

THE LORD'S BIRTH TROPARION, TRANSYLVANIAN EXEGESES

DANIEL MOCANU¹

SUMMARY. Church music of Transylvanian tradition expresses itself through the two quintessential styles, one through the voice and one through the text. The musical variants are recorded for the first time in musical notation by Dimitrie Cunțanu, in the year 1890, they also have a singed recording, which is still the today standard. The Lord's Birth Troparion represents a good example of the music style in Transylvania. Fixed in musical notation and singed in most churches around here, this one met the most fixes and "repairs" out of them all and because of this today we have numerous versions of it. On another note, the musical double use, liturgical and ceremonial, it made it that this song to become the musical model which the church singers use when they want to sing without a noted song or book from which they are regulated. The multiple musical variants that exist nowadays demonstrate the presence of common background music, from which the ones that wrote the songs a long time ago and the today singers inspired themselves and sing like that today. The songs analyzed show us the value of the song variants ensemble, which together mark a singing style in the local zone.

Keywords: troparion (hymn), The Lord's Birth (song used in church), Dimitrie Cunțanu (song writer)

The Lord's Birth or Christmas Troparion, first time recorded by Dimitrie Cunțanu, in his book from the year 1890, in the Transylvanian variant, can be considered a musical pattern, a musical model, for applying liturgical text on the fourth (IV) voice, troparion form. Other than the mnemonic musical function for the church singers, both the text and the song of the troparion entered the repertory of the star songs. In Transylvania, besides the liturgical function, the Lord's Birth Troparion is often performed by groups of carol singers, in the context of winter holidays.

¹ Ph.D. Daniel Mocanu, Lecturer professor, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, daniel.mocanu@ubbcluj.ro



The reason of the current research is that of identify, classify, and analyse the most singed melodic variants that developed from the original version created by Dimitrie Cunțanu or the ones that derived from a melodic standardized group, in the Transylvanian area, that comes from the oral tradition of singing at the lectern.

The motivation of choosing this topic of research, the Lord's Birth Troparion, lies from the fact that this troparion is used as in the liturgical setting, from the holiday season of the Lord's Birth, as well in the library of songs singed by carol singers from Transylvania. The double use, liturgical and ceremonial, led to the emergence of multiple melodic variants, that are more of the same. So, the troparion melody was greatly influenced by the oral tradition of the local area, with all its features. This aspect is observed at the multiple levels of variants that are singed today, in different settings, in the detriment of the musical standardization made by Dimitrie Cunțanu, which tried to cement himself in the Transylvanian area.

Regarding the different examples of selected melody, which we are going to analyse, they come from Transylvanian church music, as well from the common background music standardized by Dimitrie Cunțanu, and from the other numerous backgrounds from the local area. According to the experts, this landlocked musical style² is found in the confluence from the Byzantine church music from the medieval era³ and the common musical background of the native folklore.⁴

In the transcription of the recorded variants, we helped ourselves by the linear system so we can be on the same consonance with the melodic lines created by different writers. As far as that goes the linear notation, we debriefed more on a sketchy transcription of the melodic-rhythmic scheme, without having the requirement of a definitive transcript, which, by the way, presumes a long list of elements of stylistic nature: "ornaments, execution, transmission, respiration, breaks and musical crowns with exact duration,

² Constanța Cristescu, „Trăsături stilistice ale cântării românești de tradiție bizantină din Ardeal” (Stylistic Feature of the Romanian Chant of Byzantine tradition in Transylvania), în: *Contribuții la valorificarea tradiției muzicale din Banat și Transilvania (Contribution to the Valorisation of the musical tradition in Banat and Transylvania)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2011, p. 68.

³ Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Raportul dintre muzica liturgică românească și muzica bizantină” (The Rapport between the Romanian Liturgical Music and the Byzantine music), in: *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie (Studies of Ethnomusicology and Byzantinology)*, vol. II, Ed. Muzicală, București, 1979, p. 268: “the Romanian liturgical music, with all its regional variety has a basis in Byzantine music”.

⁴ Gheorghe Șoima, „Muzica bisericească și laică în Institutul Teologic din Sibiu” (The Religious and Laic Music of the Theological Institute in Sibiu), în: *Mitropolia Ardealului*, VI, 1961, nr. 11-12, p. 798.

variations of duration, intensity and height, metronomic indications”⁵. In the portative grouping, we marked the measures to facilitate comparative analysis.

The reference musical text that we have in mind, within the present analytical approach, it says that it's come over from the collection of Dimitrie Cuțanău from the year 1890⁶ and which represents the official melody for The Lord's Birth Troparion for the church music of Transylvanian tradition.

Starting from this standardized and disseminated variant, from all over the Transylvania, via graduates from the Orthodox High-Schools from Sibiu and Cluj-Napoca, we are going to analyse other variants which, via musical variants, are closer or farther from the original melody.

Thus, for identifying the diverse examples of melodic transcripts and oral ones, older or newer, from the interpretation of the troparion, we are going to look at the collection of songs made by Béla Bartók⁷ and Celestin Cherebețiu⁸, the oral variants took from diverse church singers from Sibiu

⁵ Emilia Comișel, „Probleme de transcriere” (Transcription Problems), in: *Studii de etnomuzicologie*, vol. II, Ed. Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor și Muzicologilor din România, București, 1992, p. 181.

⁶ Dimitrie Cuțanău, *Cântările bisericesci - după melodiile celor opt glasuri ale sfintei biserici ortodoxe, culese, puse pe note și arangeate de Dimitrie Cuțanău, Profesor la seminarul "andreian" arhiepiscopescan* (*The Chants of the Church – By the eight voices of the Saint Orthodox Church, picked, passed on notes by Dimitrie Cuntanu- Professor at the Archdioceses of Andrew*), Sibiu, Editura autorului, tipărită la „Imprimăria de musicalii Jos. Eberle și Co.”, Viena, 1890, p. 64.

⁷ Béla Bartók, *Rumanian folk music*, Volume Four, *Carols and Christmas Song*, Edited by Benjamin Suchoff, Texts Translated by E. C. Teodorescu, Preface to Part One Translated by Abram Loft, Preface to Part Two Translated by, Ernest H. Sanders The Hague Martinus Nijhoff, 1975, p. 185. The paper constitutes some of the most valuable and systematic which Béla Bartók picked up between 1910-1917, in the counties: Alba, Arad, Bihor, Cluj, Hunedoara, Mureș, Satu-Mare, Timiș. Cf. Iordan Datcu, *Dicționarul etnologilor români* (*The dictionary of Romanian ethnologists*), vol. I, Editura Saeculum I.O. București, 1998, p. 56-61.

⁸ Celestin Cherebețiu was an emblematic figure for the Greek-Catholic religious music. Inspired by Dimitrie Cuțanău, Cherebețiu will initialise a reform which will have as a scope the uniformity in singing. This wish will be realised by his actions: the fixing in writing of the church songs; stabilizing a fixed form of the church songs as they are sung in Blaj; assuming an adequate musical rhythm of the chants; the removal of flourishes that used to make the religious chants harder to publish in order to have them at the singers and believer's disposal for them to use. Their musical efforts will result into the elaboration and publication of the papers: *Cele opt versuri bisericesti așa cum se cântă la Blaj* (*The eight church verses as it is sung in Blaj*), 1930; *Cântări religioase ocazionale și felul în care se cântă la Blaj* (*Religious occasional chants and the way that are sung in Blaj*), 1931; *Pricesne și alte cântări liturgice* (*Pricesne and other liturgical chants*), 1939; *Liturghia Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur și felul în care se cântă la Blaj* (*Saint John Chrysostom Liturgy and the way it is sung in Blaj*), 1929¹, 1935². Cf. Alexandru Suci, „Activitatea didactică și dirijorală a lui Celestin Cherebețiu” (*The Didactic and Conducting Activity of Celestin Cherebețiu*), în: *Studia UBB*

and Săliște Archpriestship of the Archiepiscopate of Sibiu and the variant of the singer Ștefan Hrușcă⁹.

Description of the analysed variants

The Lord's Birth Troparion written down by Dimitrie Cunțanu is built on the intervallic structure of the 6th voice, in a troparion form.

In the irmologic chant of the 6th Transylvanian voice, in the melodic form of the troparion, we can notice a structural identity on the same scale and the same cadences, as in the irmologic chant of the 2nd voice in troparic form. The difference between the two voices is in the melodic formulas¹⁰, which in the troparic form of the 6th voice is melismatic.¹¹

The troparion of the 6th voice is built by the stratification method in two diatonic ways, resulting in a double modal line.

In the perspective of noticing the real melodic-harmonic functional means of the 6th Transylvanian voice, the main sounds must be known, the piles of the troparion's melody, around whom the helping sounds move indistinctively, and which project the specificity of the analysed troparion. Therefore, in the configuration of the chant written down by Dimitrie Cunțanu, we can notice a main base made of an ionic pentacord on G (1st step), on its dominant on the B sound (3rd step); and a secondary base formed on an Eolic pentachord on E (6th step). In the song's development, the structure that is of foremost visibility is of minor state, with the basis on E. We also notice the *re* undertone (5th step).

Theologia Catholica, anul LV, nr. 2, 2010, p. 89-99; Alexandru Solomon, *Învățământul muzical Blăjean (The Musical Teaching in Blaj)*, Blaj, Editura Buna-Vestire, 2003; Vasile Stanciu, „Viața și activitatea profesorului de muzică Celestin Cherebețiu” (The Life and Activity of the Music Professor Celestin Cherebețiu), în: *Studia UBB Theologia Orthodoxa*, anul XXXVIII, nr. 1-2, 1993, p. 123-137.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqS394fUoJs>

¹⁰ Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Muzica bisericească la români” (Romanian Church Music), *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie*, vol. I, București, 1974, p. 350; Ioan Popescu, „Elemente bisericești tradiționale în opera muzicală a lui Dimitrie Cunțanu” (Church Elements in the Musical Work of Dimitrie Cunțanu), în: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, an XCIV, (1976), 9-12, pp.1053-1062 (p.1060).

¹¹ Elena Chircev, *Muzica românească de tradiție bizantină între neume și portativ (The Romanian Music of Byzantine tradition between absence and stave)*, ediție revizuită, vol. 2: *Repertoriul liturgic românesc notat pe portativ în colecțiile de cântări bisericești din Transilvania și Banat (The Romanian Liturgic Repertoire noted on the stave in the collections of religious songs in Transilvania and Banat)*, Editura Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 80

The melodic ambitus: D2-C3

E.g. 1

**Functional scheme of The Lord's Birth Troparion,
Dimitrie Cunțanu, *Religious Chants...*, p. 64.**

The literary form elements

The repartition of the liturgic text in the stanzas' typology shall prove the poetic strata of the chant.

„Nascerea Ta, Christóse, Dumnezeul nostru/ Your Birth Christ, Our Lord”, - stanza 1

„Răsărit-au lumii lumina conștiinței/ The conscious light has risen for us” – stanza 2

„Că întru dânsa cei ce slugiau stelelor/ And in it the ones who served the stars” – stanza 3

„De la stea s'au învățat/ By the stars they were taught” – stanza 4

„Să se'nchine Ție, sórelui dreptății/ To bow to You, the Son of justice”, - stanza 5

„Și să Te cunóscă pre Tine, răsăritul cel de sus/ And to know You, the upwards Light”, - stanza 6

„Dómne, mărire Ție!/ Lord, glory to You” – stanza 7

Introducing the literary form elements in the troparion's musical typology, we can notice that both in the literary text and the musical text there are basic asymmetrical architectural forms, which steam from Byzantine music, where these forms are prevalent.

„Phrase 1 - 20 q; Phrase 2 - 23 q; Phrase 3 - 18 q; Phrase 4 - 12 q;
Phrase 5 - 18 q; Phrase 6 - 24 q Phrase 7 - 12 q”

The melody of the troparion describes an overall continuous waved movement, which gives it a fine, smooth expression, in conformity with the Transylvanian ethos and of the 6th tone. The melodic development is increasing. The melodic stops of the 2nd, 4th and 6th phrases on the E sound are made by conjunct steps, which states the polarizing sound around which

the song develops. The initial phrases of the melodic texts constitute in real thematic phrases that fixate the way and atmosphere by which the following melodic take will burst. In the 6th phrase, we encounter the climax of the entire song, reaching the acute sound of the example, the C sound. All this processed described by an anabasis-katabasis type of technique, by the words “and may they know You”, thus completing brilliantly the idea of the liturgic text.

In the troparion we encounter three types of beats: imperfect beats on G (1st step), and the sound B (3rd step dominant), perfect beats on E (6th step) and final beats on G (1st step). The conclusive cadenced formulas are built on the repetitive procedure of the two basis of the mode, on G and E consequently. This repetition creates a barely monotonous aspect. From a theological and spiritual viewpoint, this cadential repetition is beneficial for the together singing and the interiority of the troparion theological content. Knowing the cadential typology, the believers present at mass accompany the lectern by singing the archaic formulas. On the other hand, this monotony creates the premises of the attention’s fixation of the words that accompany the formulas and of its interiorization. By the fact that the melodic line does not have abrupt change of rhythm and melos, helps the believers as they can easily meditate, insisting on the prayer.

E.g. 2



**The Lord's Birth Troparion,
Dimitrie Cuñțanu, *Religious Chants...*, p. 64, measure 8; 20.**

The description of the melodic development of the troparion written down by Dimitrie Cuñțanu facilitates the composition of a few synthesis considerations. Firstly, we can notice the diatonic character of the song, in which the conjunct steps are present, with diatonic tones and semitones. Secondly, merely all the sounds of the 6th tone's intervallic slide of the modal diapason become active, taking the troparion shape. Thirdly, the ascendant senses of the melodic line led to dominate notes, and the descendent ones direct to the basic note. Fourthly, we can see the simplicity of the melodic lines, which fully corresponds to the melodicism principle and the vocality of the *irmological* songs in the byzantine music. Then, at the end of the melodic phrases the rhythmicity relaxes through higher values than the ones in context.

Regarding the melody's tempo, it is an animated one and in the interior cadences area we can see a melismatic cadential formula. These

formulae generate a giusto-syllabic authentic rhythm. This animated rhythm helps maintain focus on the word and melody.

This troparion's particularities show the similarity between the Transylvanian religious musical style and the psaltic one. The troparion, in its Transylvanian variant, follows entirely the *irmological* chant principles in the psaltic music: musical phrases of short size with a narrow chain; concise cadences, almost dry, without melismatic figures; simple melodic and unadorned lines, fixed measured rhythmicity, in which the monotony predominates; the close rapport between the melodic and literary text; a note to a syllable, excepting the cadential formulae easily melismatic.

All these aspects show that the troparion's origin can be placed in the Byzantine music area, but with consideration on autochthonous melodic particularities. Apart from the chromatic structure of the troparion, in the Byzantine variant, the Lord's Birth Troparion, in the Transylvanian variant, keeps the characteristics of the diatonic structure. The oral tradition, written down by Dimitrie Cunțanu is consequent regarding the diatonism of the 2nd tone, as a troparic form which it keeps in all the songs fixated in linear notation.

E.g. 3

17. Troparul Nascerei Domnului.

Allegretto.

Nas - ce-rea ta Cri - stó-se Dum-ne - ze - ul
 nos - - tru, rê-să - ri - țau lu - - - mei
 lu - mi - na cu-nos - cin - - ței, că
 in - tru dên - sa cei ce slu - giau ste-le - lor
 de la stea său in - vè - țat: să se 'nchi - ne
 țî - e só-re - lui drep - tă - - ții, și să
 te cu - nós - că pre ti - ne rê-să - ri - tul
 cel de sus, Dóm - ne mă - ri - re țî - - e.

Codacul: la podobii, gl. III, Nr 2.

The Lord's Birth Troparion, Dimitrie Cunțanu, *Religious Chants...*, p. 64.

Consequently, the Lord's Birth Troparion written down in linear notation by Dimitrie Cunțanu, in 1890, is the melodic model that the Transylvanian religious singers had in their repertoire for many centuries. With the inherent structural particularities of an orally transmission process, broadly, the troparion was kept in an almost-original form.

Apart from this form of The Lord's Birth Troparion, we encounter some other scripted melodic variants in various papers written by musicologists and religious music professors.

In the melodic variants of the Lord's Birth Troparion destined to the mass service we can add the troparion transcribed by Professor Celestin Cherebețiu. The troparion's melody¹² in the Greek-Catholic Church suffered, in its turn, the same influence from the oral tradition.

The lack of a religious singers' school and music books made the Greek Catholic religious music to have the same influence from the folklore, classical music and of the inhabited Christian cults' music, but also of the Transylvanian religious orthodox music. Referring to the situation in which the old religious chants were, that was in circulation in the first half of the 20th century, in the Catholic Church, in an article signed by Cherebețiu in the contemporary media, he denounced the situation of old religious chants, by saying: "Regarding objectively our religious chants and analyzing them from a technical-musical point of view, we shall see that they do not even remotely correspond to its true meaning in the church: the rise of the soul. The cause? Their uneven origin and evolution. Those who had composed them were people with little musical education, influenced by the Slavic and a few Greek chants. The later singers sang and distributed these songs till today by ear, each changing, adding, and omitting something, mostly unsuccessfully, subsequently today we found ourselves with these chants which are disgraceful and shameful for our church. Harsh judgment, for sure, but certain. All the musical connoisseurs agree."¹³

Analysing the chants' content, Cherebețiu stated that, most often, by the defect melodic lines do not emphasise the hymnographic text and this is due to: "a) the repetition of an unfinished word (ex. tai-taină/mys-mystery, ali-aliluia, pute-puterile/pow-powers aso); b) prolonging the word on an unstressed syllable (ex. Dumneeezeu/ Good, Feecioara/ Viiirgin etc); c) hundreds of words with a wrong accent; d) the degeneration of a fragment or musical phrase in a *coda* (ex. Cu vrednicie/ With dignity, Sfânt/Saint, Pe tine te lăudăm/ We

¹² Celestin Cherebețiu, *Cântări bisericesti ocazionale în felul cum se cântă la Blaj (Religious occasional chants and the way that are sung in Blaj)*, 1931, p. 6-7.

¹³ Celestin Cherebețiu, „Cântare nouă – bătrânele noastre cântări bisericesti trebuiesc îndreptate (New Chant - our ancient chants must be made clearer), în: *Unirea – foaie bisericească politică*, anul XLI (Blaj, 18 aprilie), nr. 16, 1931, p. 1.

praise thee, from Saint Basil the Great liturgy etc). The music of other chants is bizarre. The rhythm and modulation (passing from a tonality to another) are unacceptable¹⁴.

The modal structure of this Lord's Birth Troparion variant is like that picked up by Dimitrie Cunțanu, so we can reach the following conclusion, the common ground of the Transylvanian musical variants, from which the song was taken, is one common for both traditions, orthodox and Greek-catholic. Consequently, in the melody written by Celestin Cherebețiu, we can notice that the main basis is composed by a Ionic pentachord and a *B* (step 1), with the dominant on the sound *D* (3rd step); and a secondary base composed by an Eolic pentachord on *G* (6th step). In the song's development, the structure which is majorly essential is the one with minor state, with a basis on *G*. We also see the presence of the *F* undertone (5th step).

E.g. 4

Naș - te - rea Ta Cris - toa - se Dum - ne - ze - ul
 nos - tru, ră - să - rit - a lu - mii lu - mi - na
 cu - noș - tin - ței că - n - tru dâ - n - sa ce - ia ce ser -
 veau ste - le - lor de la stea - sa - u în - vă -
 țăt să se - n - chi - ne Ți - e Soa - re - lui drep - tă -

¹⁴ Celestin Cherebețiu, „Cântare nouă...” (New Chant...), p. 1.

- ții și să Te cu - noas - că pe Ti - ne Ră - să -
 ri - tul cel de sus, Doam - ne mă - ri - re Ți -
 e.

The Lord's Birth Troparion, Celestin Cherebețiu, *Cântări bisericești ocazionale în felul cum se cântă la Blaj/ Religious occasional chants and the way that are sung in Blaj, 1931, p. 6-7.*

Regarding the repartition of the liturgical text in the stanzas' typology, we notice a correspondence with the Cunțanu variant. Cherebețiu uses the same division of musical phrases as in Cunțanu's example, but on the musical phrases' dimensional phrase we can notice a difference. This is given by the formula structure used by the Greek-Catholic variant. Phrase 1 - 20 q; Phrase 2 - 18 q; Phrase 3 - 16 q; Phrase 4 - 11 q; Phrase 5 - 18 q; Phrase 6 - 19 q Phrase 7 - 14 q

Regarding the cadential system we can say there is a perfect correspondence between the two variants:

E.g. 5

Phrase	Cunțanu	Cherebețiu
1	G	B
2	E	G
3	G	H
4	E	G
5	G	B
6	E	G
7	G	B

The cadential system

The melodic variant written down by Cherebețiu, sung in the Greek-Catholic Church, in broad lines, is like Dimitrie Cunțanu's variant. The differences are given by the melodic lines' configuration and by the melismatic development of the cadential formulas. The differences of both songs are due to the liturgical environment in which these two songs developed and kept by oral tradition. The fact that these two examples are so similar proves the fact that, above all the differences and divergences of religious strata, regarding the religious music, the source of inspiration of both confessions is common. Both traditions are successors and continuances, more or less, of the Byzantine music that circled in the area.

Not without importance are the oral variants which we shall be referring to. They belong to the lively phenomenon of orality, that is in a continuous transformation, and illustrates the degree of variability of the troparion at the melody line, tempo, tonality, and interpretation level. All these variables are determined by the singers' biographies, by their musical preferences and the musical studies they have. The oral variants¹⁵ which we are going to be referring to are taken from the discography of the project *The Systematic research and valorisation of the treasure of orality and of lectern singing in the Sibiu Archdiocese churches* coordinated by Professor Vasile Grăjdian¹⁶.

¹⁵ Ivănuț Nicolae of Mohu, learned how to sing from singers Ioan Toader, Ilie Lupu și Alexandru Muțiu. In 1997 he obtained his religious singer's diploma. In the same year he became "tenure on the singer's position". Nica Ioan of Mohu sings at the lectern for 50 years with Nicolae Ivanut, the other singer in the village; Lupea Ioan din Galeș, from 1960 began to sing at the lectern in his native village, inheriting his father who had been a singer. He learned to sing by notes, and for the clarifying of the melodies he used the guitar. Goja Ana din Hălchiu, in 1978 graduates the course of Religious Singers Cluj-Napoca. She had adored the lectern chanting from her childhood and the first chants are taught to her by the priests Nicanor Filip, Andrei Negrea and the singer Bunea Ioan din Zagon. Grămadă Dumitru din Brașov, Spitale I Parish, The first chants he learnt were from his father, who was the conductor of the church choir in Dumbrăvița. Sorea Gheorghe din Mateiaș, graduated *Școala Populară de Arte (Folk art School)* in Brașov. Nechita Gheorghe din Mag, sings from his childhood and learned how to sing from priest Alexandru Solomon and from Pr. Silvian Stângăciu. Oană Dumitru din Holbav, learned how to sing from his father a religious singer in Holbav for years, and from Oprea Alexandu and Botea Candet. Cf. *Cântarea liturgică ortodoxă din sudul Transilvaniei: cântarea tradițională de strană în bisericile Arhiepiscopiei Sibiului (Orthodox Liturgical Chant in the South of Transylvania: traditional lectern chanting in the Sibiu Archdioceses)*, Vasile Grăjdian, Sorin Dobre, Corina Grecu, Iuliana Streza, Sibiu, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2007, p. 187-367.

¹⁶ Grant MEC-CNCSIS (Ministerul Educației și Cercetării - Consiliul Național al Cercetării Științifice din Învățământul Superior) nr.290/2002 and Grant MECT-CNCSIS (Ministerul Educației, Cercetării și Tineretului - Consiliul Național al Cercetării Științifice din Învățământul Superior) nr.368/2003. In this extensive research project, a series of religious

The method used for this purpose is that of parallel comparison of a printed musical sample, relevant for the religious singing in Transylvania, with transcriptions of the orally transmitted religious singing, as it is presently practiced in some of the Transylvanian orthodox parishes. The selection of the analysed models followed the maximum relevance criterion for the purpose of treatment. The oral methodical variants researched steam from the troparion noted by Dimitrie Cunțanu, who has for the Transylvanian singers an archetypal value.

The entire interpretative universe steams from the cunțan melodic archetype, both for those familiarized by the guidonic notation, and for those who don't. Starting from this pattern, each singer, depending on his vocal, musical, and interpretative qualities, builds its own musical variant. From the 110 recorded singers only six of them sang The Lord's Birth Troparion. From the six, we have selected 3 representative songs, that distinguish themselves by a series of structural similarities and differences of the standard variant.

Analysing the three proposed variants, we can see that modal scale of the 6th voice, the troparion form, follows the same modal line, in all the variants. The same structural identity can be noticed at the cadential system level, which proves the rooting in time of a stable melodic variant. The differences are evident for the inversion of a few cadential steps and, seldomly some of them are comprised.

As a first conclusion for the oral variants, we can state that even after one hundred years, after Cunțanu fixed in writing a song, that had been circulating in an oral form, in the Transylvanian Orthodox Church areal, around The Lord's Birth Troparion, used in a liturgical setting, a stable variant was formed, which keeps, depending on the religious singer level of education, a structural identity less or more similar to the princeps variant.

Secondly, we can see from the analysed variants, but even by direct observation, along all these years, the way the troparion has changed. Therefore, we can sum up that regarding the troparion's melody, a solid Transylvanian tradition was formed, transmitted only orally. What is more, the melodic line of this troparion is often used by the religious singers as a sample of interpretation for other text of the 6th voice, that don't have their own song.

singers were recorded. The resulting material given by researchers by the CDs represents a valuable musical trust for the musicologists who are interested in the research and valorisation of the musical religious trust, of oral tradition, in the Archdioceses of Sibiu. Given the historical importance of this eparchy, from which, beginning with 1890, started the religious chant in all Transylvania, we consider that the oral variants we have map the musical situation of this *autochthonous* style, in a continuous dynamic.

Troparul Nașterii Domnului

Dimitrie
Cunțanu

Năș - te - rea Ta, Hris - toa - se, Dum - ne - ze - ul nos -

Nechita
Gheorghe

Năș - te - rea Ta, Hris - toa - se, Dum - ne - ze - ul nos -

Goja
Ana

Năș - te - rea Ta, Hris - toa - se, Dum - ne - ze - ul nos -

Nica
Ioan

Năș - te - rea Ta, Hris - toa - se, Dum - ne - ze - ul nos -

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tru, ră - să - ri - ta lu - mii lu - mi - na cu - noș - tin -

tru, ră - să - ri - ta lu - mii lu - mi - na cu - noș - tin -

tru, ră - să - ri - ta lu - mii lu - mi - na cu - noș - tin -

tru, ră - să - ri - ta lu - mii lu - mi - na cu - noș - tin -

22

ței, că în - tru dân - sa cei ce slu - jeau ste - le - lor de -

ței, că - n - tru dân - sa cei ce slu - jeau ste - le - lor

ței, că - n - tru dân - sa ce - ia ce slu - jeau ste - le - lor

ței, căci în - tru dân - sa cei ce slu - jeau ste - le - lor

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2

33

la stea s-au în - vă - țat să se-n - chi-ne Ți - e, Soa-re -
 de la stea s-au în - vă - țat să se-n - chi-ne Ți - e, Soa-re -
 de la stea s-au în - vă - țat să se-n - chi-ne Ți - e, Soa -
 de la stea s-au în - vă - țat să se în - chi - ne Ți - e, Soa -

43

lui drep - tă - ții și să Te cu - noas - că pe Ti - ne, Ră-să -
 lui drep - tă - ții și să Te cu - noas - că pe Ti - ne, Ră-să -
 re - lui drep - tă - ții și să Te cu - noas - că pe Ti - ne, Ră -
 re - lui drep - tă - ții și să Te cu - noas - că pe Ti - ne, Ră -

54

ri - tul cel de sus, Doam - ne, mă - ri-re Ți - e.
 ri - tul cel de sus, Doam - ne, mă - ri-re Ți - e.
 să - ri-tul cel de sus, Doam - ne, mă - ri-re Ți - e.
 să - ri-tul cel de sus, Doam - ne, mă - ri-re Ți - e.

The Lord's Birth Troparion transcribing the songs of Nichita Gheorghe, Goja Ana, Nica Ioan. CD *Cântarea liturgică ortodoxă din sudul Transilvaniei: cântarea tradițională de strană în bisericile Arhiepiscopiei Sibiului / Orthodox Liturgical Chant in the South of Transylvania: traditional lectern chanting in the Sibiu Archdioceses*, Vasile Grăjdian, Sorin Dobre, Corina Grecu, Iuliana Streza, Sibiu, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2007.

The phenomenon of melodic diversity it is an important aspect of the circulation of the variants, that is why, The Lord's Birth Troparion can be found not only in liturgical celebrations, but also in the repertoire of groups of carollers from the Transylvanian area. From a liturgical point of view, in certain regions of the country is a custom that, during the Christmas fast, people go from house to house for the priest to announce the approach of the holiday. During this ritual The Lord's Birth Troparion is chanted, in every house. In Transylvania this custom does not exist, however, in certain areas, it has been established that, in the repertoire of carollers, The Lord's Birth Troparion is also present. The ritual function of this troparion is to announce the birth of the Saviour.

Among the oldest melodic variants recorded in folklore collections, the melody noted by Béla Bartók in 1904, in the town of Rogoz in Bihor County, stands out. In our analytical approach, we also chose to focus on the troparion from Béla Bartók's collection because it represents the first evidence of a written musical version of this troparion, used in winter customs. Also, the importance of this variant for the present research, also resides in the following considerations: first of all, the songs collected by Bartók have a certain variability, "being the same as a living being, it changes from minute to minute, from moment to moment"¹⁷, secondly, the melody of the troparion is distinguished by the scientific rigour evident in the notation of all melismas, glissandos and vocal inflections, down to the smallest details; thirdly, according to Béla Bartók, "all the melodies that are or have been spread in the peasant blanket of a people are the instinctive expression of the musical sense of the peasants... these songs embody the highest artistic perfections. They are true examples of how to give a musical idea the most perfect expression in the shortest form, with the most modest means"¹⁸.

¹⁷ Béla Bartók, *De ce și cum să culegem muzica populară? (Why and how to collect folk music?)*, 1936, p. 60.

¹⁸ Béla Bartók, *Ce este muzica populara? (What is folk music?)* 1931, p. 57.

131. * *Parlando*, ♩.232

1. st.

(162.) Na-ști-rea ta Hri-stoasă Dum - ne - ze - u nos - tru,

(sic!)

2. st.

Ră - să - rit - a lu-mi-j lu-mi - na cu - no - șt'in - ță, Că'n-tru dăn - sa cej ce

șer-bea ste-le-lor da la stea-ua s'au'n - va - țat, Și sa'n-chi-na țî - e

3. st.

Soa - re-lu-j drep - tă - țîj, Și să t'e cu - noa-seă pre t'i - ne

Ră - să - ri - tul cel dă _____ sus, Doam - ne, mă - ri - re țî - e!

M.F. 1904 a), Rogoz (Bihor), feciori, XII.1911.

The Lord's Birth Troparion Béla Bartók, *Rumanian folk music, Volume Four Carols and Christmas Songs (Colinde)*, Edited by Benjamin Suchoff, Texts Translated by E. C. Teodorescu, Preface to Part One Translated by Abram Loft, Preface to Part Two Translated by, Ernest H. Sanders. The Hague Martinus Nijhoff, 1975, p. 540.

The melody recorded by Béla Bartók is characterized by her as a melody with an indeterminable form, having a structure based on a text without a fixed prosodic form. This literary form of the troparion is duet of its translation from ancient Greek. At the level of relationship between the text and the melody, we find an ideational identity. The repetitive melodic formulas highlight the most important ideas of the troparion.

As far as the melody is concerned, we notice an interpenetration of church music with folk music. The collected melodic text reveals a similarity with the 4th voice, in the Transylvanian version. This similarity can be seen in the incipits of the melodic lines and in the cadential formulas. The particularities of the melodic line and cadential formulas are given by the

melismas, glissandos and vocal inflexions, which the ethnomusicologist Béla Bartók noted with acrimony. Regarding ornamentation, it is very rich, which proves that the variants and oral formulas do not necessarily propose a simplification of the ornamentation, in the sense of reducing it, but rather it is about proposing other melodic twists, more familiar to the singer and in this way simpler to sing. From a stylistic point of view, it is true that these repetitive formulas that the singers used can create such a state of monotony, which sometimes suggest a possibly slightly derogatory tone of this type of singing, in the direction of a primitive unprofessionalism. But these so-called defects can constitute true qualities, viewed from an ecclesiastical point of view. We also notice a rhythmic-melodic change, in the sense of decreasing some note values. The troparion respects all the rules of irmological singing through a lively, animated character, with concise melodic structures and a strict mensuration of the rhythm.

The Troparion of the Nativity of the Lord recorded by Béla Bartók is a good example of what professor Gheorghe Şoima designates as Romanization, in the Transylvanian style of post-byzantine singing.¹⁹

Along with the variants recorded in the works mentioned above we will also focus on the variants popularized and disseminated by means of singers established for this type of church singing. The Lord's Birth Troparion, in the interpretation of Ştefan Hruşcă, original from Ieud, Maramureş, represents a local variant of the way in which this troparion is sung and integrated into the repertoire of carols. The melodic line is popularized by the performer Ştefan Hruşcă and also sung by different groups of carollers from the Maramureş area is an important one for this research because, on the one hand, it represents a melodic variant known in the area from which it originates, and on the other hand, due to the fame of which the performer enjoys among different communities, has managed to impose a certain style of interpretation of the troparion.

¹⁹ Gheorghe Şoima, „Muzica bisericească și laică...” (Religious and laic music...), p. 799.

Naș - te - rea Ta Hris - toa - se Dum - ne - ze - ul _____

nos - tru ră - să - ri - ta lu - mii lu - mi - na cu - noș - tin - ței

că - n - tru dâ - n - sa ce - ia ce slu - jeau ste - le - lor

de la stea s - au în - vă - țat, să se - n - chi - ne Ți - e Soa

re - lui drep - tă - ții și să Te cu -

noas - că pe Ti - ne Ră - să - ri - tul cel de sus,

Doam - ne _____ mă - ri - re Ți - e.

**The Lord's Birth Troparion, transcribing the song after Ștefan Hrușcă,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxGBCLJkCas>**

At first glance a connection between the standard version of Dimitrie Cunțanu and the one collected by Béla Bartók can be noticed. The structural identity with Cunțanu's melody can be observed at the level of incipits, and

with Bartók's melody at the level of cadences. Overall, one can appreciate for The Lord's Birth Troparion in the written and oral versions, a common melodic matrix, which however in most cases undergoes a transformation. The rich ornamentation of the version used as a carol demonstrates the sophistication of the singers. The repetition of the troparion during the divine service and in the rehearsals of carol groups favours its memorization and embellishment, as appropriate, with various folk-style melismas.

The presence of the troparion in the two liturgical and folkloric dimensions offers us an extended beach of structural aspects that reveal the stylistic transformations that the troparion underwent, from its fixation in linear notation, in 1890, to the performances of groups of carollers and church singers from the first decade of the 21st century.

A first general conclusion, following the comparison of the musical variants of the Nativity trope, would be that of finding the existence of a great diversity and melodic richness.

Around the model or pattern recorded by Dimitrie Cunțanu there is a musical universe quite considerable in terms of its stylistic maturity, which is still waiting to be discovered, differentiated, exploited.

The presented melodic variants, although they are part of the Transylvanian area and are often called "cunțană" or "after Cunțanu" and considered somewhat having their own regional identity, enclaved, are constituted as "melody in itself", with strong local accents, a variant of the psaltic church chant of byzantine origin, Romanianized in a folkloric manner.

The analysed melodies demonstrate the value of the ensemble of existing melodic variants, which together mark a style of church singing, within a native musical culture.

Translated from Romanian by Marcela Stan

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