CHRISTIAN CEREMONIAL FOLK SONG. CASE STUDY: PILGRIMAGE SONGS FROM NICULA MONASTERY

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SUMMARY. In the complex landscape of contemporary Romanian religious music, the last decades have been marked by a phenomenon of crystallization and diffusion of a new musical genre, with deep roots in the popular music tradition. This genre, defined by specific structural, thematic and functional characteristics, has succeeded in imposing itself within the Koinonikon liturgical ritual, in some cases replacing the traditional musical repertoire of the period. Initially, Christian ceremonial folk songs were associated with certain liturgical feasts dedicated to the Virgin Mary, fulfilling an occasional function of marking important moments in the church calendar. Through oral transmission and adaptation to the religious context, these songs entered the collective consciousness and became an integral part of the religious practices of rural communities during pilgrimages. Over time, under the influence of socio-cultural and religious factors, Christian ceremonial folk songs underwent a revalorization and an expansion of their original functions. They have thus gone beyond the strict liturgical ritual of pilgrimages and have been integrated into various forms of cultural and religious expression, such as folksong festivals or religious events: camps, competitions. An emblematic case in this respect are the pilgrimage songs, especially those associated with the Nicula Monastery. These songs, originally intended to accompany pilgrimages to the monastery, have spread nationwide, becoming a symbol of Romanian religious and cultural identity for the musical genre of Christian ceremonial folk songs.

Keywords: pilgrimage songs, ceremonial, folklore, church music

Popular religious songs are a dynamic phenomenon, subject to continuous evolution under the influence of complex religious, cultural and social factors. The present research aims at identifying and analyzing the

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structural particularities of this musical genre, with a focus on the Niculan repertoire. The specific objectives of the study include: the precise definition of the musical genre in question, the establishment of the functional, thematic and structural parameters that characterize it, as well as a detailed classification of the Niculan repertoire based on melodic structures and the themes addressed. By means of this analysis, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the specificity and role of this type of song in Romanian religious culture.

As far as the working method is concerned, since we are working with melodic structures coming from the area of musical folklore, we will be guided by its laws. In the study of songs from the Romanian folk repertoire, we will consider two main aspects: the methodology of collecting and the methodology of studying the melodic variants.

The melodic variants analyzed come from the collections made by some researchers, which were later published in books[2] and studies, from the recordings made available by some interpreters of the *pricesne* and from direct observation, occasioned by our presence in the ceremonial contexts in which they were performed. For this purpose, we made use of the collections made by Vasile Stanciu[3], Domin Adam[4], Constanța Cristescu[5], of the recordings made available to us by Mrs. Eugenia Marinescu[6] and of the recordings we made at the Nicula Monastery, over several years.

When it comes to Christian ceremonial folk songs, as in the case of songs that are part of the popular repertoire, the original melody will never be collected, that is to say in the form in which it was first issued by the creator, but the version that has been fixed in the memory of the performers or the version fixed in the notation written by a particular collector. For this purpose, we will deal only with a series of variants, more or less close to the

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[2] *Culegere de rugăciuni și cântări pentru creștinii care merg la Sfânta Mănăstire (Collection of prayers and songs for Christians who go to the Holy Monastery),* Tiparul Tipografiei Diecezane, Arad, 1938; *Calea mântuirii. Îndreptar practic, cum să se facă pelerinajele la Sfânta mănăstire (The way to salvation. Practical guide, how to make pilgrimages to the Holy Monastery),* Editura Ordinului Sfântului Vasile, Biksad, 1943.

[3] *Cântați Domnului tot pământul. Cântări bisericești, Pricesne, Colinde, folosite la Sfânta Liturghie și la Paraclisul Maicii Domnului (Sing to the Lord all the earth. Church hymns, Pricesne, Carols, used at the Divine Liturgy and at the Mother of God's Mass.),* editor Pr. Vasile Stanciu, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Renașterea, 2018.

[4] Domin Adam, *Culegere de pricesne și colinde: cu un studiu introductiv (Collection of pricesne and carols: with an introductory study)*, Alba Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2011.

[5] Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul de pelerinaj din Transilvania epocii comuniste" (Pilgrimage and pilgrimage song in communist Transylvania), in: *Crâmpeie din cronologia unei deveniri*, vol. 1, Editura Muzicală, București, 2004, p. 55-69.

[6] Eugenia Marinescu is an established interpreter of pricesne, working for 20 years at the Nicula Monastery. Throughout her musical activity she has received and collected ceremonial religious songs and pricesne from various performers and pilgrims' groups, which she has recorded on 8 CDs.

original form. This method of working is based on the statement of the researcher Ilarion Cocișiu, who affirms that a song is good to study "when it is known by someone from whom we have collected it, it is in circulation, it is frequent, or at least we have the testimony of the elders that it has been sung before"[7].

The scope of the present research is restricted to the musical phenomenon performed every year at Nicula Monastery. We have chosen to deal mainly with the musical repertoire of Nicula because, at the national level, it is the largest pilgrimage in the Orthodox space, on the occasion of the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Therefore, the melodies and songs consecrated in this religious space are the most representative for the musical phenomenon we analyze in this study.

The Niculan repertoire is an essential reference point in defining this religious music. On the one hand, it provides rich material for the structural analysis of the songs, highlighting the specific particularities of the genre. On the other hand, the study of the spread of consecrated melodic variants within the Niculan ceremonial and their introduction into various liturgical contexts allows us to understand the mechanisms of diffusion and adaptation of this type of music. Bearing in mind the main factors[8] in the activity of collecting and researching a musical variant: the object (ceremonial religious songs), the researcher and the conditions in which the research is carried out, we will focus on the analysis of the musical repertoire performed in the religious ceremonial of the pilgrimage to the Nicula Monastery.

The study of this musical phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach, combining elements from ethnomusicology, musicology and cultural anthropology. Our methodology will include both descriptive methods, which allow a thorough characterization of the data, and comparative and analytical methods, which will help us to identify general patterns and trends in the phenomenon. The music collections comprising the religious songs considered in the present research are numerous. Some of them have only text[9], without melody, making it impossible to establish a melodic variant, but they are useful for comparing

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[7] Ilarion Cocișiu, „Despre răspândirea geografică a unui cântec de stea" (On the geographical spread of a star song), in: *Sociologie românească,* anuL III, NR. 10-12, 1938, p. 537.

[8] Dr. Ghizela Suliteanu, „Metodologia culegerii folclorului muzical. Aspecte metodologice privind folclorul muzical din județul Tulcea" (Methodology of collecting musical folklore. Methodological aspects regarding the musical folklore from Tulcea County), in: *Peuce VI. Studii și comunicări de etnografie și muzeologie susținute la cel de-al doilea Colocviu Tulcea 2-5 iunie 1974,* Muzeul Deltei Dunării, Tulcea, 1977, p. 485-491

[9] *Carte de cântări bisericeşti: versuri (Book of church hymns: verses),* Ediție îngrijită de Petru Puşcaş, Beiuş, Editura Buna Vestire, 2004; Iuliana Băncesu, *Cântările religioase din Maramureș. Text şi context (Religious songs from Maramureș. Text and context),* Editura Macarie, 2000.

textual variants, and others[10] contain both text and melody and are the subject of the present research. Among those who played an active part in the Christian ceremonial folk songs are Gheorghe Șoima[11], Constanta Cristescu[12],

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[10] *Carte de cântări bisericeşti: pricesne şi învăţături ale credinţei străbune (Book of church hymns: pricesne and teachings of the ancient faith)*, Ediţie îngrijită de Ioan Ghiurco şi Florian Dudaş, Editura Lumina, 1998; Ceauşu, Ion Gh., *Carte de cântări duhovniceşti (Book of spiritual hymns)*, Ediţia a 4-a revizuită, Bucureşti, Editura Artemis, 2009; *Carte de cântări religioase şi colinde (Book of religious songs and carols)*, Arad, 1994; Buda Luca, *Cântece de înmormântare şi pricesne (Funeral songs and carols)*, Timişoara, Editura Politehnica, 2009; *Cântări în cinstea Maicii Domnului (Songs in honor of Our Lady)*, Editura Mesagerul, Cluj-Napoca, 1996; Corlean Natalia, *Pe Tine Te lăudăm: cântări liturgice ortodoxe, pricesne şi colinde (We praise Thee: Orthodox liturgical songs, praises and carols)*, Editura Agaton, 2019; *Cinstind Adormirea Maicii Domnului: prohodul Adormirii Maicii Domnului şi pricesne de procesiune închinate Maicii Domnului (Celebrating the Assumption of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: the Prood of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and processional songs dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Renaşterea, 2014; *Cânta-voi Ţie Dumnezeule: culegere de pricesne, cântări bisericesti şi colinde (I will sing to Thee, O God: a collection of carols, church songs and carols)*, Editura Traian Dorz, 1998; Lazăr Ion, *Florilegiu melodic: motive folclorice, colinde, pricesne, imnuri şi cântări din tezaurul poetică-melodic al poporului român (Melodic Florilegium: folkloric motifs, carols, carols, hymns, anthems and songs from the poetic-melodic treasury of the Romanian people)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2009. *Toata suflarea sa laude pe Domnul (Let all the world praise the Lord)*, Ed. Oltenia, Craiova, 1992, represents church songs, religious hymns, carols and hymns, carols and star songs, collected and revised by priest-professor Alexie Al. Buzera.

[11] Gheorghe Șoima, „Folclorul muzical religios" (Religious folk music), în: *Studii teologice*, nr. 3-6, 1950, p. 288-294. Professor Șoima presents the connection between Transylvanian Romanian folklore and Transylvanian church music. How the two musical traditions have influenced each other, contributing to the preservation of religious, cultural and linguistic identity

[12] Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul...". Constanța Cristescu's study is the most important for our approach and for the definition of this new musical genre. Based on a series of field research, she establishes the functional, structural and thematic particularities of Christian ceremonial folk song. The definition of this new musical genre belongs to him. Inspired by Traian Mârza's study, „Ritmul vocal acomodat pașilor din mersul ceremonios, un tip distinct al ritmicii populare românești" (The vocal rhythm accommodated to the steps of the ceremonial gait, a distinct type of Romanian folk rhythm), in: *Lucrări de muzicologie*, vol. 10-11, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 245-257, proposes a methodology for the morphological analysis of pilgrimage songs, highlighting the fact that we are dealing with a distinct musical genre, belonging to the family of occasional ceremonial songs performed collectively. The analytic method applied to both the text and the melody provides us with a useful musical key to distinguish this musical genre, which is widespread among the dozens of new religious creations called pricesne.

Vasile Stanciu[13], Domin Adam[14], Daniel Mocanu[15], and Ovidiu Martis[16].

Starting from the working hypotheses outlined in the research listed above, the present research seeks to provide new information in terms of defining the particularities of this musical species, completing the diachronic stratifications of the species and outlining a typological sketch of the melody of the pilgrimage song.

Defining the species

When we want to define a musical species within a particular genre of popular music, we have to consider several defining criteria: its function in a ceremonial act (the meaning of the act, its purpose in the socio-cultural-religious context); the thematic and motivic scope, and the structure or compositional scheme reduced to a model, or models, with specialized stylistic procedures[17].

Depending on the place and role they occupy in the life of the individual and the community, folk songs are usually divided into occasional and non-occasional. Referring to the functional and structural particularities of the songs analyzed, pilgrimage songs can be categorized as occasional

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[13] Vasile Stanciu, „Priceasna euharistică şi alte cântări religioase în colecţii de muzică bisericească din Transilvania şi Banat în secolele XIX-XXI" (The Eucharistic Priceasna and other religious songs in church music collections from Transylvania and Banat in the 19th-21st centuries) în vol. *Euharistie, Spovedanie, Martiriu. Lucrările Simpozionului Internaţional al Facultăţii de Teologie Ortodoxă din Cluj-Napoca (3-5 noiembrie 2014),* Vol. II, coordonator volum împreună cu Pr. lect. univ. dr. Adrian Podaru, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, pp. 7-33. Priest Professor Vasile Stanciu lists the main religious songs present in musical collections from Transylvania and Banat.

[14] Domin Adam, *Culegere de pricesne... (A collection of pricesne); „*'Priceasna' and 'Koinonikon' - history, structure and form" (Priceasna" and "Koinonikon" - history, structure and form)*, in *Altarul Reîntregirea*, no. 3, 2012, p. 69-88. Professor Domin Adam presents the role of the quincunx in the Orthodox liturgy and the religious songs that are sung today at this liturgical moment. At the same time he also presents the present custom in the Transylvanian area of introducing popular religious songs at the time of the chinicon..

[15] Daniel Mocanu, „Religious Chants – The Diversity of Church Hymns Types", in: *Studia UBB Musica*, LXV, 2, 2020, p. 193-224. The study presents the religious songs performed in the liturgical moment of the quinonic. By classifying them according to textual and melodic criteria, a series of religious songs are identified which fall into the following categories: chinonic, pilgrimage songs, thematic prayers, Marian prayers, popular prayers, folk songs, folkloric songs, calophonic songs, psaltic creations, songs from the Lord's Prayer, songs from the literature of prison poetry from the communist period…

[16] Ovidiu Marțiș, *Priceasna în „arhitectonica" de ansamblu a cultului bisericesc - Abordare pastoral-misionară (Priceasna in the overall "architectonics" of church worship - A pastoral-missionary approach)*, PhD thesis. It presents the role that religious singing in general and folk songs in particular play in increasing Christian piety and their missionary impact…

[17] Ileana Szenik; Ioan Bocșa, „Studiu introductiv" (Introductory study), in: *Colinde românești*, coord. Ioan Bocșa, Fundația Culturală *TerrArmonia*, 2005, p. 11. (p. 7-62)

repertoire. Unfortunately, this category of songs has been omitted by those who have so far dealt with folklore collecting. In the concerns of ethnomusicologists this musical genre has not been of interest. However, we are dealing with a living musical phenomenon, which is in a continuous dynamic and influences on a greater or lesser extent the church music life of the Orthodox Christians in Transylvania. The only in-depth research aimed at highlighting this new musical species belongs to ethnomusicologist Constanța Cristescu. Analysing this musical phenomenon of pilgrimage songs, she defines them as *Christian ceremonial folk songs*[18], which belong to the category of collective occasional songs, not yet defined by specialists.

If we refer to the function that the pilgrimage songs have in the ceremonial act, we must emphasize, first of all, the latreutic function, of prayer, of invoking the person of the Mother of God, in order to thank her and ask for her help. The religious theme of these pilgrimage songs has generated a series of secondary functions, subordinated to the latreutic function. Thus, since we are talking about a social group coming together for an event which has a whole series of rules, the function of strengthening the cohesion of the social group and the community is mentioned. Then, the protective function, the whole action is placed under the protection and guardianship of God and the Mother of God. The normative function, through the moralizing themes of the pilgrimage songs, proposes models of moral conduct in accordance with Christian precepts. The cathartic function of releasing negative thoughts and accumulated tensions. Lastly, we must remember the function of manifesting and experiencing the sacred[19].

The Christian ceremonial folk songs are sung mainly on feasts in honor of the Virgin Mary, are present in a cultic setting, have countless variants in the popular musical tradition, spread orally and have led to the emergence of a new genre of church music, called priceasnă, which replaced the old chant of the koinonikon in the Holy Mass.

The terminological explanation of this new musical species Christian ceremonial folk songs is as follows. The songs that belong to this species are part of the occasional popular musical repertoire, are creations of church singers, priests, rhapsodies, have a specific theme, have defining structural features, are often performed in groups, on pilgrimages and, more recently, are also sung at church services throughout the year.

The species of pilgrimage songs we are dealing with in this study is distinct from Christian religious songs, which are generically called *priceasnă*. All songs with a religious content that are not part of the Byzantine musical repertoire and that are performed today in the context of worship are assimilated into the category of the *priceasnă*, the Christian hymn. Classifying them from

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[18] Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul...” (Pilgrimage and song), p. 67.
[19] Ileana Szenik; Ioan Bocșa, „Studiu introductiv" (Introductory study), p. 12

the perspective of the melodic line and the texts used, we have *priceasnă* belonging to Romanian folklore, moralizing *priceasnă* focused on highlighting Christian moral behavior; psaltic *priceasnă*; folk *priceasnă*; *priceasnă* belonging to the Oastea Domnului group, many of them with lyrics by Traian Dorz.

Origin of Christian ceremonial folk songs

Since the beginning of the 20th century, scholars have been asking the question: how does a folk song come into being? Today, analyzing this musical species, we can ask ourselves: how does a Christian ceremonial folk song come into being? The answers are manifold. The scholar Stojan Djoudjeff is of the opinion that: "Usually, what is called the birth of a song is nothing more than the adaptation of a new text to an old melody or, conversely, of a new melody to an old text whose music has become old or banal. To *create* a new melody, the rhapsodist is often content to introduce what are otherwise superficial changes, either in the rhythm or in the melodic flow of an existing song. Even the actual creation of a new melody is usually no more than a mere inspired process, an imitation of other arias that torment the memory of the performer-turned-composer, a reminiscence"[20].

At the same time, it should be noted that the role of the individual and the collective in the creation of pilgrimage songs is important. They are decisive factors in the creation of variants. The tendency to create these variants is manifested by the intensity with which the style of the song of the community in question lives in the pilgrims' souls[21]. Gheorghe Ciobanu believes that several factors have contributed and continue to contribute to the evolution of the creation of folk music: contact with the music of other peoples; contact with cultured music; the interweaving of different regional styles; variation; contamination[22]. All these factors influence to a greater or lesser extent the creation of pilgrimage songs.

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[20] Djoudjeff Stojan, *Rythme et mesure dans la musique populaire bulgare*, Paris, Ancienne Champion, 1931, p. 9

[21] Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Stratificări în muzica populară românească" (Stratifications in Romanian popular music), în: *Studii de Etnomuzicologie și Bizantinologie*¸ vol. 2, Editura Muzicală, București, 1979, p. 27.

[22] Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Stratificări în muzica populară românească" (Stratifications in Romanian popular music), p. 27.

As for the origin of pilgrimage songs, specialists[23] believe that they are reminiscent of the melodic patterns of those old religious songs present in the anthologies circulating in Europe from the 17th century onwards[24].

Marian-themed religious songs are known as "Marienlied" or pilgrimage songs[25]. Marian poetry flourished in medieval literature from the 12th century onwards. Works such as *Frauenlobs Marienleich*[26], Grazer Marienleben[27] and *Bordesholmer Marienklage*[28] bear witness to the growing interest of poets in the figure of the Virgin Mary. Transmitted orally or in manuscripts, these songs were later set to music by composers such as Oswald von Wolkenstein[29] , helping to spread them throughout Europe.

Although initially outside the liturgical sphere, Marian songs were often inspired by Latin texts and integrated into the religious practices of the faithful.

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[23] Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Izvoare ale muzicii românești" (Sources of Romanian music), in: *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie*, vol I., Editura Muzicală, București, 1976, p. 9; Vasile Stanciu, *Muzica bisericească ortodoxă din Transilvania (Orthodox church music in Transylvania)*, Editura Presa Universitară, Cluj-Napoca, 1996, p. 26; Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul de pelerinaj…", p. 67

[24] *The Liber Usualis*, Desclee & Co., Tournai, 1956. In 1570, a *Little Book of Songs* in Romanian was printed for the Calvinized Romanians, in Latin letters, translated from the Hungarian book of Szegedi Gergely. This work would later be completed and translated by Ioan Viski under a different title, *Psalms and Church Songs*, for the Calvinized Romanians of the Hețeg Country. The pastor Ioan Viski also compiled the book *Psaltirea calvino-română versificată*, which includes in addition to the psalms versified by the author, songs, carols for Christmas, New Year, Easter, Easter, Easter and Pentecost. Cf. Nicolae Albu, *Istoria învățământului românesc din Transilvania până la 1800 (History of Romanian education in Transylvania until 1800)*, Tipografia Lumina, Blaj, 1944, p. 24; 109. Papp, Géza, *XVII század énekelt dallamai,* Academiai Kiado, Budapest, 1970.

[25] Thomas A. Thompson, „The Virgin Mary in the Hymns of the Catholic Church", in: *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, Edited by Chris Maunder, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 247-265. Marian hymns flourished in the Middle Ages, but after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Catholic missal contained, with a few exceptions, only the scriptural and euhological texts in Latin. The Marian devotional hymns of non-Liturgical origin succeeded in creating a particular Marian devotion. After the Second Vatican Council, the Virgin Mary was integrated into the "Mystery of Christ", being celebrated within the Mass, but at the same time creating a scriptural and ecclesial image of the Virgin Mary. For a more in-depth examination of the reception and role of the Virgin Mary in Christianity see: *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, Edited by Chris Maunder, Oxford University Press, 2019.

[26] Ludwig Pfannmüller: *Frauenlobs Marienleich.* In: A. Brandl, E. Schröder, F. Schulz (eds.): *Sources and research on the linguistic and cultural history of the Germanic peoples.* Issue 120. Karl J. Trübner, Strassburg 1913.

[27] Werner Fechter : *Grazer Marienleben* . In: German Literature of the Middle Ages. Authors' Dictionary. 2nd, completely revised edition. Edited by Kurt Ruh (et al.), vol. 3. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter 1981, col. 229f; Alfred Kracher: *Medieval literature and poetry in Styria* . State exhibition 1976. Graz 1976.

[28] Horst Appuhn: *The Bordesholmer Altar*, 2nd edition, Königstein i. Ts. 1987.

[29] *The songs of Oswald von Wolkenstein* (= *Old German Text Library.* Volume 55). Edited by Karl Kurt Klein . 4th, fundamentally revised edition by Burghart Wachinger . De Gruyter, Berlin 2015.

They played an important role in popular devotion, being sung during pilgrimages and in local communities. Collections such as the *Goldener Himmelsschlüssel* have collected these songs, providing the faithful with a rich repertoire of prayers and hymns[30].

These songs penetrated Transylvania through book sources[31], but also through the religious propaganda of the Catholic, Lutheran and Protestant cults. The musicologist Romeo Ghircoiașu affirms, in this regard, the fact that "the musical current implanted by the reformers among the Romanians of Transylvania was able to stimulate the development of a musical-literary-cultic tradition not specific to Orthodoxy, of the so-called "priceasnă", of popular, but also Protestant influence, as a way of expressing a truth of faith, a tradition that is still practiced today in many Orthodox churches in Transylvania and, more particularly, in the bosom of the Oastei Domnului"[32]. Performed in the Christian space of different confessions in Transylvania, the pilgrimage songs in honor of the Virgin Mary can be confessionally confiscated. Each Christian cult has assimilated, disseminated and performed them according to its own specificity. In the Orthodox area, they came from the Catholic and Greek-Catholic tradition and were later adapted to the Orthodox ethos of Transylvanian Christians.

Spread in the Transylvanian area through different confessional channels, the pilgrimage songs dedicated to the Mother of God were subject to processes of adaptation and transformation, according to the specificity of each cult. Thus, within the Orthodox Church, these songs have been integrated into the liturgical repertoire and have been adapted to the cultural and religious context of the Orthodox communities in Transylvania.

Oral transmission has led to a gradual unification of melodic elements common to religious and processional songs, contributing to the formation of a specific musical identity within Orthodox communities. These melodic patterns,

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[30] D.V. Huebner: *Vokalmusik.* In: Remigius Bäumer, Leo Scheffczyk (ed.): *Marienlexikon.* Volume 6 (Scherer-Zyprese / Addendums). Eos, St. Ottilien 1994, pp. 651–663; *The greatest Marian prayers: their history, meaning, and usage* by Anthony M. Buono 1999.

[31] At the same time, spiritual songs also penetrated Transylvania through the schools that were established by the Catholic Church in Oradea, Alba Iulia. Also the schools established by the Lutheran and Calvinist denominations in Sighișoara, Caransebeș, Hețeg, Turda. For more information see: *Istoria învățământului din România (History of education in Romania)*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1971, p. 35. Paul Brusanowski, *Învățământul confsional ortodox român din Transilvania între anii 1848-1918. Între exigențele statului centralist și principiile autonomiei bisericești (Romanian Orthodox confessional education in Transylvania between 1848-1918. Between the demands of the centralist state and the principles of ecclesiastical autonomy)*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2010.

[32] Romeo Ghircoiașu, *Contribuții la istoria muzicii românești (Contributions to the history of Romanian music)*, vol I., Editura Muzicală, București, 1963, p. 100.

subject to constant change, reflect the evolution of religious experience and cultural context. Consequently, Orthodox pilgrimage songs have developed a distinct musical identity, specific to the liturgical-processional space of Transylvania[33]. Today, by functionality, thematic and music we are dealing with a unitary background that constitutes a distinct species of folk music. This new style of music is also called pilgrimage songs, monastery songs, Marian songs, St. Mary's songs, songs of St. Mary, songs in honor of the Virgin Mary[34].

If in the beginning these ceremonial religious songs were strictly related to the event being celebrated, pilgrimages on feasts in honor of the Virgin Mary, and to certain geographical areas, especially the Transylvanian area, today we can observe an interesting phenomenon. By means of social networks: Facebook, Instagram and online video platforms: YouTube, Spotify, we are witnessing the spread of this new species throughout the country. What was once performed only in a well-determined ceremonial setting is now being propagated in new non-ritual contexts. Pilgrimage songs have moved from the repertoire of communities into the musical repertoire of popular music performers, who sing them on various occasions: church services, popular music performances; concerts, festivals.

In this context, it is very difficult today to talk about their range. It has evolved from a local musical phenomenon, linked to a cultic ceremony, into a national musical phenomenon, propagated by folk singers and church singers. Some pilgrimage songs have broken down the musical barriers that characterize regional musical styles. An important point to note is that these popular pilgrimage songs exist and are propagated mainly in the ecclesiastical environment. They are songs that have managed to penetrate almost all Orthodox parish communities, being particularly linked to the devotion that Christians have to the Mother of God.

Functional particularities

From a poetic-musical point of view, the pilgrimage song belongs to the category of lyrical-epic creations. Unlike the other creations, it is characterized by its theme, musical structure, occasion and mode of performance[35].

There are only 2 measures of verse in Romanian folk song: tetrapodic acatalectic verse of 8 syllables and tripodic acatalectic verse of 6 syllables. The 5 and 7 catalectic verses are only variants of the 6 and 8 syllables ones.

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[33] Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul de pelerinaj..." (Pilgrimage and pilgrimage song), p. 67.

[34] Daniel Mocanu, „Religious chants ", p. 201.

[35] Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul de pelerinaj..." (Pilgrimage and pilgrimage song) , in: *Crâmpeie din cronologia unei deveniri*, vol. 1, Editura Muzicală, București, 2004, p. 55-69 (56).

Both octosyllabic and hexasyllabic verses are metrically divided into 2-syllable feet, the first of which is stressed and the second unstressed. Hexasyllabic verses have a tripodic structure, and octosyllabic verses have a tetrapodic structure, both of trochaic type[36]. The oral tradition has preserved Romanian folk verse in a binary metrical form, with emphasis on the first syllable of each stem. However, the flexibility of musical interpretation has allowed for the development of varied rhythmic structures, adapted to the specifics of each region and each performer. These rhythmic variations reflect the richness and diversity of Romanian folk culture. Thus, we also find rhythmic structures such as iamb and spondee.

In addition to tetrapodic and tripodic metrical structures, in the analyzed songs we often find 13 syllables supernumerary verse structures, as well as 6, 7, 8 syllables mixed verses.

Metrical accents are consonant with melodic accents, and the starting point of any vocal song is the word: *Est etiam in dicendo quidam quidam cantus obscurior* (Cicero); *Accentus seminarium musices* (Martianus Capella). In Romanian, the accent is a dynamic one of intensity; the accent is usually done by pitch and intensity. There are two types of accents in the category of pilgrimage song texts. The syllabic accent, in which the verse is based on a stable number of syllables and on the inner stress which is marked by the ending of a lexical unit, and which returns after the same number of syllables. And the accent of the dynamic type with 2 to a maximum of 4 syllables that move freely - especially on the inner verses - with the number of atonic syllables between 2 stressed syllables varying from 1 to 7[37].

The lyrics of these songs are creations of cultured or semi-cult origin, belonging to the community, the deacons, the priests.

The theme of these texts is centered around the cult of the Virgin Mary. We find texts with a doxological character, invoking divine help, texts describing events in the life of the Virgin, texts in the form of versified prayers. The central idea of these semi-cultic creations is often determined by the time at which they are sung. Christian ceremonial folk songs can be divided into songs for going to the Monastery, songs to be sung at the Monastery while going around the wooden Church or waiting for the worship of the Holy Icon, and songs for returning from the Monastery. Depending on their place in the ceremonial, the theme of the song's changes, emphasizing: the longing to go to the Monastery, the sacrifice of the journey, the joy of reunion with the Blessed Virgin, thanksgiving for all the gifts received, prayer for loved

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[36] Gheorghe Ciobanu „Raportul structural dintre vers și melodie în cântecul popular românesc", in: *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie,* Editura Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor, București, 1974, 14-34, p. 16.
[37] Gheorghe Ciobanu „Raportul structural..." (Structural Report), p. 22.

ones, blessing for the return home, the joy of participating in the pilgrimage and the promise of seeing again.

The theme of the procession texts is also largely conditioned by the ceremonial moments. When the pilgrims set out from the locality to the Monastery, they sing: "Come, souls, set out/ And prepare for the journey"; "With songs of greatness/ We set out today for the Monastery". Along the way: "Mary, Holy Virgin/ My thoughts fly to you"; "Come all you Christians/ Young and old"; "The day of judgment/ When it shall be given to us"; "Let all the Christian heart/ Come to the Monastery". In the monastery courtyard: "Great tears run down my face with sorrow/ I am angry in life, evil to God"; "Rejoice, Holy Mother, Mother of God/ For all the angels sing to thee, Mother of God"; "O Holy Mother/ With all we have come"; "Heavenly Empress/ Divine wonder"; "Mary, heavenly flower/ You are all enchanting"; "We have come, Mother Mary/ To sing to you"; "To Nicula, up on the hill/ In our beautiful Ardeal"; "From the edges, O apostles"; "O Holy Mother/ We pray to you with fervent fervor". Departure from the Monastery: "Mother, you have helped us/ To do what we were given"[38].

Pilgrimage songs also have refrains. In terms of content, they have in their thematic structure an invocation addressed to the Virgin Mary. The refrains are used in several ways: as an initial verse as a direct address to the Virgin Mary; the refrain takes the place of a verse, but through repetition, it is transformed again into a refrain; refrains that take the form of a dialog; and refrains that are attached to verses as a supporting function.

The two arts, music and poetry, come together in Romanian folk songs to express more fully the same content, without one being subordinate to the other. The text and melody of folk songs do not constitute an inseparable whole[39].

Structurally, there is a very close link between the text and the melody, they merge and condition each other[40]. One argument in this sense is that pilgrims cannot offer the text dissociated from the melody and conversely, in their subconscious, the two elements constitute a unitary whole. Another

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[38] „Cântece de procesiune" (Processional songs), in: *Vieața creștină,* nr. 11-12, 1946, p. 6; *Cinstind Adormirea Maicii Domnului: prohodul Adormirii Maicii Domnului și pricesne de procesiune închinate Maicii Domnului (Celebrating the Assumption of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: the Prood of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and processional songs dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Renaşterea, 2014.

[39] Gheorghe Ciobanu, Raportul structural..." (Structural Report), p. 14; B. Bartok, *Cântece populare românești din Comitatul Bihor (Romanian folk songs from Bihor County),* București, 1913, p. VII; XIV. Bella Bartok, *Volksmusik der Rumanen von Maramureş,* Munchen, Drei Masken Verlag, 1923, p. XIX.

[40] Gh. Ciobanu, Raportul structural..." (Structural Report), p. 48-49; Constantin Brăiloiu, „Le giustos syllabique bichrone. Un systeme rythmique propre a la musique Populaire roumaine", în *Polyphonie*, 2 Paris, Edit. Richard Maase, 1948, p. 21..

argument would be the reciprocal conditioning verse-melody, which occurs in all cases of adaptation of verse to acatalectic or catalectic forms[41].

Songs in this style are composed in the form of romances, proper songs, couplets, but also have their own melodies.

Own melodies are those that belong to the moment of the pilgrimage ceremonial, are performed collectively and have a specific textual theme. The rhythm of these melodies is syllabic in a structured form of 6 or 8 syllables, or several syllables, rhythmic beats for each melodic line. In general, the rhythm belongs to the divisional and the giusto-syllabic system, except for the arrival and departure songs, which are played on the pulse of the steps, in ceremonial rhythm, falling within the "vocal rhythm accommodated to the steps of the ceremonial walk"[42].

The melodies of the chanting of the hymns, sung at different set moments during the pilgrimage, are used as community-building tools. They punctuate the cadence of the steps, being accommodated to the rhythm of walking, focus attention on the event to be celebrated, arouse the emotional state of the participants, in a word, articulate spiritual experiences and beliefs, personal motivations and devotional gestures into a unified whole. "Music is related to forms of natural energy, to the kinetics of movement, and human bodies that come to master certain musical parameters execute specific, common movements, the tempo of the music and the style of music playing a decisive role in creating emotional states"[43]. In this sense, the anthropologist Dupront states that "hearing has the property of inscribing the religious extraordinary and converting it into the sensory nourishment of popular religions, giving rise in some cases to a culture of pilgrimage[44].

Rhythm occupies a privileged place in the system of popular musical language. The varied nature and form of the unfolding are the first criteria for systematizing rhythm. The ceremonial march is generally slower and usually uniform. The ceremonial rhythm is illustrated in Romanian folklore by the classical form of several vocal species integrated into customs: the song of the harvest wedding, the ceremonial song of recruitment, some ritual wedding and funeral songs, partly in carols. Species that in their concrete and authentic manifestation are performed in groups and only during ritual-ceremonial journeys[45]. In addition to these musical species, pilgrimage songs can be

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[41] Ileana Szenik; Ioan Bocșa, „Studiu introductiv", p. 20. 23-33.

[42] Traian Mârza, „Ritmul vocal acomodat pașilor din mersul ceremonios, un tip distinct al ritmicii populare românești" (The vocal rhythm accommodated to the steps of the ceremonial walk, a distinct type of Romanian folk rhythm), în: *Lucrări de muzicologie*, vol. 10-11, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 245-257.

[43] Tia de Nora, *Music in Everyday Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 87.

[44] Alphonse Dupront, *Du Sacré. Croisades et pèlerinages. Images et langages,* Gallimard, 1987, p. 357.

[45] Traian Mârza, „Ritmul vocal…" (The vocal rhythm), p. 247.

unequivocally included in the structure of melodies accommodated to the ceremonial steps.

Starting from the characteristics described by Traian Mârza for the songs specific to the vocal rhythm accommodated to the steps of the ceremonial march, we can establish a series of specific features for the Christian popular ceremonial songs. A syncretism that unites the versified word, the melody and the ceremonial march, which is different from the syncretism of other vocal categories (ballad, doina, the main song). A performance in a tempo proper to the ceremonial walk, slower and relatively the same throughout the song, a performance different from that of songs with parlando rhythm as well as from the varied performance of dance. The rhythmic pulses have conventional values of fourths, twelfths at times even higher, rarely lower. They have a structured rhythm together with their verse, an aspect seen in the numerical equality of the rhythmic pulsations in any series, corresponding to a melodic line and the sung syllables as in the cells and rhythmic formulas superimposed on the pair of syllables in the verse and the hemistich. The number of beats in each rhythmic series is constant[46].

Given the considerable amount of musical material collected during the research, the present analysis will focus on a selected corpus of pilgrimage songs, representative of the repertoire performed during the pilgrimage to Nicula Monastery. This selection is based on the criteria of frequency of performance and their relevance within the pilgrims' musical tradition.

As a result of direct observations, we have found a Niculan musical style, which has imposed itself in the repertoire of pilgrim groups, beyond their specific melodies. We can speak of a Niculan style that was formed over time through the interference of several factors.

The first factor would be the exchange of songs between the different groups of pilgrims who come to the monastery. During the 2-3 days of pilgrimage, the pilgrims have moments when, between the Masses celebrated on the stage in front of the church, they sing different songs in honour of the Virgin Mary. In this context, the flow of songs among the thousands of pilgrims is dynamic and enriching.

Then the next factor is determined by the imposition of a musical canon by means of books of pricesne, printed under the authority of the Church. Some of these also contain melodic versions of the pilgrimage songs, which give a well-defined musical style.

Finally, we consider that the most important factor in the normalization of the Niculan style is the chanting of the priceasna, which are sung in choir during church services. From the stage situated in front of thousands of pilgrims, at specific moments, a set of songs in honor of the Virgin Mary is performed.

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[46] Traian Mârza, „Ritmul vocal…" (The vocal rhythm), p. 249-249.

The climax of the whole procession is the procession with the icon of the Virgin Mary, when all the pilgrims sing: "Great tears are streaming down my face"; "Receive us, Mother, again to your bosom"; "Mother of Heaven, hope of the people"; "Help us, Mother/ To pray always"; "Mary, Mary, Mary, your mercy"; "O Holy Mother, we have come with love, to Nicula in the grove"; "We have come, Mother, to see you again". These Marian songs have become normative for the pilgrimage to Nicula. Sung year after year several times during the three days of celebration, they have entered the pilgrims' mentality, becoming a musical trademark for the Nicula style.

Next, we will analyze the pilgrimage songs, which form the core of the entire musical canon of Nicula Monastery.

The architectural structure of these pilgrimage songs has a strophic aspect. The verse is usually made up of 2, 3 or 4 melodic lines, with two phrase-like segments of two lines each and a refrain.

Types of architectural format:

$$\frac{A \quad B}{a\,b\,c\,a'a\,a} \cdot \frac{A \quad B}{b\,a'rf.a\,b} \cdot \frac{A \quad B}{c'rf.a\,a\,b'} \cdot \frac{A \quad B}{a\,b\,rf.c\,d'} ; \frac{A\,B}{a\,b\,c}$$

E.g. 1

Cu cântare de mărire

Cu cântare de mărire, (With songs of greatness), Constanța Cristescu Collection, "Pilgrimage and pilgrimage song..." p. 62.

Maica Cerului

Maica Cerului (Mother of Heaven), Vasile Stanciu collection, *Cântați Domnului tot tot pământul,* p. 226.

Lacrimi mari îmi curg pe față

Lacrimi mari îmi curg pe față (Big tears streaming down my face), collection Vasile Stanciu, *Cântați Domnului tot pământântul,* p. 219.

E.g. 4

La Nicula, sus în deal

La Ni - cu - la   sus_____   în   deal_____

În fru-mo - sul   nost   Ar - deal   În   mij-lo - cul   co - dru - lui_____

Șa - de   Mai - ca   Dom - nu - lui

The **Eugenia Marinescu collection** *La Nicula, sus în deal*
(At Nicula, up in the hills).

E.g. 5

Am venit, Măicuță

O,   Măi - cu - ță   Sfân - tă_____   Cu   drag   am   ve - nit,

La   Ni - cu - la-n   co - dru_____   În   lo - cul   sfin - țit.

Am_____   ve - nit,   Măi - cu - ță_____   Să   ne   mai   ve - dem__

Să-ți   spu - nem   ne - ca - zul_____   Pe   ca - re-l   a - vem.

Am venit, Măicuță (Here I am, Mother), **collection Vasile Stanciu,**
Cântați Domnului tot tot pământul, **p. 232.**

E.g. 6

Ajută-ne, Măicuță

Trâm – bi – ța va su – na ta – re, De la mun – te pân la ma – re.

A – ju – tă – ne, Măi – cu – ță, Să ne ru – găm me – reu,

Să cre – dem tot – dea – u – na, Că es te Dum – ne – zeu.

***Ajută-ne, Măicuță (Help us, Mother),* Vasile Stanciu collection,
Sing to the Lord all the earth, p. 225.**

E.g. 7

O, Măicuță sfântă

O, Măi – cu – ță Sfân – tă Te ru – găm fier – bin – te,

Să ne-as – cul ți – de-a pu – ruri Ma – rea ru – gă – min – te.

Nu lă – sa Măi – cu – ță Să pie – rim pe ca – le

Căci noi sun – tem fi – ii La – cri – mi – lor ta – le.

***O, Măicuță sfântă (O, holy Mother),* Vasile Stanciu collection,
Sing to the Lord all the earth, p. 221.**

The melodic structure of the songs presented above usually uses a major hexachord, sometimes amplified with a supporting lower fourth. Even though some pilgrimage songs take place within an octave, however, the melodic skeleton rests on only a few major steps. The melodic contour starts

from the tonic, then the melody gradually ascends to the beginning of the 2nd hemistich after which the melody gradually descends again to the starting sound, where it cadences prolonged cadences. The second segment, B, usually begins on the mode chord, and consists of a distinct melodic line, or a sequencing of the melodic lines in segment A.

The melodic formulas are distinguished mainly by their vaulting character, especially in the first segment.

As far as the compositional procedures are concerned, we notice the use of several principles. Firstly, there is the process of repeating melodic figures. The repeated melodic patterns denote a certain symmetry. This process allows a given pilgrimage melody to change its literal text and to become a model melody for many other songs. The repetition of certain melodic figures can be strict or free, depending on the freedom of the performer.

Another compositional process we find in pilgrimage songs is the variational one. It starts with a melodic figure, to which new forms are then added by changing the direction of the line (ascending or descending), ornaments and rhythmic patterns.

The Christian popular ceremonial songs or pilgrimage songs analyzed in this study are the ones that define the melodic canon of the musical repertoire of Nicula Monastery. The dynamics of the evolution of songs in Romanian musical folklore, characterized by regional and individual adaptations, is also evident in their case. They have undergone changes over time, reflecting the specifics of the performer, the community and the cultural context. "A particular style lives in its fullness only in the bosom of the mass that gave birth to it"[47]. The musical style of Niculan music, shaped over time by the decantation of several popular Christian ceremonial songs, has become a defining element in the shaping of a musical repertoire for the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

Starting from the premises stated for the first time by the ethnomusicologist Constanța Cristescu, through the musical examples analyzed, we reinforce the idea that we are dealing with a new musical genre, which deserves all the attention of musicologists.

Conclusions

Pilgrimage songs fall into the category of Romanian folklore, being closely related to religious practices and ceremonial events. They represent a complex form of cultural expression, situated at the intersection between

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[47] Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Stratificări în muzica populară românească" (Stratifications in Romanian popular music), p. 43.

the sacred and the profane, between tradition and innovation. They combine elements of oral culture with influences from written culture, reflecting a syncretism specific to the religious and social context in which they emerged.

In addition to their primary function of honoring the Virgin Mary, pilgrimage songs fulfil other important roles in the community, contributing to strengthening social cohesion, protection, transmission of moral values and the experience of the sacred.

The musical structure of pilgrimage songs is closely linked to the ceremonial character of the pilgrimage act, being adapted to the processional walk. Pilgrimage songs have a specific musical structure adapted to their ritual context and social function. The close link between text, melody and rhythm helps to create a strong aesthetic experience and to facilitate the memorization and transmission of the songs.

Syncretism is a defining feature of these songs, which combine elements of cult and popular music, reflecting the complexity of the processes of creation and transmission of culture.

The rhythm and meter of these songs are closely linked to the poetic text, creating an aesthetic unity and facilitating memorization and oral transmission. The theme of the songs is centered around the cult of the Virgin Mary, reflecting the religious beliefs and aspirations of the community.

Pilgrimage songs play an important role in transmitting cultural and religious values down the generations. These songs help to strengthen the identity of the community and strengthen the social bonds between its members. Through pilgrimage songs, believers live an intense religious experience marked by devotion and spiritual communion.

The functional, thematic and melodic particularities of Christian ceremonial folk songs underline a dynamic process of affirmation of a specific musical identity, in continuous evolution and adaptation to the socio-cultural context.

Pilgrimage songs are a complex phenomenon at the intersection of religion, art and society. They fulfil a multitude of functions, helping to strengthen cultural identity and perpetuate religious traditions. Their musical structure, adapted to the ceremonial context, and their deeply religious themes make these songs an essential element of the Romanian musical cultural heritage.

Translated from Romanian by Angelica Marcu

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