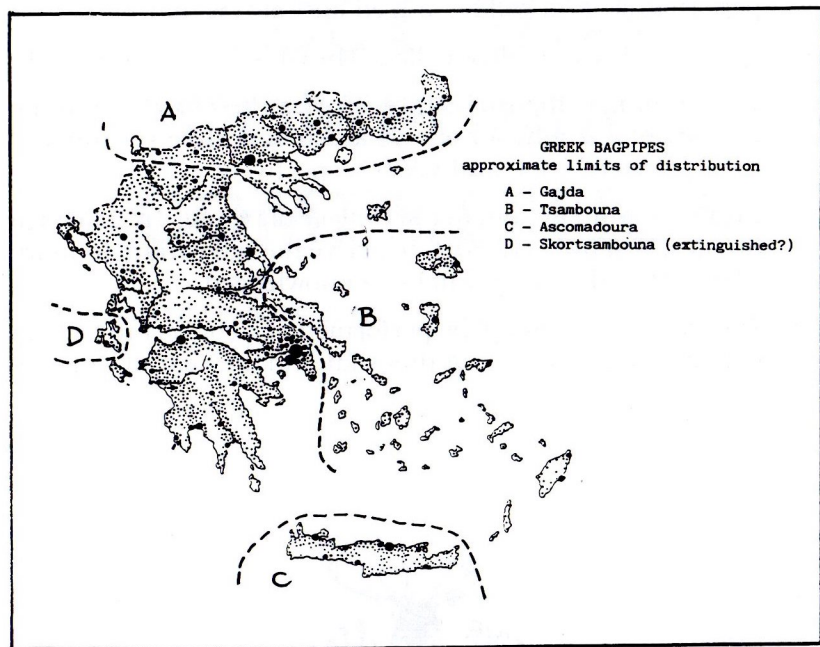


# Bagpipes in Greece

by Mauro Gioielli, Isernia, Italy

The traditional music of Greece counts some models of bagpipes. First of all I have to say that the Northern instruments (Macedonia and Thrace) are distinguished in a way clear from those diffused in the Southern area and in the isle of the Aegean sea. In fact, the Northern bagpipe is that typical of the middle-eastern Balkans (gajda); while the characteristics of the bagpipes of the Greek isles are similar to those of the analogous instruments of the Mediterranean Sea area (as Maltese "zaqq").



The bagpipes of Northern and Southern Greece appear so unlike that certainly they can be considered as the result of a different genesis and evolution.

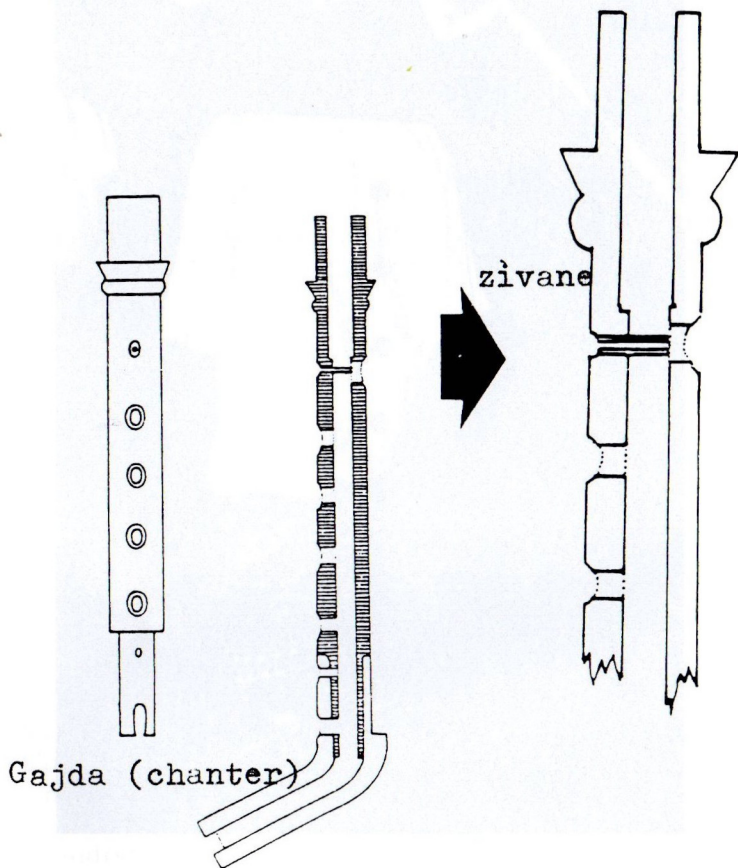
## THE INSTRUMENTS

### The Gajda

The "gajda" is not a typical Greek bagpipe. It is an instrument of

large diffusion (in some models, not much difference between them) and it is used in these nations:

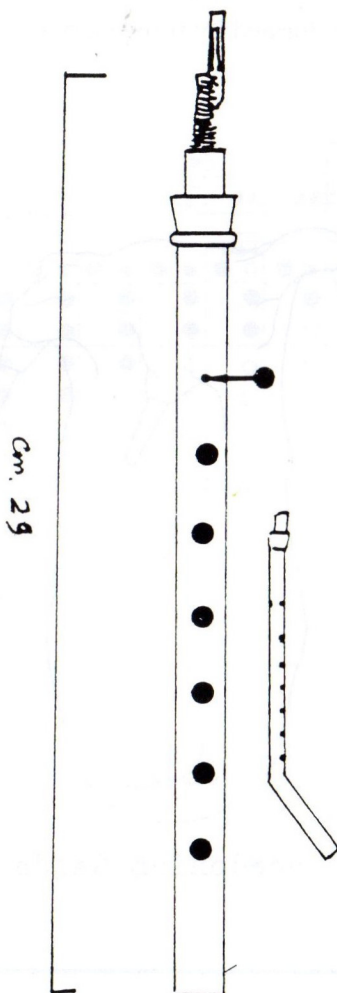
- Yugoslavia (Macedonia and Serbia);
- Greece (Thrace and Macedonia);
- Rumania (here the instrument is called "cimpoi");
- Turkey (Thrace and European Turkey);
- USSR (Ukraine);
- Bulgaria;
- Albania (Eastern area).





Macedonian players with his gajda.





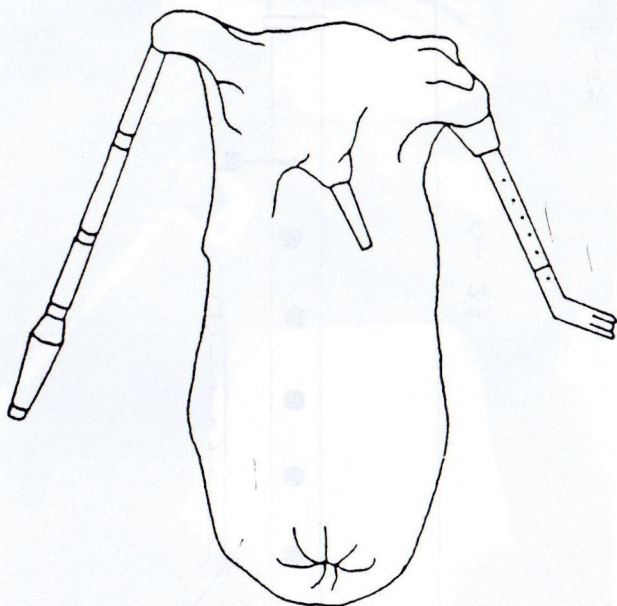
### Gajda (Chanter with reed)

The particular structure of this bagpipe, by reason of its largest diffusion, has not been studied thoroughly. A common model of gajda in Greek folk music is structured in the following way:

- 1 cylindrical chanter. It is formed by two sections. The terminal part is curved forward. The chanter has 7 front holes (7th superior is very small) and a posterior hole (thumb) which is called "**zivane**" (or

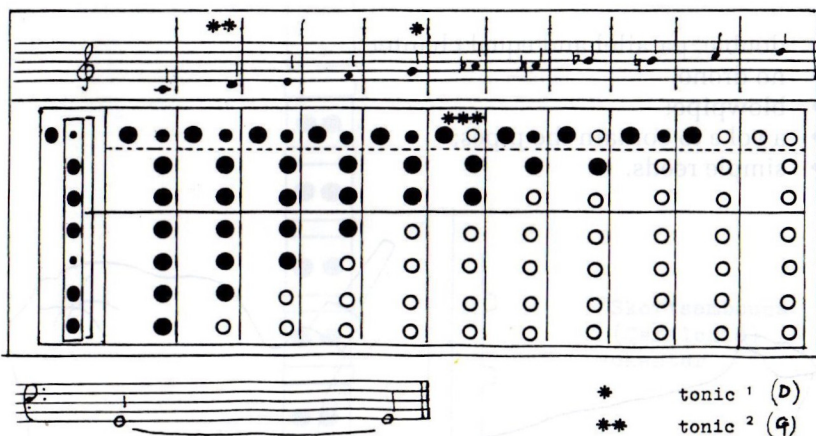
rather: "hole of the flea");

- a cylindrical drone, formed by three parts;
- blowpipe;
- simple reeds.



Macedonian Gajda

The basic fingerings and the musical scale of a Greek "gajda" (with zivane) have been examined by Roberto Leydi in "La zampogna in Europa", page 164:



\* tonic 1 (D)  
\*\* tonic 2 (G)

\*\*\* By closing the "zivane" and opening the 7th front superior hole, we can obtain the increase of semitone for every note.

### TSAMBOUNA

The "**tsambouna**" is a bagpipe still present in the Greek islands of the Aegean sea, in the Dodecaneso and in Crete. However, it is suffering a serious abandon and is risking extinction. Nowadays there are very few traditional players.

In the opinion of Baines (but my mind is different), the name of this instrument (similar to the Italian "zampogna") is a possible corruption of a Greek word in latin: symphonia (Baines, Bagpipes, p. 45).

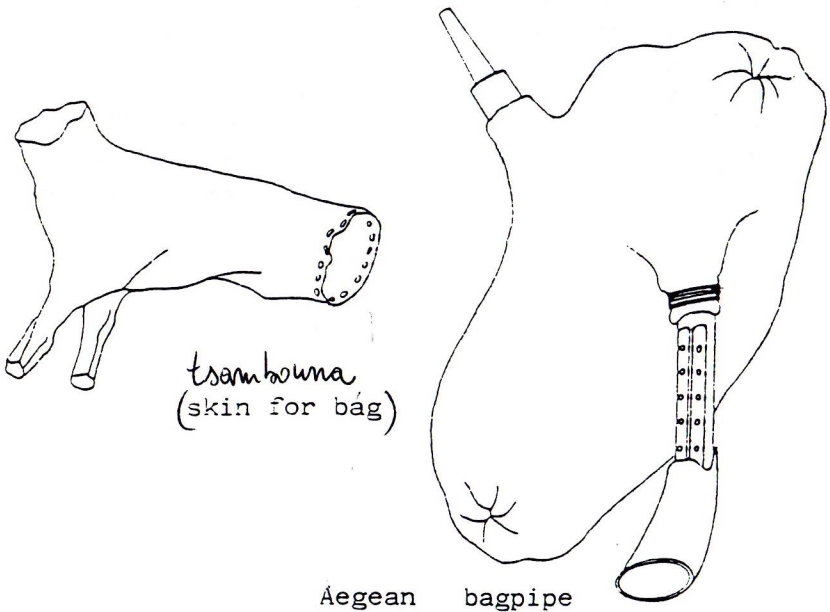
This bagpipe is also named "ascauli", a cultured term composed by two words: "ascos" and "aulos". In the Greek language "ascos" means bag; and "aulos" is an ancient instrument made by two pipes, without bag. (Ascos + aulos = bag + pipe).

The Cretan model of this instrument is called "**ascomadoura**" (ascos + madoura). The "madoura" is a folk clarinet, made of arundo donax. It seems sure, moreover, that in the isle of Cefalonia (western coast) a bagpipe has been used called "**skortsambouna**", whose

characteristics are similar to the Cretan instrument. The skortsambouna seems extinct; but it would be a good thing to do more thorough studies.

The **characteristics** of "tsambouna" are:

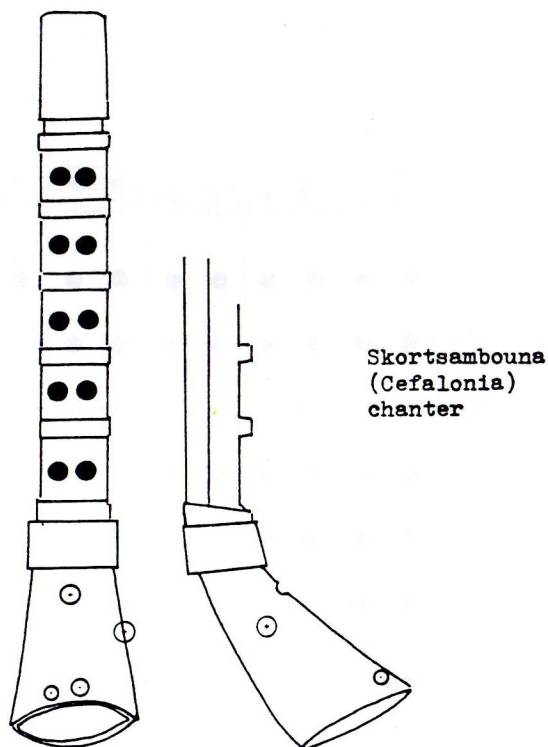
- double, parallel and equal chanter;
- no drone;
- blowpipe;
- a yoke to contain the pipes;
- simple reeds.



The bag is made by animal's skin (kid – sheep?). Blowpipe and yoke (with two chanters) are inserted in the forelegs. The skin is cut in correspondence of the hind legs, that are eliminated. Neck's hole and the cut are closed by a noose, and the knots end in the bag when hair is turning inwards.

The chanters are two thin and cylindrical cane-pipes. They are waxed in a yoke, that is a skeleton of wood, close-packed posteriorly but open frontly to let the finger-holes be disclosed. At the end of the yoke is placed a cowhorn-bell or a bell of the same wood of the yoke.

Bell is single for both chanters, because it is linked to yoke. The whole block (yoke + bell) is about 30cm long.



A "tsambouna" could have its pipes with three possible combinations of holes:

=	5
=	4
=	3
=	2
1	1

type 1

=	5
=	4
3	3
2	2
1	1

type 2

5	5
4	4
3	3
2	2
1	1

type 3



**type 1** is a combination of the Islands of Eastern Aegean Sea;  
**type 2** is very rare (or extinct?);  
**type 3** is the Cretan model.

Basic fingerings for the Cretan model of "tsambouna" (from: S. Perister, "O ascaulos (tsambouna) eis ten nisiotiken Ellada" pp. 63-65):

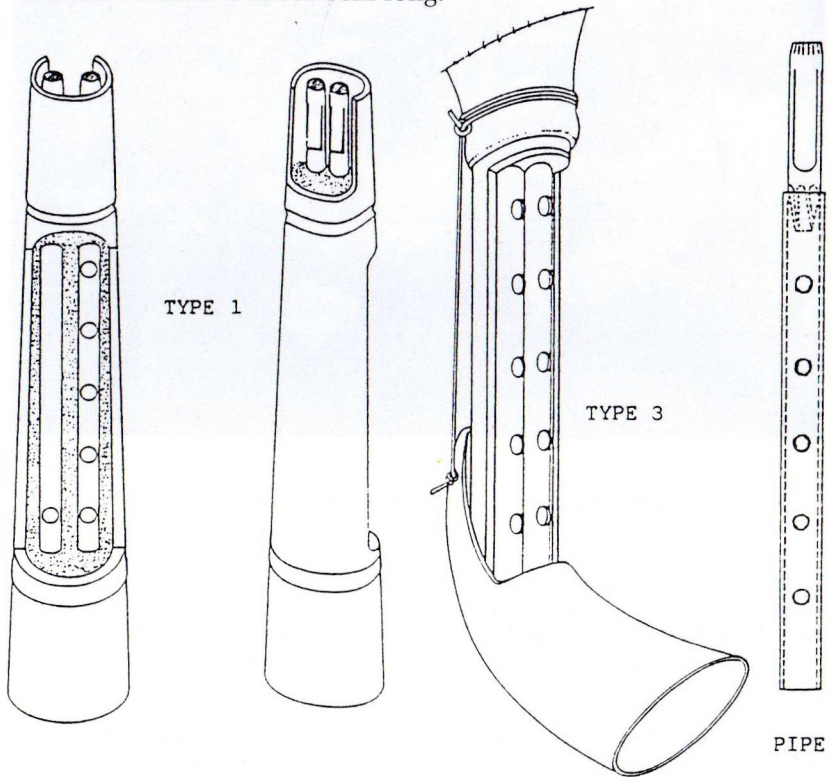
The first staff of music shows a sequence of notes on a treble clef staff. Below it are two sets of fingering diagrams. Each diagram has three rows: 'fore', 'middle', and 'ring'. Fingering is indicated by solid black dots (fingered) and open circles (unfingered).

fore	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ○	○ ○
middle	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ○	○ ○	● ●
fore	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○
middle	● ●	● ●	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○
ring	● ●	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○

The second staff of music shows a sequence of notes on a treble clef staff. Below it are two sets of fingering diagrams. Each diagram has three rows: 'fore', 'middle', and 'ring'. Fingering is indicated by solid black dots (fingered) and open circles (unfingered).

fore	○ ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●
middle	● ●	○ ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●	● ●	● ●
fore	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●
middle	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●	○ ●
ring	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	○ ●	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ●	○ ●	○ ○

The tsambouna's reeds are always simple, and are named "**bibikie**". A reed is about 5cm long.



Greek tsambouna is played solo or accompanied by a drummer or by the laouto.

In the end, I must say that Aegean bagpipe is a primitive instrument (evolution of the previous hornpipes) without large musical possibilities. But the modern players want to use instruments more evolved than "tsambouna". This bag pipe, consequently, could die and become a simple object for a museum.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- F. Ánojanakis: "Ellínika láika móusika órgana" Athens, 1976 (pp. 167/182)
- C. Ahrens: "Die griechische Sackpfeife (gaida) und ihre musik" in: "Studien zur musik Sudost-Europas" (Beitrage zur Ethnomusikologie) Hamburg, 1976
- S. Caracassis (S. Kapakash): "Ellínika móusika órgana" Athens, 1970 (pp. 117/122)
- S. Caracassis: "Mission musicale folklorique à l'île de Chios" (Annuaire des archives de folklore, 15-16) 1962/1963 (pp. 273/287)
- S. Caracassis: "Contribution à l'histoire des instruments populaires grecs" (Annuaire du centre de recherches du folklore hellénique, 18-19) 1965/1966 (pp. 44/58)



*Tsambouna players. The photograph was taken in 1949.*

- S. Baud-Bovy: "Chanson du Dodécanèse" Vol. 1, Athens, 1935  
A. Baines: "Bagpipes" Oxford, 1960  
M. Gilson: "Bagpipes of the Balkans" in: "Sing Out!" New York, jan-feb. 1977  
V. Hadzimanov: "Instrumentalna igraorna muzika vo Makedonia" in "Makedonski folklor" Skopje, 1968  
R. Leydi: "La zampogna in Europa", Como, 1979  
R. Leydi: "La musica popolare a Creta" -ricerca a Creta, vol. 1-Milano, 1984  
S.D. Perister: "O ascaúlos (tsamboúna) eis ten nisiótiken Ellada" in: "Epeterís tou laografíkoí arkéiou" Vol. 16-ID, Athens 1960/1961, 6 (pp. 52/72)