

TUNES OF THE TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS CAROLS IN THE NORTHERN PART OF MEZŐSÉG* (CÂMPIA TRANSILVANIEI)

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SUMMARY. The paper hereby briefly presents the most beautiful Christmas carols of the northern part of Mezőség (Câmpia Transilvaniei) and also the most popular ones. Part of the material I have presented in this paper has been collected by myself (tunes of the carols from Magyarborzás and vice), the rest I have taken from folklore literature on the area. Tunes are presented and analyzed in a chronological order, starting with the oldest ones. My motivation to write on this topic was to present the area of Mezőség (Câmpia Transilvaniei) and the invaluable treasures of its folklore to a larger group of people. On the other hand, I think it is our duty to help these valuable pieces of folklore survive.

Keywords: Christmas Carols, Mezőség, tunes, repertory, lyrics, hymn, Transylvania.

Introduction

Ethnography literature presents the region called Mezőség (Câmpia Transilvaniei) in the following way: "A hilly region without any forests bordered by the Someșul Mic, Someșul Mare, Șieu, Mureș and Arieș rivers in the central part of Transylvania. More than three hundred villages can be found in this region, populated by Hungarians, Romanians and Germans (Saxons). The main fairs of the region are held at Șărmașu (Nagysármás), Mociu (Mócs), Buza (Buza), Sâmpetru de Câmpie (Uzdiszentpéter), Band (Mezőbánd). One of the traditional Hungarian villages of the region is Sic (Szék), near Gherla (Szamosújvár). This village had many privileges in the thirteenth- nineteenth centuries, thanks to its salt mines of great importance.

The Mezőség was one of the first regions in Transylvania to be populated by Hungarians (tenth - eleventh centuries). In the Middle Ages the Hungarian population here was quite numerous. The Romanians started moving into the area only at the end of the Middle Age period, especially when the number of Hungarians dropped in the sixteenth - seventeenth centuries.

* In the paper hereby I will use the name of this region in Hungarian, since this region forms a cultural unit within the Hungarian culture and therefore its Romanian name (Câmpia Transilvaniei) would be merely a geographical name, while in Hungarian the name Mezőség means not only a well defined area in the land, but also a subculture, a life style, a piece of folklore.

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A typical area of the Mezőség is the group of eight villages *along the Şieu river*, neighbouring the formerly Saxon villages around Bistrița (Beszterce) (the most famous among these are Jeica (Zselyk) and Şieu-Măgheruș (Sajómagyaros)). Another unit consists of the six Hungarian villages *along the upper stream of the Mureș River*, north to Reghin (Szászrégen).

Hungarians of the Mezőség live in small Diasporas, scattered among the Romanian villages of the region. As a consequence, their folk culture, one of the most archaic Hungarian peasant cultures in Transylvania interacts with the folk culture of the Romanians among whom they live. Ethnography started folklore research on the musical and dance life of the Hungarians of Mezőség only in the last thirty or forty years.”¹

Therefore, the region whose Christmas carol tunes I study is the geographical area between the Someșul Mare River and the Şieu River. The following villages are also part of this ethnographical unit: Valea Unguraşului (Csabaújfalu), Ceaba (Bálványoscsaba), Vita (Vice), Sâmboieni (Erdőszombattelke), Bozieş (Magyarborzás), Fizeşu Gherlii (Ördöngösfüzes), Sânmartin (Szépenyerűszentmárton), Bonţ (Boncnnyíres), Sic (Szék), Buza (Buza), Țigău (Cegőtelke), Geaca (Gyeke), Sângeorgiu Nou (Szászszenygyörgy), Şărmaşu (Nagysármás), Fântânița (Mezőköbölkút), my home village, Bozieş (Magyarborzás) and the next village, Vita (Vice). The last two being the villages where I collected the Christmas songs (carols). Thus, part of the material I have studied was my own collection. The other part was collected by a group of students supervised by folk-music specialist Dr. Ilona Szenik and it can be found in the Folklore archive of the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca. Besides these, I also considered the tunes collected from the region that already became part of the folklore literature.

Most of the Christmas carols sung by Hungarians in general and therefore by Hungarians of this region are so called “folk songs” or are very similar in style. Musicology considers folk songs all the songs sung together by the congregation as a community in the church during services. Some of these songs have become part of the folk customs related to the various holidays, in our case customs related to Christmas (caroling, Bethlehem play). Their lyrics are religious texts and most of the tunes can be found in handwriting or in printed hymn books. According to the data of the Hungarian tune research specialists, some of these songs go back to the sixteenth century. The number of songs increases continually until the nineteenth century new songs being added to the already existing repertory.

Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály emphasizes in many of his writings that it is important to compare the tunes of the written or printed sources with the versions preserved by the folk tradition. He dedicates an entire chapter to the subject in his book entitled *A magyar népzene [Hungarian Folk*

¹ Hungarian Lexicon of Ethnology: Mezőség

Music]: in this chapter entitled *VII. Traces of Composed Music* the first subchapter deals with the folk versions of the Gregorian music and the church music.² In the following paragraph let me quote some of his thoughts on the subject:

“Hungarians, at least part of them have been practicing reading and writing for centuries now and thus their original oral culture has been exposed to elements of the early culture of writing and printing since the sixteenth century. However, as far as music is concerned the Hungarian people and also the middle class were illiterate even at the end of the nineteenth century: they were not using the score. [...] The plainsong – the major, almost the single form of musical activity – was transmitted “orally from person to person and not in a written form, not through the scores. Both old and new songs were passed on by ear. [...] Neither were the scores of the hymn books of any more help: people have been reading the lyrics next to them since 1607, but they never learned how to read the music, tunes were passed on by oral tradition.”³

“Scores started to be included in the hymnbooks only as late as 1607 (Szenczi Molnár Albert’s *Psalterium*), respectively 1651 (*Cantus Catholici*). Some of the tunes contained in these hymn books also have different versions in the different hymn books and today’s oral tradition. Should somebody collect the different versions of songs part of the oral tradition that would provide many valuable data to the process of discovering the rules of variant formation.”⁴

“... but even if we had more scores on the ancient songs, it would be impossible to reconstruct what the tune was really like with their help. For early scores provided merely the “skeleton” of a tune, most of the times it does not offer information even on the key and the rhythm of the song. This skeleton can be formed into flesh again only by interpretation. Therefore we have a true picture only of the songs that were passed on through tradition to our days.”⁵

Following the directions indicated by Kodály Hungarian musicology developed a new branch; through the last decades, the researchers have added such general works to the literature of the field that no one can overlook when dealing with this subject. Accordingly I identified and organized the following tunes based on the *A Magyar Népdaltípusok Katalógusa III. és IV. Stíluscsoportja [3rd and 4th Group of Styles in the Catalogue of the Hungarian Folk Song Types]* and the *Magyar Népzene Tára II. [Catalogue of the Hungarian Folk Song, vol. II]*. In describing these songs, I also used other data from the literature of the field.

² Kodály: 1971, 63-70

³ Kodály: 1974, 9

⁴ Kodály: 1971: 64

⁵ Kodály: 1971, 71.)

I intended to give as a complete picture as possible of the repertory of Christmas carols in the northern part of Mezőség, therefore I included in the following presentation, besides the tunes I collected from the two above mentioned villages, also some tunes collected earlier in other villages (Sânmartin (Szépkényerúszentmárton), Fântânița (Mezőköbölökút), Fântânele (Újös)). In comparing tunes to the old printed sources, I took over some examples from the unpublished studies of Ilona Szenik and Éva Péter – to which they kindly consented.

1. The literature of the field compares tunes of the earlier carols and Bethlehem play songs with the style of the cantios and hymns of the Middle Ages. Literature includes in the category of the carols and songs of the earlier style songs which have written variants even if these have been written down or printed much later and songs with no written variants, but created in the same style. The following songs (except example no.1) can be identified as belonging to the Small ambitus, old style subchapter of the *A Magyar Népdaltípusok Katalógusa III. és IV. Stíluscsoportja [3rd and 4th Group of Styles in the Catalogue of the Hungarian Folk Song Types]*.

1. 1. The lyrics of the song starting with “Parancsolá az Augustus császár” [“The emperor Augustus gave the following command”] appears for the first time in the Hymn Book of Lőcse (1635) and lyrics accompanied by the tunes appear in the Gradual Book of Eprejes written between 1635 and 1650. In Kálmán Csomasz Tóth’s opinion, the style and content of the song point to a much earlier origin.⁶ From the point of view of style and origin, this is one of the folk songs formed out of a cantio of the Middle Ages.⁷

A variant of this song can be found also in the *Reformed Hymn Book of Cluj-Napoca* published in 1744 and republished in 1778. Since 1837, the reformed hymn books ceased to publish it any more, so today only oral versions of it exists, proving how strong the oral tradition can be. One of the first oral versions of this song comes from Săvădisla (Tordaszentlászló) in the Kalotaszeg region⁸ and gives us a full idea of the complete tune with the slow, pulsating rhythm particular to the folk songs (example no. 1a). The diction of the version from Fântânița (Mezőköbölökút) (example no. 1b) is *Parlando*; the last line of the stanza is dropped turning it into a three-line stanza and the original tune in plagal minor ending in *A* now ends on the 5th degree, i.e. in *E*.⁹

⁶ RMDT I: 44/III-IV

⁷ Dobszay 1995. II.1. 59

⁸ *Magyar Népzene Tára II. [Catalogue of the Hungarian Folk Song - CHFS, vol. II] 509j*


⁹ Enumeration of the historical data: at the example of Szenik: 1997.1st and of Péter 2004.46th. In the latter we find another two examples of the three-lined stanza ending in *E*, one from the Mezőség, the other from Kalotaszeg.


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“So, on Christmas eve 20 men and 20 women go out to sing, “This is the pleasantest way”: The emperor Augustus gave the following command: a census is to be made in the entire world. The names of all the people should be written down and thus has the emperor sent his letter out.”¹⁰


Ex. 1

Tordaszentlászló

a) 

b) *Parlando rubato* ♩=96 Mezőköbölkit


(a) 

(b) 

a) MNT II. 509j; Tordaszentlászló, Kolozs m; gy.Makkai-Nagy, 1939
 b) KZA Mg 2941/12; Mezőköbölkit, Beszterce-Naszód m., Dózsa György 64, Rigó Ferenc 75.
 gy. Szenik I. - Mann G. 1975.

1. 2. This two-lined tune (example no. 2b) with pentachord scale so popular among the Reformed population of central Transylvania shows strong connection to the first part of a Gregorian Maria Hymn (example no. 2)¹¹. The recitative style of the hymn is transformed into a more melodious version in the folk song. Of the Bozieş (Magyarborzás) version of the song, it is characteristic to sing it in a slow tempo and decorating it with melismatic features (example no. 2c).

Ex. 2

CC 1651-RMDT II.75

a) 

b) ♩=144 Szépkényerüszentmárton


b) Lajtha I. 1. Szépkényerüszentmárton, Tuli Anna.

¹⁰ Kövesdi, 160

¹¹ MNTK III/9; CHFS II. 513; Péter: 2004, example no. 51.)

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Poco rubato

Magyarborzás



Magyarborzás, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Tóth Attila 67,
coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

1. 3. The previous tune contains a minor third, a tune very close to it is very popular in the Mezőség and in Kalotaszeg (example no. 3b-c). Its tune tempo and features and also the rhythm based on the regular alternation of the long and short time values can be found also in the first two lines of a 16th century song published in the 1744 version of the Reformed Hymn Book of Cluj- napoca (example no. 3a.)¹².

Ex. 3

a) Kv 1744/250 = RMDT I./118.II.
Jé - zus Krisz - tus szép fé - nyes haj - nal

b) Giusto ♩=112 Vajdakamarás
Pa - ra - di - csom kő - kert - jé - be, Ott az an - gyal szép fé - hér - be.

c) ♩=160 Szépkényerűszentmárton
Pa - ra - di - csom kő - ze - pi - be A - rany - szó - nyeg le - te - rit - ve.

b) KZA Mg 3110/ 31. Vajdakamarás, Kolozs m.,Kutas Eti 53, Kutas János 58. gy. Szenik I., 1979.
c) Lajtha I. 2., Szépkényerűszentmárton, Kolozs m. Szakács Mártonné, 67 é.

1. 4. The Hungarian translation of the Europe-wide well known Christmas cantio beginning with "In natali Domini" was connected to the tune in example no. 4. According to its style, it is obviously a piece belonging to the music of the Middle Ages in Europe. The literature of the field mentions its appearance only in the Székelyföld** and Moldova so it is to be presumed the informer learnt it out of a hymn book¹³.

¹² MNTK III/13, CHFS II/508-510; Péter: 2004, example no. 48.

** Another specific Hungarian region with no particular Romanian name.

¹³ MNTK III/39

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Ex. 4

Szü - le - té - sén Is - ten - nek , az an - gya - lok ö - rül - nek

Víg é - ne - ket zen - ge - nek, Dí - cső - ség az Is - ten - nek.

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Bálint Zoltán 17, Coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

1. 5. It is thought the tune of example no. 5 is derived from a Middle Age hymn and it is known in all the areas traditionally populated by Hungarians, except for Transylvania¹⁴. Both its tune and its lyrics are similar to the Christmas song taught by the manuals; it is almost certain the informer learnt it at school.¹⁵

Ex. 5

Vice

Kirje, kir je, kis-de - decs ke, ki mi értünk sok jót tet-tél, a pokoltól meg men - tet tél.

bet-le-he-mi her-ce - gecs-ke

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Kádár Julianna 74, Soós Ilonka 57,
coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

1. 6. The carol called “Csordapásztorok” [“Herdsman”] appears first in a 17th century hymn book (example no. 6). It has versions throughout the area populated by Hungarians, both as a carol and as a Bethlehem play song. Its versions differ quite a lot from region to region. In the version, known in Transylvania the last verse is repeated with a different tune (examples no. 6b-c). The different versions vary also in their key. The verse in minor (6a) is enriched with a frigid tendency (6b) or it gains a major tendency by setting the finalis secundus on lower notes (6c).¹⁶

¹⁴ MNTK III/99; CHFS II. 551-554

¹⁵ Kodály: Iskolai Énekgyűjtemény I. [Collection of Songs for Teaching Purposes, vol. I], Budapest 1943., 117., a song collected in the county of Csongrád).

¹⁶ MNTK III/151; CHFS II. 407-413. Péter: 2004, example no. 52.

CC (1651)=RMDT II.1.

a) Csor-da Pász-to - rok mi - dön Bet - le - hem - ben

b) $\text{♩}=74$ Mera
Csor-da - pász-to - rok mi - dön Bet - le - hem - ben

(a) Csor-dát ô - riz - nek Éj - jel a me - zô - be, Éj - jel a me - zô - be.

(b) Mera
Csor-dát ô - riz - nek Éj - jel a me - zô - be, Éj - jel a me - zô - be.

b) PE IA-17; Mera, Kolozs m., asszonyok csoportja; gy. Péter Éva, 2000.

$\text{♩}=92$ Szépkenyerüszentmárton

c) Csor - da - pász - to - rok Mi - kor Bet - le - hem - be

Csor - dát ô - riz - nek Éj - jel a me - zô - be, Éj - jel a me - zô - be.

Lajtha I. 3. Szépkenyerüszentmárton, Kolozs m. Koncz Andrásné, 60.é.

1. 7. The origins of one of the most beautiful carols of the Reformed community of central Transylvania (Mezőség, Kalotaszeg) and of the csangos of Moldva are still unknown (example no. 7). Literature of the field interprets it on the basis of a vast material to which it has been compared that it is supposedly a concentrated form of a Gregorian tune: by dropping some of the motifs, the four-line stanza shrinks to two lines (compare examples 7a and 7b; 7c makes the line of the tune more varied by descriptive features). In the version collected in northern Mezőség (7d) the repetition of words has as a result an increase in syllables, for the original number of syllables is 4+6¹⁷.

¹⁷ MNTK III/160; Szenik: 1997, example no. 3; Péter: 2004, example no. 50.)

Ex. 7

CC 1651=RMDT II/103.

a) Felvitett magas Mennycsúgta

Poco rubato ♩=60 Mezőkeszű

b) Fel-ke-lünk mi nagy va - sár- nap reg gel, Fel-ke-lünk mi nagy vasárnapreggel,

b) IMB VII A-15; Mezőkeszű, Kolozs m., csoport, gy. Kallós-Andrásfalvy, 1963.

Poco rubato ♩=112 Méra

c) Én fel-ke-lék ka-rá-csony jó reg - gel, Én fel-ke-lék ka-rá-csony jó reg - gel.

c) PÉ I A-6; Méra, Kolozs m., Tótszegi Károlyné Kozma Anna 69. gy.. Péter É. 2000.

Poco rubato ♩=96 Újös

d) Kimenék, kimenék nagypénce-ken reg-gel, Kimenék, kimenék nagypénce-ken reg-gel.

1) 2a) 2b)

d) KZA Mg 2941 / 134, Újös, Beszterce-Naszód m., Salak Mihályné Darlaci Zsuzsa 50; gy. Mann G. 1975.

2. In the Small ambitus, new style subchapter of the *A Magyar Népdaltípusok Katalógusa III. és IV. Stíluscsoportja* [3rd and 4th Group of Styles in the Catalogue of the Hungarian Folk Song Types] we find tunes characterized rather by tonality – versus the modal style of the old tunes; the sequences of thirds and seconds are frequent in this case both at the level of the line of the tune and of the motifs.

2. 1. In the four-lined stanza, the sequence appears among the closing motifs in the first half of the line and among the beginning motifs in the second half. The pattern is not exact in every version, but comparing the three versions, it reveals itself obviously (examples 8 a-b-c). The height of the closing note varies in the case of the short musical note without emphasis to which the last syllable is sung in the first and third lines. The song has the same lyrics in several regions of Transylvania.¹⁸

¹⁸ MNTK IV/75; CHFS II. 5 19, Péter: 2004, example no. 53.

Ex. 8

Poco rubato $\text{♩} = 60$ Buza

a) 
 Bet - le - hem kis fa - luc - s - ká - ba, Ka - rá - csony - kor éj - fél - táj - ba


 Fi - ú Is - ten em - ber lett, Mint kis gyer - mek szü - le - tett.

KZA Mg 2943 /38; Buza, Kolozs m., Eke Péterné 43. gy. Földvári K. 1976.

Magyarborzás

b) 
 Bet - le - hem kis fa - luc - s - ká - ba, Bet - le - hem kis fa - luc - s - ká - ba


 Ka - rá - csony - kor éj - fél - táj - ba, Ka - rá - csony - kor éj - fél - táj - ba.

Magyarborzás, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Papp János (Pilu) 80, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

2. 2. The lyrics of carol “Elindult Mária” [“Maria Set Out”] is a song of the legend in the epic style (example 9 a-b). It is known mostly in the eastern part of the area populated by Hungarians, in Mezőség it is one of the most often sung carols at Christmastime. The tonal style of the tune is rendered by the sequence between the beginning of the first and second verses and the decomposition of the common chord¹⁹.

Ex. 9

a) 
 El - in - dult Má - ri - a Ka - rá - csony éj - sza - ka,

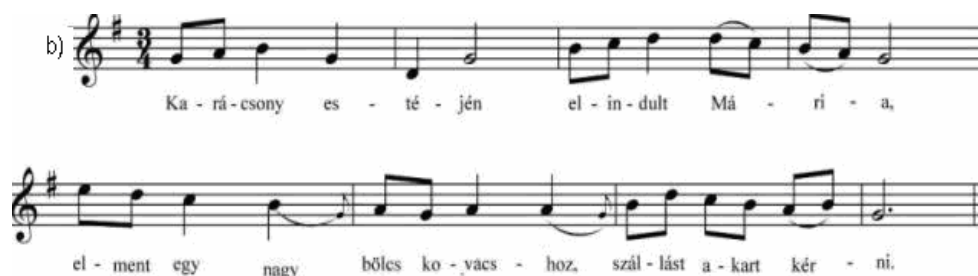

 el - ment szál - lást kér - ni a gaz - dag ko - vács - hoz.

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Kádár Julianna 74, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

¹⁹ MNTK IV/139; CHFS II. 460-461

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b)



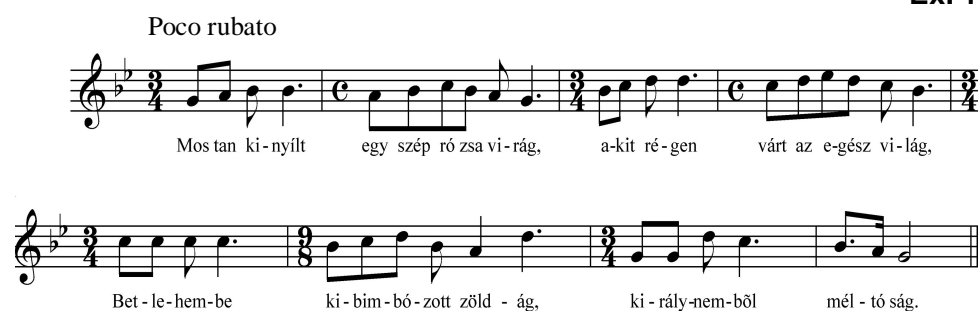
Ka - rá - csony es - té - jén el - in - dult Má - ri - a,
el - ment egy nagy böles ko - vacs - hoz, szál - lást a - kart kér - ni.

Magyarborzás, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Tóth Attila 67,
coll. by Gergely Z. 2007.

2. 3. This ascending tune with repetition of thirds, structure of AA³BC in minor hexachord is known in all Hungarian populated regions. Usually it is sung with the lyrics presented in example 10. This lyric was first written down in a manuscript of 1839, but having in view its structure of 4+6 it can be dated to a much later date.²⁰

Ex. 10

Poco rubato



Mos tan ki - nyílt egy szép ró zsa vi - rág, a - kit ré - gen várt az e - gész vi - lág,
Bet - le - hem - be ki - bim - bó - zott zöld - ág, kí - rály - nem - ből mél - tó ság.

Vice, county of Beszterce-Naszód, Bálint Margit 37, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

2. 4. This tune of AABB structure and plagal major style (example 11) was written down in the song books of the choir masters of the nineteenth century. It became known thanks to the school and the services of the Catholic Church. As it started being sung by the people as a folk song, it suffered some small changes in both lyrics and tune²¹.

²⁰ MNTK IV/159; CHFS II. 586; Péter: 2004, example no. 58.

²¹ MNTK IV/307

Ex. 11

Meg-szü - le - tett a kis Jé - zus, ör - vend - jünk, Bet - le - hem - be fek - szik ron - gyos
el - kül - döt - te Ő szent fi - át Is - te - nünk
já - szol - ba, a - zért van oly fé - nyes - ség a vá - ros - ba.

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Bethlehem play no. 7, the group presenting the Bethlehem play, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

2. 5. The shepherds' dance is a general item of the Bethlehem plays. In one of the typical tunes of this dance (example no. 12) the first line is repeated and then followed by a middle part composed of various motifs and closed with a line whose tune reminds of the tunes of the swineherds' dance, its structure: AA b+b c+c D D_k. It is known in all Hungarian areas, it is usually sung as a shepherds' dance, but it also became part of the service of the Catholic Church²².

Ex. 12

Pász - to - rok, kel - jünk fel, Bet - le - hem vá - ro - sá - ba, ron gyos is - tál - lócs ká - ba,
ha - mar in - dul - junk el
si - es - sünk, ne kés - sünk, hogy még e - zen éj - jel o - da - le - hes -
sünk, mi U - runk - nak tisz - te - le - tet te - hes - sünk.

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Bethlehem play no. 4, the group presenting the Bethlehem play, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

²² MNTK IV/307

2. 6. In a seventeenth century writing we find one of the most popular Christmas carols of the Hungarians, known to all social strata and used in the service of the church as well (example no. 13). The two main parts of its tune start with sequential motifs (the first line contains an ascending sequence of third, the third line contains a descending sequence of second) and closes with motifs of opposite styles (5th grade, 1st grade).

Ex. 13

Menny -ből az an - gyal el - jött hoz - zá - tok, pász - to - rok, pász - to - rok,
 hogy Bet - le - hem - be si - et - ve men - ve lás - szá - tok, lás - szá - tok.

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Betlehem play no. 1, the group presenting the Bethlehem play, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

2. 7. One of the tunes in major hexachord with repetition of motifs from the shepherds' dances (example no. 14) was probably introduced among the other tunes from another source, for there is no Transylvanian version of this tune in the collections of songs I have studied (example no. 14)²³.

Ex. 14

Vedd fel, ju - hász a bun - dát, a bun - dát, fog - junk gőn - dőr
 Mert mi in - nen el - me - gyünk, el - me - gyünk, má - sok - hoz is
 bá - rány - kát, fog - junk gőn - dőr bá - rány - kát.
 be - me - gyünk, má - sok - hoz is be - me - gyünk.

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Betlehem play no. 5, the group presenting the Bethlehem play, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

²³ Versions in the Bethlehem plays presented in the CHFS II. 356/III and 359/III, from the counties of Bihar and Ugocsa

2. 8. A feature of a certain category of the folk songs is the repetition of the repetitive motifs, a frequent feature of the children's songs (the first part of example no. 15). This feature is usually followed by a second part repeating the motif of the first part, but in this example, we find a second part rhyming to the first part in its plagal and partly sequential closing. I could not identify the tune exactly, because in the studied collections I could find only versions of the first part.²⁴

Ex. 15

Mes - si - á - sunk szü - le - tett, ki - ért lel - künk e - pe - dett
 Gyer - tek, ma - gasz - tal - juk Őt, hull - junk le tér - de e - lött

5
 ör - vend - vén ör - vend - jünk, mert ke - gyes Is - te - nünk Bet - le - hem - be

11
 szü - le - tett ma mi - né - - künk

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Soós Ilonka 57, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

2. 9. The song "Pásztorok, pásztorok" ["Some shepherds ..."] is part of the Bethlehem play, but Catholics sing it also in the church. It is a tune documented since the nineteenth century. It belongs to the branch of the new style songs of arched quintal sequence, which Kodály thinks, are of Western origin.²⁵ Its structure is AA⁵BA, the decomposition of the common chord of verse A, and the descending scale of verse B both emphasize the tonal features.

Ex. 16

Pász - to - rok, pász - to - rok ör - ven dez - ve sí - et - nek Jé - zus hoz Bet - le - hem - be.

Kő - szőn - tés - t mon - da - nak a kis - ded - nek, ki - vált - sá - got ho - zott az em - ber - nek.

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Bethlehem play no. 3, the group presenting the Bethlehem play, coll. by Gergely Z. 2007

²⁴ The first part of the CHFS II. 498 and 499, the counties of Pest and Baranya

²⁵ Kodály: 1971, 39-40

2. 10. The song “Ó, boldog Betlehem” [“Oh, you Happy Bethlehem”] (example no. 17) is also one of the songs of the Bethlehem play. Its highly artificial lyrics have been applied to the folksy tune of a nineteenth century song.²⁶

Ex. 17



Ó, boldog Bet le hem, ál-dá sok vá ro sa, föl diek ö rő me, é giek szent gyönyőre, Ne sírj, kis Jézuska.
ott sír a Jé zus ka, pólyá ba ta karva

Vice, county of Beszterce- Naszód, Bethlehem play no. 2, the group presenting the Bethlehem play, coll. by Gergely Z.

From the previous characterization and based on the songs sung in the Bethlehem play a conclusion can be drawn. It contains only generally known pieces or pieces without any connection to the specific tunes of the area, so it can be supposed that it was got up not from the traditions of the region, but from a collection of songs of not so very high standards.

3. On the tunes of the name day greetings Lajos Vargyas states that " ... the name day greetings for the Istváns and Jánosos^{***} are connected to tradition only by their lyrics too, for their tunes belong to several types of folk songs and through these songs they are related to the early church hymns and other historical styles."²⁷

In the Mezőség – as in the other regions of the area populated by Hungarians – according to the local or subregional custom – the tunes and the lyrics of the name day greetings can be identical in several villages. But it can also have different versions within the same village (e.g. the tune of example no. 18 is known in Sânmartin (Szépkényerűszentmárton), Sic (Szék), Cireșoaia (Magyardécse), but also in other regions: Kalotaszeg, Udvarhely; on the other hand they sing two different versions of the same greeting in Sic (Szék) and Decea (Décs)²⁸.

Considering the musical features of example no. 18, we could say it is a product of the early recruiting music formed at the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The structure of its tune is a

²⁶ CHFS II. 628 and the note, Kerényi: Népies dalok I [Folksy songs, vol. I]. Annex, with the first line being: Mariska, Mariska)

^{***} two Hungarian male names whose day is after Christmas on December 26th and 27th and still belonging to the celebrations of Christmas time

²⁷ Vargyas: 2002, 327

²⁸ Example no. 18: MNTK IV/313, Lajtha I/4, II/47, CHFS II, 956; other tunes CHFS II. 896, 981 Décs, Lajtha II. 78, 81. Szék

specific dance structure: AA_kBB_k. The structure of its rhythm is based on the metre of the rhythm of the swineherds' dance: the lines have four measures, three of which present the basic beat, while the fourth measure is made up of a closing formula of one or two/three syllables. Even in the case of a slower tempo (as is the case in the example hereby), the basic time values are transformed into long and short time values, or flexible time values, one of the typical features of the recruiting music.

In the rhythm formula of this example, the typical features of the style of the Mezőség are reflected: in rare cases, the long and short time values are transformed into dotted formulas and more often into triolic formulas – or other formulas of irregular distribution.²⁹

Ex. 18

Szépkenyerűszentmárton

Sokszent István na-po-kat ví-gan el-ér - hess Nap-ja-i - dat szám-lál-ni ne légyenter-hes

Az ég har - mat-ja szí-ve-det ú-jít-ja, Ál - dá - sok ár-jo há-za-dat bo-rít-sa.

Lajtha I. 4.: Szépkenyerűszentmárton, Kolozs m., Varga Istvánné 62.

4. When speaking of the folk music tradition of the Mezőség, all the works in the literature of the field refer to the interactions between the specific tunes of the Hungarian and Romanian folk tradition. We find such an interaction also in the tunes of the Christmas carols.

Some of the previous examples can be found also in the collection of Romanian Christmas carols (colindas) published by Béla Bartók. We find here especially those tunes which could not be identified regarding their origin by the literature of the field or to which the literature refers as originating from the Middle Ages and/or having versions in the folk music of the entire continent. According to the orally expressed opinion of Ilona Szenik, these can be classified as tunes belonging to the common repertory of the two people, even if there are early writings to which they show any likeness. Typological classification of the Romanian colindas show these tunes to be widespread, creating many variants, which proves that they are deeply rooted in the Romanian tradition. Examples no. 2, 3 and 8, all of them present also in the

²⁹ Szenik: 1998, 21.).

collection of colindas of Bartók³⁰, belong to this category. In addition, likes of the last tune have been discovered also among the tunes of the Saxons of Transylvania.

The tunes specific to the music of one or the other ethnic group appearing in the repertory of the other can be considered borrowings.

It is very rare, but the tunes of the songs *Csordapásztorok [Herdsmen]* and of *Mennyből az angyal [An angel from heaven]* have been collected also from Romanians with the help of some translated lyrics.³¹

Two of the typical tunes of the Romanian colinda are presented here sung with Hungarian lyrics in the villages of northern Mezőség both are widespread types. The colinda of AB_rA structure (example no. 19) was collected by Lajtha in Sânmartin (Szépkényerűszentmárton). It is obvious that in this case also the lyric was translated from the Romanian colinda, for Hungarian Christmas carols do not have the legendlike or baladeliike motif of the passion of Christ. In this case, even the Romanian chorus (*Florile dalbe*) has been translated into Hungarian.³²

The lyrics of the other tune (example no. 20) are identical with that of example no. 3. Romanians have a chorus for the third line of this tune.³³

Ex. 19



Szépkényerűszentmárton

Jé - zus az asz - tal - nál e - szik, Fe - hér vi - rá - gok,
Zsí - dók a ház me - gett le - sik.

Lajtha I. 40; Szépkényerűszentmárton, Kolozs m. Varga György, 43.

Ex. 20



Giusto ♩=96

Mezőköbölkit

Pa - ra - di - csom sze - ge - let - be, Pa - ru - di - csom sze - ge - let - be
Van egy szó - nyeg le - te - rit - ve.

KZA Mg 2941 / 117 Mezőköbölkit, Beszterce-Naszód m. gy. Szenik I.-Mann G. 1975.

³⁰ Bartók 1935: 45r-u, 45a-p, 121a-e

³¹ Oral information given by Ilona Szenik.

³² Lajtha I. 40, with the Romanian lyrics 39.; Bartók: 1935, 62 a-g; MNTK III/14, Feketelak, an incorrectly interpreted version: it starts with the tunes of the chorus

³³ Bartók 1935: 73p-x

CONCLUSIONS

The items of the collected material presented in the paper hereby can be classified into different periods, according to the time of their collection. The collection of László Lajtha from the Mezőség fifty years ago was of a great sensation, since the musical data from this region were scarce. Ethnographical data, i.e. data concerning customs were known in a somewhat greater number. In the 1950s, the regular folklore research started also in Transylvania and as a result, the knowledge on the musical tradition of northern Mezőség increased as well. Parallely collections of Hungarian folk songs processed the new data offering thus serious scientific basis to the characterization of the repertory already known.

As far as I know, the traditions of the two Hungarian villages where I collected my material have not been yet processed (the literature I read does not mention their names). Therefore, I could define the situation of the local traditions only by comparing them to those of the entire region.

Regarding the practice of the customs, it can be stated that caroling is fading out in the two villages and the tunes are also more likely to be known by the older, than the younger generation. At present, carol singers belong to the so called "passive repertory", to use a scientific term. The number of tunes has dropped and earlier tunes of the hymn books have been replaced by folk songs belonging to the new style. There was no Bethlehem play in Bozieş (Magyarborzás), while in Vita (Vice) they still practice it, but it is rather a tradition of the school than that of the community. According to its dramatic structure, the Bethlehem play fits into the line of the typical Transylvanian features of the genre. But the tunes accompanying it differ very much from local traditions, since these tunes belong - from the point of view of the classification offered by the literature of the field – either to the general or to the newest category of tunes or they belong to other, far away regions and their musical value is doubtful.

Compared to the recent collections, the collections of earlier decades, published in printing and kept in the archives of Kolozsvár contain tunes that are far more valuable.

In the new style of living brought by the social change, traditions of the folklore have been - naturally - pushed into the background. At present, the movement for the revival of traditions set as its goal to counteract this tendency under the supervision of qualified specialists. Their main goal is to select on a scientific basis the most valuable creations of folklore and to preserve and revive these by fitting them into the new style of living. By writing this paper and the experience it offered me, I drew the conclusion that as a music teacher and a folk singer to be I need to follow the same principles.

(Translated from Hungarian by: Borbély-Bartalis Zsuzsa)

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