

## WRITTEN SOURCES IN THE REPERTOIRE OF THE CHRISTMAS CAROLS FROM THE TRANSYLVANIAN PLAIN

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**SUMMARY.** In the structure of the carols from the Transylvanian Plain has survived an old material of tunes and texts. The origin of some song's dates back as far as the 16th century, and from that period to the 19th century the set of songs had been enriched with more and more tunes. In the material collected by the author an important style group is the Variants of the songs from the hymnals. The author argues that even if the written or printed forms still have their role in the learning, remembering, and singing of Christmas songs, the learning of new tunes or the passing of the old ones to the new generation happens by the well-known oral tradition and not with the help of music sheets.

**Keywords:** Christmas songs, Transylvanian Plain, oral tradition.

Zoltán Kodály outlined on several occasions the importance of the comparative research of the melodies from written or published sources and the variants that have been kept in the oral tradition. In his book *The Hungarian Folk Music* he completed a whole chapter on this question: *VII. The Marks of Art Music*, including the first subsection on the folk versions of Gregorian chants and ecclesiastic songs.<sup>2</sup>

In the following I shall quote some ideas of Kodály in this question: "The Hungarian nation, at least a part of it, has been reading and writing for centuries, thus the elements of the forming writing and book culture could

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<sup>2</sup> Kodály, Zoltán. *A magyar népzene (The Hungarian Folk Music)*. The set of music exercises, edited by Lajos Vargyas, 11th edition, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1989. pp. 63–70.



have been included in its original oral culture starting already with the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But in the musical way, not only the Hungarian peasants, but also the whole middle class had been living in illiteracy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: none could read the notes. (...) The plain song – the reigning, almost exclusive musical activity – had been travelling truly ‘from mouth to mouth’, not through writing, not through notes, only through the ear, old and new altogether. (...) The notes of the hymnals were no exceptions: the people can see these since 1607, but they haven’t been able to learn to read it since, thus the melodies were preserved by oral tradition.”<sup>3</sup>

On the Transylvanian Plain, as well as all over the Hungarian language area, most of the songs related to the folk customs of Christmas are popular songs or are related to these in their character. Musicology defines *popular song*<sup>4</sup> as a term that includes all those songs that are sung together by the community within church practice. A part of these had been organically embedded in the repertoire of different holidays, thus in the practice of Christmas carols, too. Usually the texts deal with religious topics, and most of the melodies can be found in old manuscripts or hymnals. Some of the pieces can date back as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, being related to medieval songs and Gregorian chants, and since then, up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the repertoire had been continuously extended with more and more new melodies.<sup>5</sup>

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The text of the song (E.g. 1) *Parancsolá az Agusztus császár (Thus Ordered Emperor Augustus)* can be found first in the *Lőcsei Énekeskönyv (The Hymnal from Levoča)* (1635), than together with the melody it appears in the *Eperjesi Graduál (The Gradual from Prešov)*, made between 1635–1650. In the opinion of Kálmán Tóth Csomasz, according to its style and content, the text might have been written earlier.<sup>6</sup> As concerning the melody, due to its origin and style can be included in the popular songs deriving from medieval chants.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Dobszay, László. *A magyar népének I. Tankönyv. (Popular Song. I. Manual.)* (Egyházzenei füzetek, I/15.) MTA-TKI – Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem (LFZE) Egyházzenei Kutatócsoport – Magyar Egyházzenei Társaság, Budapest, 2006. pp. 7–10. (Abbreviation Dobszay 2006).

<sup>5</sup> This study was published in Hungarian within the volume *Mezőségi kántáló énekek, (Christmas Carols from the Transylvanian Plain)*, Author: Gergely, Zoltán. Hagyományok Háza, Budapest, 2016. ISBN 978-963-7363-89-4.

<sup>6</sup> Csomasz Tóth, Kálmán. *A XVI. század magyar dallamai. (Hungarian Melodies of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century).* Vol. *Régi Magyar Dallamok Tára, I.* Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1958. type 44/III–IV. (Abbreviation RMDT I.)

<sup>7</sup> Dobszay, László. *A magyar népének I. (Popular Song I).* Veszprémi Egyetemi Kiadó, Veszprém, 1995. p. 59. nr. 1.

One version of the song can be found in the *Kolozsvári Református Énekeskönyv (The Reformed Hymnal from Cluj)*, in the editions from 1744, respectively 1778; however starting with the 1837 edition the hymnals do not include it anymore, so it has survived only in its popular versions, up to our days, demonstrating the preserving power of oral tradition. The first publication of the popular versions comes from Călata Region, from Săvădisla<sup>8</sup>, and it brings the entire melody, in a slowly pulsating rhythm characteristic to popular songs (1a); while the performing style of the version from Fântânița (1b) is *parlando*; the last line of the melody is missing, therefore the verse becomes three-line, and the originally plagal minor, *A-ending* melody ends on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, transforming into a *E-ending*.<sup>9</sup> The melody has become a part of the passive repertoire. The theme and the motifs are identical with example 1b.

E.g. 1a/b

*Parancsolá az Agusztus császár (Thus Ordered Emperor Augustus)*

Tordaszentlászló

a) 

b) *Parlando rubato* ♩=96 

(a) 

(b) 

a) MNT II. 509j; Tordaszentlászló, Kolozs m; gy.Makkai-Nagy, 1939

b) KZA Mg 2941/12; Mezőkőbőllkut, Beszterce-Naszód m., Dózsa György 64, Rigó Ferenc 75.  
gy. Szenik I. - Mann G. 1975.

<sup>8</sup> György, Kerényi (editor). *Jeles napok. (Holidays Magyar Népzene Tára II. (Archive of Hungarian Folk Music II.))*. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1953. pp. 1134–1135. nr. 509. note . (Abbreviation MNT II.)

<sup>9</sup> The list of historical data: Ilona, Szenik. *Adatok néhány karácsonyi kántáló dallamáról. Előadás a KJNT Ünnepek és hétköznapiak. (Contributions to the Melody of a Few Christmas Carols. Presentation at the conference of KJES: Holidays and Everyday Life (Cluj, 16. 05. 1998).* Manuscript. 1998. nr. 1. and Éva, Péter. *Református gyülekezeti énekek az erdélyi írott és szójhagyományos forrásokban. (Reformed Congregational Songs in the Transylvanian Written and Oral Sources.)*. Kolozsvári Egyetemi Kiadó, Kolozsvár, 2008. pp. 108–109. nr. 46. (Abbreviation Péter 2008); in the latter there are also variants from the Transylvanian Plain and from Călata Region, also in fragments, and with *mi-ending*.

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The 16<sup>th</sup> century song (E.g. 2) *Jer mindnyájan örüljünk (Let Us All Be Merry)* is considered by church music literature as the translation of the Latin song *Iam cantemus odie*. The author of the Latin and Hungarian text is unknown.

On the Hungarian language area this melody's first appearance is in the 1566 (*The Hymnal from Oradea*), and it has been a constant presence within the Reformed church from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and within the Roman Catholic church from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the Reformed hymnals from Debrecen and Cluj of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the melody is accompanied by several text variants. For unknown reasons the song had been left out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century hymnals, however, it has been coming back as a church song in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

Music historian Éva Péter from Cluj – being involved with the research of ecclesiastic songs preserved within folk tradition – includes the example from above in the group of *Melodies Published with Interruption*.<sup>11</sup> From her research we can find out that the song *Úr Istennek szent Fia (Jer mindnyájan örüljünk) (Sacred Son of the Lord (Let Us All Be Merry))* was last published in the 1778 hymnal from Cluj. Even though the song had been missing from the hymnals for more than 200 years, the folk tradition preserved it, as on the Transylvanian Plain and the Călata Region it was incorporated into the Christmas repertoire of the Reformed and the Unitarians. The 1996 hymnal published in Cluj includes this song again, but in practice we can find the old, popular version, which is identical with the variant from the 1778 hymnal. The same thing can be seen during field work collecting.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Papp, Géza. *A XVII. század énekelt dallamai. (Oral Melodies of the 17th Century). Vol. Régi Magyar Dallamok Tára, II.* Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1970. pp. 322–323. nr. 129., p. 519 (Abbreviation RMDT II.); Szendrei, Janka - Dobszay, László and Rajeczky, Benjamin. *A XVI–XVII. századi dallamok a népi emlékezetben. I–II. (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Century Melodies in the Folk Memory). Volumes Régi Magyar Dallamok Tára I–II.* Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1979. p. 60. nr. I/129 (Abbreviation SZ–D–R I, SZ–D–R II); SZ–D–R II. p. 29. nr. I/129.; Dobszay, László and Szendrei, Janka. *A magyar népdaltípusok katalógusa (stílusok szerint rendezve) (Catalogue of Hungarian Folk Song Types (by Styles) I.) I.* Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Zenetudományi Intézet, Budapest, 1988. III(G) type 178. pp. 526–527. (Abbreviation MNTK I); Dobszay 2006. pp. 110–111. nr. 336.; Volly, István. *Karácsonyi és Mária-énekek (Christmas and Marian Songs).* Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 1982. pp. 74–75. nr. 50–51., p. 272.; Péter, 2008. pp. 73–74. nr. 16., pp. 109–110. nr. 47.

<sup>11</sup> Péter, 2008. p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> Collecting by Péter, Éva and Kallós, Zoltán. (<http://db.zti.hu/kallos/kallos.asp> (2013. 09. 19.)); see also HAS IF Folk Music Type System: nr. 17.148.0/0.

## E.g. 2

## Úr Istennek szent Fia (Sacred Son of the Lord)

Poco rubato ♩ = cca 40

1. Úr Is - ten - nek szent Fi - a,

Szü - le - ték e vi - lág - ra.

S el - jött lel - künk bol - dog - sá - gá - ra.

Suatu, Cluj County, Mária Maneszes (Tóth) 88, Anna Kiss (Dezső) 78, Zsófia Nagy (Domokos) 77, coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.

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This melody (E.g. 3), originating from the medieval chants, could be found already from the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the German Catholic and Evangelic hymnals, and later on it was taken over by the surrounding Polish, Slovakian and Czech Protestant congregations.<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther's song, *Vom Hoch da komm ich her*, translated into Hungarian as *Mennyből jövök most hozzátok* (*I Shall Come to You from Heaven*) was first published in the *Ráday Graduál* (*Ráday Gradual*) (1596–1607)<sup>14</sup>. The first noting of the melody from the *Eperjesi Graduál* (*The Gradual from Prešov*) (1635) presents the song with the text mentioned above: *Mennyből jövök most hozzátok* (*I Shall Come to You from Heaven*); the starting verse, a well-known piece written by Bálint Triller (1555) from Silesia, called *Az Istennek szent angyala* (*Saint Angel of the Lord*)<sup>15</sup>, was annexed to the melody only later, and that is how it is published by the 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> century Reformed, Evangelic and Baptist hymnals. According to László Dobszay the melody has been ignored by the Catholic hymnals from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but there are some Catholic congregations in

<sup>13</sup> RMDT II. p. 488. note nr. 85.

<sup>14</sup> RMDT II. p. 244. nr. 85.; pp. 488–489. note nr. 85.; Péter 2008. pp. 63–65.

<sup>15</sup> Friedrick, Károly. *A magyar evangélikus templomi ének (XVI–XVIII. század)*. (*Hungarian Evangelic Church Songs (16th–18th Century)*). Garab József könyvnyomdája, Cegléd, Budapest, 1944. p. 84. *Es kam ein Engel, hell un klar*-translation, RMDT II. p. 489. note nr. 85.

Transylvania, where thanks to oral traditions this song is still in use in church practice and in the repertoire of winter folk customs.<sup>16</sup>

The use of this song was not restricted within church walls. In the middle part of Transylvania, especially in the Călata Region and the Transylvanian Plain, the *Az Istennek szent angyala* (*Saint Angel of the Lord*) is present in the basic repertoire of the adult groups involved in the performance of Christmas carols.<sup>17</sup> There are other texts that are paired with this melody as the well-known *Paradicsom szegeletbe* (*In the Corner of Paradise*) type of text, but also other Christmas, New Year's Eve and even profane texts.<sup>18</sup>

The performance differs from village to village: some are leaning towards an ecclesiastic, balanced rhythm, medium tempo and lack of ornamentation (3a), while others prefer a drawling rhythm, a slow tempo and such a rich ornamentation, that it is almost unrecognizable (3b).<sup>19</sup> The informant from Chesău is singing two lines similar to the ending part of the hymnal variant (3a): the third line is different, while the fourth line is in fact a variant of the fourth line from 3a.

## E.g. 3a

*Az Istennek szent angyala* (*Saint Angel of the Lord*)

Poco rubato ♩ = 185

Az Is-ten-nek szent an-gyala, Meny-nyek-ből hogy a-lá-szál-la,  
És a pász-to-rok-hoz ju-ta, Né-ki-ek e-kép-pen szó-la.

**Nuşeni, Bistriţa-Năşăud County, Rozália Kiss (Gergely) 63,  
coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.**

<sup>16</sup> About the presence of the song in Evangelic and Baptist hymnals and ad notam see Dobszay, 2006. nr. 215. pp. 77–78.; about the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century appearance in the Transylvanian Reformed hymnals see Péter, 2008. p. 150.

<sup>17</sup> Péter, 2008. pp. 102–105. Another 15 variants can also be found in the Kallós online collections: <http://db.zti.hu/kallos/kallos.asp> (2013. 09. 19.)

<sup>18</sup> HAS IF Folk Music Type System: nr. 18.117.0/1.

<sup>19</sup> SZ–D–R I. nr. 58. \*II/85, SZ–D–R II. nr. 25. II/85.; Volly, István. *Karácsonyi és Mária-énekek* (*Christmas and Marian Songs*). Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 1982. nr. 94–95., pp. 102–103., pp. 289–290. The American Protestants sing it also in 6/8, while in the Transylvanian Christmas carols is sung also in 5/8.

*Az Istennek szent anyala (Saint Angel of the Lord)*

Quasi giusto ♩ = cca. 47

1. S az Is - ten - nek — szent — an - gya - la,

S meny - nyé - böől — hogy — a - lá - szál - la.

2. És a pásztorokhoz juta,  
Nékiek eképpen szóla:

**Chesău, Cluj County, Erzsí Horváth (Kicsi) 74, coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.**

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The text of the Christmas carol (E.g. 4) of Imre Pécseli Király (1585?–1641)<sup>20</sup> is already included in the 17<sup>th</sup> century *Várdi énekeskönyv (Hymnal from Oradea)*, but it also appears in the latter Reformed and Evangelic hymnals.<sup>21</sup> This melody, bearing the specificities of the 16<sup>th</sup> century chronicle and church song style, despite the fact that it appeared a century later, it has become very popular. It has been republished ever since the first appearance of the 1744 hymnal from Cluj.<sup>22</sup>

With some difference in melody and text, the song can be found at the Protestant and Catholic congregations as well: the Baptist hymnal includes the version from Debrecen, while Catholic hymnal introduced it much later, following the popular practice, and producing some minor changes in the text. The Evangelic hymnal, although it refers to the 1744 hymnal from Cluj, it presents the melody variant used by the Catholics, but with a rewritten text. The Reformed hymnals from Cluj have been republishing the version from 1744: the distinguishing aspect of the melody is the opening fifth, which has been taken over by the popular practice as well.

<sup>20</sup> RMKT XVII/2. nr. 15. pp. 33–35., pp. 279–280.

<sup>21</sup> RMDT II. nr. 319.

<sup>22</sup> See Péter, 2008. Table 219. *Krisztus Urunknak áldott születésén*, nr. 154.

The function of the song has been changing during time: it has survived as a church song, a part of the Christmas carol or as a New Year's Eve chant.<sup>23</sup>

The traditional character of the melody is supported not only by its Dorian mode, but also by the 5+6, 5+6, 5+6, 5 syllabic Sapphic medieval way of composition, well-known all over Europe, whose metrical structure is reflected also in the rhythm of the melody.<sup>24</sup>

The seven-verse biblical text sums up the story of the birth of Jesus, the fulfilment of the prophecy, the gratefulness and joy of mankind, the release from our sins and our saving – in one word the essence, the sense of Christian faith.

**E.g. 4a**

*Krisztus Urunknak (At the Birth of Our Lord Jesus)*

$\text{♩} = 40$

Krisz-tus U-runknak, Ál-dott szü-le-té-sén, An-gya-li ver-set,

Mond-junk szent ün-ne-pén. Mely Bet-le-hemnek, me-ze-jé-ben ré-gen

Zen-gett e-kép-pen.

**Buza, Cluj County., Mária Eke (Simon) 78, Ilus Czégér (Marha) 67,  
coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.**

<sup>23</sup> About its hymnal variants and characteristics see Dobszay, 2006. nr. 454. p. 185.; SZ–D–R I. nr. II/319., pp. 214–215.; SZ–D–R II. nr. II/319. p. 95.

<sup>24</sup> Péter, 2008. p. 88. nr. 32., pp. 105–106. nr. 42.



## E.g. 4b

*Krisztus Urunknak (At the Birth of Our Lord Jesus)*

Quasi giusto  $\text{♩} = \text{cca } 36$

I. Krisz-tus U-runk-nak ál-dott szű-le-té-sén,  
An-gya-li ver-set mond-junk szent ün-ne-pén,  
Mely Bet-le-hem-ne-ek me-ze-jé-be ré-gen, zen-gett ez kép-pen.

Vaida-Cărnăraș, Cluj County., József Kenderesi 71,  
coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2011.

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Included in the group of medieval chants<sup>25</sup>, well-known all over the Hungarian language area, the *Csordapásztorok* (E.g. 5) (*Shepherds*)<sup>26</sup> Christmas song was first documented in the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>27</sup> (5a), but the stylistic specificities of the melody, respectively the textual motifs refer – according to specialists – to medieval origins. Its popularity is due to the fact that it has been continuously republished in the Catholic hymnals, and it has remained a part of church and popular practice as well even today. It cannot be found in the Reformed church repertoire, neither in the handwritten collections, it has been never published, however – due to oral tradition – it has become an organic part of the Christmas repertoire of the Reformed communities of Transylvania.<sup>28</sup>

According to István Volly, this 17 verse, dialogue-like, dramatic song is in fact the text of the oldest Hungarian Bethlehem play.<sup>29</sup> The function of the *Csordapásztorok* (*Shepherds*) has changed during time. It has survived

<sup>25</sup> MNTK I. 500. type III(G)/151 ; HAS IF Folk Music Type System: nr. 16.221.0/1-3

<sup>26</sup> Dobszay, László. *A magyar népének I. (Popular Song. I.)*. Veszprémi Egyetemi Kiadó, Veszprém, 1995. pp. 113–115.

<sup>27</sup> CC. 1651, see: RMDT II. 203. nr. 1., pp. 425–431.

<sup>28</sup> Péter, 2008. p. 113.

<sup>29</sup> Volly, István. *Karácsonyi és Mária-énekek (Christmas and Marian Songs)*. Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 1982. pp. 256–262., nr. 19–22 notes.

in public knowledge as a congregational song, respectively a part of the Bethlehem play with different greeting text adaptations.<sup>30</sup>

According to the more than 200 appearances, the folk music experts have defined three subtypes within the Hungarian language area: ‘the major hexachord from Transdanubia’, ‘the Phrygian from the Great Hungarian Plain’, which is the oldest and the most widely spread version, and the ‘Dorian from Transylvania’,<sup>31</sup> which gains its originality from the repeating of the last line of the verse and of the melody. Thus the variants of the *Csordapásztorok* (*Shepherds*) can be distinguished geographically; the archive material, the specific literature and the variants from the sources show an identical melody image, but the differences between the intervals result different tones.

The ABCC<sub>k</sub> structured, VII (4) 4 1 cadency, Phrygian example (5b) differs from the others due to the performance. The informant from Suatu sings this song with the ornamentation specific to this settlement, in a slow rubato. In Uriu, at the Christmas festivity from the church the children’s singing was accompanied by a synthesizer (5c). At the melody sections the ending note was always repeated, so it resulted in a six line ABBCBC. The Phrygian hexachord example from Chesău (5d) is incomplete, its melody resulted from the repeating of the ending.

The major hexachord versions from Sic and Sănmărtin (5e, 5f) differ from the examples from above not only by their tone, but also in their structure: with the repeating of the fourth line they have become a five line version.

E.g. 5a

*Csorda Pásztorok* (*Shepherds*)

CC (1651)=RMDT II.1.

RMDT II. 203. nr. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Other text variants: HAS IF Folk Music Type System nr.: 16.221.0/1–3.

<sup>31</sup> MNTK I. p. 501.; SZ–D–R I. nr. II/1, pp. 101–105.; SZ–D–R II. nr. II/1, pp. 49–50.; Dobszay, László. *Magyar zenetörténet* (*Hungarian Musical History*). Gondolat Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1984. p. 391, pp. 398–399.

E.g. 5b

*Csordapásztoroknak (Shepherds)*

Poco rubato ♩ = cca 123

1. Csor-da-pász-to-rok - nak, Csor-dát ő-riz-ze - tek,  
 Éj - jel a me-zó - be, Nap-pal az er-dó - be.

The score is written on two staves in G minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the first two phrases of the melody, with a fermata over the final note of the second phrase. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a triplet of eighth notes in the first phrase and a triplet of eighth notes in the second phrase. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Suatu, Cluj County, Mária Maneszes (Tóth) 87, coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2011.

E.g. 5c

*Csordapásztorok (Shepherds)*

♩ = 80

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 1. Csor - da - pász - to - rok, Mi - dőn Bet - le - hem - be,  
 Csor - dát ő - riz - nek, Éj - jel a me - ző - ben.

The score is written on two staves in G minor (three flats) and 2/4 time. The first staff contains the first two phrases of the melody, with a fermata over the final note of the second phrase. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a fermata over the final note of the second phrase. The lyrics are written below the notes.

1) A szakasz elején a gyermekek bizonytalanul intonálnak.

Uriu, Bistrița-Năsăud County, Group, coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2011.

E.g. 5d

*Csordapásztoroknak (Shepherds)*

Giusto ♩ = 44

1. Csor-da - pász - to - rok - nak, mi - dőn Bet - le - hem - be,  
 Csor - dát ő - ri - zé - nek, éj - jel a me - ző - be.

The score is written on one staff in G minor (three flats) and 2/4 time. It features a triplet of eighth notes in the second phrase. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Chesău, Cluj County, Mihály Földvári 76, coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.

E.g. 5e

*Csordapásztorok (Shepherds)*

Giusto ♩ = 53

1) Csor - da - pász - to - rok, Mi - dőn Bet - le - hem - be,

Csor - dát ő - riz - nek, Éj - jel a me - ző - be.

**Sic, Cluj County, Rózsi Tamás (Kertész) 63, Klára Zsoldos 76,  
coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.**

E.g. 5f

*Csordapásztorok (Shepherds)*

Giusto ♩ = 86

1) Csor - da - pász - to - rok, Mi - dőn Bet - le - hem - be,

Csor - dát ő - riz - nek, Éj - jel a me - ző - be.

**Sânărtin, Cluj County, Mária Vincze (Miklósi) 89,  
coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.**

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In the melody of E.g. 6, we can recognize one of the most popular psalms of French composer Louis Bourgeois (1510–1561); while the text of Théodore de Bèze (1519–1605) – written based on the Psalm 42 – was translated into Hungarian by Albert Szenci Molnár (1574–1633), and since 1651<sup>32</sup> it has been continuously republished within Catholic and Protestant

<sup>32</sup> CC. 1651. RMDT II.

hymnals with the text *Mint a szép (híves) hűvös patakra (As to the Wonderful Cold Stream)*.<sup>33</sup>

Congregational singing has been adapting the “ad notam” practice from the beginnings. Thus in the hymnals we can find several examples of melodies which have been accompanied by different texts. According to church music specialist Éva Péter, the melody of Psalm 42 has no less than 9 “ad notam” appearance in the 1923 Reformed hymnal from Cluj, respectively 7 in the 1996 edition of the hymnal.<sup>34</sup> As a result of the different text usage these songs could have played other roles too besides church songs. For example, reformed pastor István Szentés – born at Suceagu, Cluj County, serving in Nuşfalău between 1816–1829 – was the author of the text *A próféták elhallgattak (The Prophets Became Silent)*, by which this melody has become a part of the Christmas repertoire of the Reformed congregation of Unguraş<sup>35</sup>. According to the local informant, this used to be the “big carol” of the adults and the married people. Whoever was singing something else, was warned.<sup>36</sup>

The evenly quarter-pumping song, performed in an ecclesiastic manner, has a text about the completion of the prophecy about the birth of Jesus Christ, according to the Bible. Literature notes that even some profane verses were associated to this song in Transdanubia.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>See Dobszay, 2006. p. 132–133. type 353. For the appearance of the melody in the Catholic, Evangelic, Reformed and Baptist hymnals see op. cit. p. 132.

<sup>34</sup>Péter, 2008. p. 12.

<sup>35</sup>Unguraş was not the only place where the song has become a part of the Christmas repertoire. See Volly, István. *Karácsonyi és Mária-énekek (Christmas and Marian Songs)*. Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 1982. p. 222. nr. 252, pp. 356–357. (data from Chidea); Keszeg, Vilmos. *Történetek és történetmondás Detrehemtelepen. (Stories and Storytelling at Triteni-Colonie)*. Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, Kolozsvár, 2012. p. 173 (data from Triteni-Colonie).

<sup>36</sup>Gergely, Zoltán. *Mezőségi kántáló énekek (Christmas Carols from the Transylvanian Plain)*. Hagyományok Háza, Budapest, 2016. Appendix I. Interview 4.: *As there is the other one, At the Blessed Birth of Our Lord Jesus. And if the lads were not singing The Prophets, as this one is a little bit harder to sing, people already warned them: What is it? You know only Our Lord Jesus?*

<sup>37</sup>See: Sz–D–R I. p. 236–237. nr. F5; Sz–D–R II. p. 107. nr. F5; See MNTK I. pp. 846–847. type IV(F)/396. (popular variants).

*A próféták elhallgattak (The Prophets Became Silent)*

$\text{♩} = 53$

A pró - fé - ták el - hall - gat - tak, Krisz - tus a test - ben el - jött.  
 A - ki - ről nyil - ván szó - lot - tak az í - rá - sok e - ze - lőtt.  
 Min - den bé - tel - je - se - dett, A - mint meg - í - gér - te - tett,  
 Az Is - ten - től — még kez - det - ben, Ós - zü - le - ink - nek É - den - be.

**Unguraş, Cluj County, András (Bandi) Kerekes 72,  
 coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2011.**

\*

The world-famous Jesus-song *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* – adapted also by J. S. Bach – is one of the most popular pieces of the German choir repertoire. The text and the melody of the song (E.g. 7) were written by German pastor Philip Nicolai (1556–1608) in 1599 in Frankfurt am Main, and it was published in his book called *Frewden-Spiegel dess ewigen Lebens (The Joy of the Mirror of Eternal Life)*.<sup>38</sup>

The song became known within the Hungarian language area quite late. Its first apparition is in the 1696 Evangelic hymnal, with the starting line *Tündöklő hajnali csillag (Shining Morning Star)*, while the latter editions include it with the text *Szép tündöklő hajnalcsillag (Beautiful Shining Morning Star)*. It also appears in the 1743 collection of György Maróthi and the 1764 collection of Albert Szenci Molnár, but with a text adapted to Christmas: *Szívünk vígsággal ma bétölt (Today Our Heart is Filled with Joy)*.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup>[http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns\\_and\\_Carols/Biographies/philipp\\_nicolai.htm](http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Biographies/philipp_nicolai.htm) (2013. 09. 19.); Péter, 2008. pp. 69–71. nr. 13., p. 107. nr. 45.

<sup>39</sup> Péter, 2008. p. 70.; Volly, István. *Karácsonyi és Mária-énekek (Christmas and Marian Songs)*. Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 1982. pp. 335–336. note nr. 276.

Starting with 1774 the song is a constant presence in the Reformed hymnals, however – with casual text adaptations – it can be also found in the Catholic, Evangelic and Baptist hymnals.<sup>40</sup> The authors of the Hungarian texts are unknown.

On the Transylvanian Plain this song was present not only within the Christmas mass, but in many villages on Christmas night the adults and the married people used to greet their neighbours and relatives together, in a festive, evenly pulsing performance, with the text *Szívünk vígsággal* (*Our Hearts with Joy*).

The AABC structure melody is composed of three big phrases and one short ending, therefore the two A phrases are 23-syllabic, with the following structure of motifs: A=a+b+c (8+8+7 syllables); the B phrase includes four smaller units: B=d+e+e+f (4+4+4+4 syllables), while the 8-syllable C line sums up the ending motifs of the previous phrases.<sup>41</sup>

E.g. 7

*Szívünk vígsággal* (*Our Hearts with Joy*)

$\text{♩} = 45$

Szi-vünk víg-ság-gal ma bé-tölt, Mert i-gé-ret sze-rint fel-kött,  
 Is-ten fe-lök szá-má-ra. Az i-gaz-ság fé-nyes nap-ja,  
 Új szö-vet-ség fel-kent pap-ja, El-jött kit sok szent vá-ra.  
 Csil-log vil-log, már fenn ra-gyog mint a lát-nok lát-ta ré-gen,  
 Fény-lik mint szép nap az é-gen.

**Malin, Bistrița-Năsăud County, János Muzsi 81, coll. by Zoltán Gergely, 2012.**

<sup>40</sup> Dobszay, 2006. pp. 147–148. nr. 376.; Péter, 2008. Appendix 1. p. 157.

<sup>41</sup> *ibidem*, p. 70. nr. 13.

## Conclusions

The presented songs from the hymnals have their own local oral sources and starting with the 16<sup>th</sup> century they have been published in Catholic or Protestant hymnals. One part of the melodies has undergone major changes in the popular practice in most of the villages. The songs (E.g. 3a) *Az Istennek szent anyyala (Saint Angel of the Lord)*, (E.g. 4a) *Krisztus Urunknak (At the Birth of Our Lord Jesus)*, (E.g. 6) *A próféták elhallgattak (The Prophets Became Silent)*, (E.g. 7) *Szívünk vígsággal (Our Hearts with Joy)*, similar to the church practice, are performed in an even, medium tempo, while at Chesău (E.g. 3b) *Az Istennek szent anyyala (Saint Angel of the Lord)*, at Vaida-Cărnăuș (E.g. 4b) *Krisztus Urunknak (At the Birth of Our Lord Jesus)* and at Suatu (E.g. 5b) *Úr Istennek szent Fia (Sacred Son of the Lord)* are performed in a relatively slow rhythm, with a rich ornamentation. The (E.g. 5) *Csordapásztorok (Shepherds)*, which is one of the most popular Christmas carols of the Hungarian language area, has kept only partially its form from the printed hymnals, as many of its variants were created in popular practice. The song (E.g. 1) *Parancsolá az Augusztus császár (Thus Ordered Emperor Augustus)*, last recorded in 1997 by ethnographers, I could not find in the visited villages of the Transylvanian Plain, although it was included in my questionnaire.

During fieldwork, at the recordings, several of my informants have used the hymnals, as it was a helping tool especially at evoking the longer texts and songs. But it was obvious to me during the interviews and even after, that my informants learned the melodies first of all after the ear. Written or published sources might still have their importance even in our days in learning, evoking, and performing the Christmas carols, but learning new melodies or transmitting the older ones to younger generations still happens through oral tradition and not by the notes.

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