

Partea a II-a

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Cuvinte cheie: Delta Dunării, ucraineni, colinde, tradiții, etnomuzicologie

Contopirea tradițiilor și colindele de Crăciun ale unei comunități de ucraineni (haholi) din satul Sfântu Gheorghe (Delta Dunării)²

Rezumat

În acest articol abordăm tema colindelor de Crăciun practicate de comunitatea ucraineană de haholi de la Sfântu Gheorghe (Delta Dunării). Întrebarea pe care ne-am pus-o se referă la relația dintre vechile cântece ucrainene (colinde ucrainene arhaice) și colindele românești pe care le-am auzit și înregistrat în ziua de Crăciun. În cele ce urmează, ne vom concentra în principal pe două colinde de Crăciun cântate la Sfântu Gheorghe (una românească și una ucraineană), arătând felul în care acestea coexistă într-un mod firesc, reprezentând tradițiile de origine antică în strânsă legătură cu ritualul transmis din generație în generație și cu reprezentarea identității ucrainene.

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Melting Traditions and Christmas Carols of a Ukrainian Community (the *Hahols*) from the Village of Sfantu Gheorghe (Danube Delta)

Summary

In this article we address the theme of the Christmas carols of a Ukrainian community from Sfantu Gheorghe on the Danube Delta. The question that we posed concerned the relationship between the old Ukrainian songs (Old archaic Ukrainian Christmas carols) and the Romanian carols that are sang on Christmas day in Sfantu Gheorghe. In this paper we focus mainly on two Christmas carols from Sfantu Gheorghe (a traditional Ukrainian Christmas carol and a Romanian one), showing how they coexist in a pacific manner and represent traditions of antique origin connected to the ritual of carolling transmitted from generation to generation, directly linked to their representation of the Ukrainian identity.

Melting Traditions and Christmas Carols of a Ukrainian Community (the *Hahols*) from the Village of Sfantu Gheorghe (Danube Delta)

1. Introduction

During the month of January 2009 together with the ethnomusicologist Giancarlo Palombini, an ethnomusicological research was conducted in the village of Sfantu Gheorghe (Danube Delta) having as a theme the Ukrainian Christmas carols and the traditional Ukrainian songs. As a research methodology we have adopted the participant observation, the interviews, the field diary, photographs, video and audio registration during the event and on request. Observation of the rite in actual performance allowed us to observe how, in the face of its vitality felt inside the community, there have been significant changes and innovations. According to the testimony of the elders, young people, boys and girls, organized in groups, used to go carolling in the village. Nowadays the groups of adult carollers have almost disappeared and there is only one that still goes carolling, and we can only find children who perform the task of the ritual begging.

In this article we focus mainly on two Christmas carols from the village of Sfantu Gheorghe (Danube Delta), one Ukrainian and the other Romanian, and show how these coexist in a pacific manner and represent traditions of antique origin connected to the ritual of carolling that has been transmitted from generation to generation, directly linked to their representation of the Ukrainian identity mainly during the celebration of Christmas.

2. Ukrainian orthodox religion in Sfantu Gheorghe (Danube Delta) and Christmas carolling

One of the secular traditions felt deeply in the Romanian Orthodox religious community is represented by the Christmas carols (ro. *colinde*) sung by groups of carollers going from one house to another on Christmas Eve. Generally the “colinde” are traditional songs, focusing on the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus, performed by children or by groups of young men or adults. These Christmas songs also called *callophonic songs* (beautiful songs) are sung from 6th December (Saint Nicholas Day) until 7th January (Epiphany). In church, during the celebration of Mass, carols are sung from 21st November, the day of the Presentation of Blessed Virgin Mary when the following verses are sung: “Christ is born, glorify him! Christ from heaven, go out to meet Him, Christ on earth, be exalted”.

Petru Caraman (1983) considers that the term “colinda” (*carol*) has a Latin origin being derived from *calendae* and is closely related with the Roman feast of the beginning of the year, *Calendae Januariae*, mentioning that the carolling custom can be seen from two perspectives, one profane and the other one religious, according to the theme of the lyrics. From this affirmation and according to Marienescu (1971) we may speak of a division of carols into two groups: *religious carols* and *worldly carols*. Thus, the lyrics of the religious carols are similar to the text of the bible, from which they borrow the theme of the Nativity and other themes as well, as there are also themes that refer to the Old and New Testaments. The worldly carols, on the other hand, are inspired by everyday life; they speak about honour and heroism and are very similar to ballads.

However, as we might observe, the lyrics of the carols change over time, on the one hand because of their oral nature and on the other hand because of the influence exerted by other religious

texts, the “traditional” carols sometimes mixing with newer ones, absorbing them into the repertory, as we will see in the case of the Ukrainian Christmas carols.

The fishing village of Sfantu Gheorghe³, where this research was conducted, is an isolated village of Ukrainian origin situated at the end of the homonymous branch of the Danube Delta. The inhabitants, also called *haholi*, settled in this area around 1775 in order to escape from the reprisals of the Empress Catherine II. Attracted by the richness of the Danube Delta, the *hahols* built settlements and churches and worked at agriculture, fishing and animal breeding.

Being for a long time one of the most important fishing centres from the entire Danube Delta, the village of Sfantu Gheorghe has changed during the last ten years turning gradually from a typical fishing village into a touristic one. This change is mainly linked to the recent development of tourism and the new regulations concerning the fishing activities (Stoica, 2012). Due to this recent development of the tourism, the local community is completely immersed during summer time in the touristic activities being for two months (July and August) what I call a *suspended community*. They start living again and celebrate their own traditions when the touristic season is finished and the inhabitants “know again each other” as declared Marin, one of the locals.

Living in an isolated place, these Ukrainians succeeded in maintaining not only their traditions but also their identity. Being themselves, “strangers”⁴ on the Danube Delta, they created their perception of their identity in relation to the territory. Not only did they take possession of the Danube Delta territory and settle there hundreds of years ago, they also gave Ukrainian names to some parts of it such as “Strelca” (*threshold sand sea*), “Buival” (place next to the village where the Danube flows into the sea), or “Milea” (*low water*). Even if they know and speak Romanian, among themselves they use the old Ukrainian language that has been transmitted orally from one generation to another. Moreover, inside the community they do not easily accept people who were not born and raised in the village and they call these people “strangers”. Even people from outside the village, both men and women, who get married in the village and have a family there continue to be considered as “strangers” (Simmel, 1908), and the same happens to people who settle in the village. Even if the inhabitants, as we will see, have adopted in their repertory the Romanian Christmas carols who were introduced in the village by the “strangers” they kept alive their identity.

The Ukrainian orthodox religion of the old rite, under the patronage of the Romanian Orthodox church, continues to be the main religion of the inhabitants of Sfantu Gheorghe. Even though the liturgy is conducted by the orthodox priest in the church according to the Gregorian calendar, they usually celebrate their feasts according to the dates of the Julian calendar, and so Christmas is celebrated on 7th January, New Years’ Eve on 14th January, Epiphany on 19th January,

³ The village, which can only be reached by water, is mentioned in historical documents of the XIV century, when the developing economy attracted Italian traders, especially from Genoa, mostly to the outfalls of the Danube where they established a real monopoly on the waters of the Danube Delta by selling the fish caught in this area. It is for this reason that on the maps of that time we find the village of Sfantu Gheorghe, as indicated in 1319 on the Visconti map, together with other important economic centres of the Dobrudja region. We have little information about the previous existence of this settlement. There is, however, evidence of the village in the XVIII century, when the Turks who dominated this area called it *Kadarlez*.

⁴ The Ukrainian presence in the Danube Delta region is related to a tragic moment in the history of the Ukraine: the abolition, in 1775, by order of the Empress Catherine II, of the Zaporizhian Sich - a specific form of Ukrainian state organization of that time. The Cossacks sent a delegation to the Sublime Porte, demanding Turkish protectorate and the right to establish a new Sich in the Danube Delta. In 1813 they organized a new military camp at Dunavățul de Sus, Zadunaiska Sich, which existed for 15 years until it was dismantled by the Turks. The northern part of Dobrogea was settled by groups of peasants coming from the southern regions of Ukraine to escape from the harsh conditions of serfdom and the Tsarist army. Here they established towns, built churches, and made a living from agriculture, fishing, hunting and farming. The Turkish government gave them land and pay in exchange for their military services. To distinguish them from their Russian neighbours the *lipovans*, the locals of the Danube Delta called the Ukrainians *haholi*.

the Annunciation on April 7th, the Dormition on August 28th and the Feast of Saint Nicholas on December 19th, there being a difference of 13 days between the Julian and the Gregorian calendar.

We may also say that the fact that they continue to celebrate feasts according to the Julian calendar is linked to a representation of their identity that reinforces the sense of community. When in 1924 the Romanian Orthodox church adopted the Gregorian calendar, the inhabitants from Romania continued to celebrate according to the Julian calendar. As Ernest Bernea (1997) observed, the decision to adopt the Gregorian calendar had a real impact on the life of the Romanian people. For believers it appeared not only to be an unusual thing but also something that was fraught with danger. The calendar reform represented a dramatic change in the religious practices of the people. The community of believers was living by virtue of ancient traditions and the religious calendar was one of those very traditions. For believers, as Ernest Bernea remarks, the religious feast was not only the celebration of a Christian saint, but also had the meaning of time itself, of a fixed day of the year connected to the rhythm of their work. The new reform not only disorganized the spiritual life of the Romanian villages but also met with the resistance of the people, as the calendar was considered to be unchangeable and, more importantly, “given” by God as people who kept celebrating according to the Julian calendar declared to Ernest Bernea.

The orthodox church situated in the centre of the village of Sfantu Gheorghe represents an important element in the lives of the inhabitants and is one of the ancient buildings in the village. Together with the village lighthouse, it also represents one of the reference points that one can see when arriving by boat at the end of a four hour trip. Recent tragic events such as the burning of the roof of the church and the disappearance at sea of the young priest in 2011 totally overwhelmed the life of the inhabitants and proved how attached they are to their religion, with the events being interpreted for example as punishments that God was sending to them over a short period of time.

Mass in Sfantu Gheorghe is usually celebrated in Romanian according to the Gregorian calendar⁵ and follows the normal rules of an orthodox mass. During the liturgy, one important element follows the Ukrainian tradition, however, and that is the religious chant which uses the old Ukrainian cadence of the voice overlapping with a sober tone and with Ukrainian verses.

The Ukrainians there celebrate the religious feasts twice, giving much more importance to the feasts of the old rite and the only feast celebrated according to the Gregorian calendar is Easter. One old lady told: *“We don’t know how we are celebrating anymore. We have mixed our traditions but everything in our lives is following the rhythm of the old rite! We attend the mass on Christmas day but we celebrate the feast on the day of the old rite. During the other religious feasts we stay at home and we don’t work otherwise something bad might happen to us!”*

Concerning Christmas, the people of Sfantu Gheorghe celebrate it twice. They prepare themselves for the day of 25th December, go to church and exchange greetings with their relatives. But it is on 7th January that they “really celebrate Christmas”, cooking their traditional Christmas dishes such as *cucchia* and *ozvar*⁶ and preparing for the carolling which is performed on Christmas day. On the Christmas day of the old rite, people go to church to attend Mass, even though the priest celebrates the day of Saint John the Baptist. It is only at the end of the Mass that they “celebrate Christmas”, singing their traditional Christmas carols in chorus to the joy of everyone and saying Christmas greetings such as “Izpraznico”.

⁵ The only feast celebrated in the church according to the calendar of the old rite is the feast of Saint George, the patron of the village, which every year falls on 6th May, the day on which they celebrate their identity as *hahols*.

⁶ *Cucchia* and *ozvar* are two traditional dishes prepared for Christmas Day, the principal ingredients being wheat, nuts, honey and plums.

If we compare the Ukrainian carols sung in Sfantu Gheorghe with the Romanian ones, we can see that the hahols from Sfantu Gheorghe preserved the old Ukrainian Christmas carols, the so called “koliadky”. The first difference is that these carols are not sung on Christmas Eve⁷ as it happens in the Romanian Orthodox tradition, but on Christmas day and their theme exclusively concerns the Nativity of Jesus. So in this case we may speak only of religious *koliadky*.

As witnessed by the inhabitants, these carols used to be performed by groups of young men whose repertory contained only three carols that lasted thirty minutes. The “performance” started in the church, where they received the priest’s blessing, and continued in the village as they went carolling from one house to the other, receiving money or produce from the inhabitants. The carolling ended at the church, where half of the money were given to the church and the other half was distributed among the carollers. According to the inhabitants, groups of children and women also went carolling. Nea Vanea, an old man from Sfantu Gheorghe, says:

“In the village there were groups of young men that were carolling these carols that were very difficult and also the words were difficult and the refrain was always repeating. The women and the children went carolling too from one house to another but their carols were easier. There were numerous children’s carols, but they were very simple. These carols were sung in Ukrainian and were about the birth of Jesus Christ. Starting on 19th December people would gather at someone’s place to learn these carols and then they would go carolling on Christmas day.”

As we documented in the village during our research, carolling is a dying tradition. During the research we met only one group of carollers. Also there are only a few children who know the Ukrainian carols and who are go carolling. This carolling tradition is still alive inside the church where, at the end of the Mass on Christmas day, the believers sing the traditional Ukrainian carols.

Even though the inhabitants know the lyrics, they do not entirely understand the message in the carols. The language used is an archaic one, a Ukrainian dialect, sometimes with old Polish words, and in some cases people understand only half of the words. For instance *Sfit smesleni* (God’s miracle), one of the oldest Ukrainian carols that we recorded in the village, is known only by a few people in the village. They know that the carol speaks about the nativity of Jesus in a stable, but part of the carol is not understood. As one lady told me: *We don’t understand all the words. One day last year we met at my house and we read the carols three times. It was useless... We couldn’t understand... there are some words that we don’t understand. Maybe our parents and grandparents could understand it* (Dumitrita, Sfantu Gheorghe).

While in the village, we accompanied a group of carollers, this time adults going from one place to another, and we observed the carolling process and recorded the carols. We also watched some children carolling, performing shorter Christmas songs that were different from those sung by the adult groups. We also observed that, apart from the Ukrainian carols, in the repertory of carols there were also Romanian carols such as *O ce veste minunata!!* (*What wonderful news*), *Trei pastori* (*Three shepherds*), *Deschide usa, crestine!* (*Open the door, Christian Man!*), carols that were adopted over time by the inhabitants during Communism when people came from other parts of Romania and settled in the village as teachers, doctors or engineers and spread the Romanian

⁷ Christmas’s Eve in Sfantu Gheorghe is dedicated to the tradition of honouring the elders, which is called “vecera”. Young people uses to go with *colaci* (bread rolls) to the relatives in order show their gratitude. *Dobre vecer, sfati vecer! Mama i batchio poslale mane u veceru!* (Good evening holy evening, my mother and my father sent me to your place to show our gratitude)

Christmas carols. As Tanti Ana said to us: “*There were also Romanian carols but these were sung by the officials, the “strangers”. They didn’t speak Ukrainian and they sang their Romanian carols*”

3. Ethnomusicological analysis

For the ethnomusicological analysis we decided to focus on two Christmas carols: an Ukrainian one (*Oi temnoie narojdenia*) and a Romanian one *Deschide usa, crestine!* (*Open the door, Christian Man!*) included by the inhabitants in the local Ukrainian repertory. For the analysis we transcribed only two stanzas, which can be read below.

The coexistence of the old Ukrainian Christmas carols and the Romanian Christmas carols, which are widely spread throughout Romania, is an element that shows a disintegration of the old tradition in terms of preservation of identity. We have observed how this mixing takes place during a single performance when the singers pass without distinction from the ancient Ukrainian tradition to the Romanian tradition and vice versa.

We have tried to focus our analysis mainly on the melodic aspects by transcribing the two *colinde*, to which we have added a third one without providing a transcription of the words (see above).

While it is not difficult to identify in the carol *Deschide usa, crestine!* (Carol n.1) an underlying scalar structure also reinforced by the performance of the tiers, combined with a rhythmic structure perfectly regular in a binary time of ternary subdivision, we may say that it is not easy to find a scalar and rhythmic form for the Ukrainian *colinda Oi temnui narojdenia* (Carol n.2). Concerning this last carol, we underline that the musical structure is based on a modality and not on a tone with a free rhythm of the type of the gregorian chant (*cantus planus*) based on modality.

While looking for a trace of the melodic and rhythmic organization system we must consider that, like any phenomenon marked by orality this song is connected to the ancient versions, and it is also the result of a discontinuity, but also of innovations and transformations wrought by these anonymous performers who have kept it alive.

Given therefore a *urtext* to which it can hardly be traced the origin there is the concrete made of a sound product. On one hand there is a stabilizing force that tends to ensure coherence with the system and takes advantage of the memory in particular, which is the main instrument of the normalization executive, and on the other hand we have a destabilizing force, which hinges on the ability of the individual interpreter to break down the prefabricated material provided by memory in order to re-aggregate it through a creative effort.

All this leads us to be cautious in attributing to products connected to the orality formal schemes in retrospect and applied by scholars to classify and stabilize materials of the liturgic chant during their codification and transition in the system of writing.

This does not mean, however, that our ear seizes a melodic structure that is not based on degrees belonging to the tonal system (tonic, dominant), but it has an "archaic taste" that we would generically call modal. One can identify, with all the precautions that we have highlighted above, inside the Phrygian mode the modal structure of reference⁸.

A more accurate analysis of the melodic structure shows us a first part A (the first two verses) of convex profile starting with C4 and with a C4 cadence. The *ambitus* is a C- F tetrachord.

In the part B of a downward trend, the *ambitus* is of descending fifth E4 – A3 if we exclude the F4 and G3 as accessory notes.

⁸ For an application of these modes to a repertoire of ballads cfr. Bronson 1969 and Magrini 1988.

The rhythmic system presents an alternation of binary and ternary metric feet in order to describe what may be useful to apply the theory of syllabic giusto that Brailoiu Constantin has developed for the Romanian repertoire (Brailoiu 1954).

Brailoiu's statement according to which all the metric forms of the Romanian verses would be octosyllabic or senari is partially confirmed by the analysis of the Christmas carol *Oi temnui naraodenia* (Carol n. 2), in which the first and third line of the stanza is octosyllable and the second and fourth is quinary.

Carol n. 1

Deschide ușa, creștine!

*Deschide ușa, creștine,
Deschide ușa, creștine
Că venim din nou la tine,
La mulți ani, mulți ani cu bine!*

*Drumu-i lung și-am obosit,
Drumu-i lung și-am obosit,
De departe am venit
La mulți ani, mulți ani cu bine!*

*Noi la Viflaim am fost,
Noi la Viflaim am fost
Unde s-a născut Cristos,
La mulți ani, mulți ani cu bine!*

*Și-am văzut și pe-a Sa mamă,
Și-am văzut și pe-a Sa mamă
Pe care Maria o cheamă,
La mulți ani, mulți ani cu bine!*

Open the door, Christian Man!

*Open the door, Christian Man!
Open the door, Christian Man!
We come again to your place
Many happy years to you!*

*The road is long and we are tired
The road is long and we are tired
We come from far away
Many happy years to you!*

*We have been to Bethlehem
We have been to Bethlehem
Where Jesus was born
Many happy years to you!*

*And we also saw His mother
And we also saw His mother
Whose name is Maria
Many happy years to you!*

[♩. = 53 c.a.]

CUM UMBLA DIN CR-SĂ-NCA - SĂ CUM UMBLA DIN CA-SĂ-N CA - SĂ [47° 3d]

CA PE FIUL SĂU SA NAȘ - CĂ LA MULȚIANI MUL-TIANI CU BI - NE

*Cum umbla din casă în casă,
Cum umbla din casă în casă
Ca pe Fiul ei să nască
La mulți ani, mulți ani cu bine!*

*She was going from house to house
To give birth to Her Son
To give birth to Her Son
Many happy years to you!*

*Umbla-n jos și umbla-n sus,
Umbla-n jos și umbla-n sus
Ca să nască pe Iisus,
La mulți ani, mulți ani cu bine!*

*She was walking
She was walking
To give birth to Jesus
Many happy years to you!*

*Care cu puterea Sa,
Care cu puterea Sa
Mântui-va El lumea
Și de-acum până-n vecie
Mila Domnului să fie!
La mulți ani, mulți ani cu bine!*

*With His power
With His power
Will redeem the world
From now until forever,
God's mercy be done!
Many happy years to you!*

Carol n. 2

[♩ = 150 c.a.]

v.f. A
OI TEM - NO - I NA ROS DENA BO - JO - HO SI - NA

v.f. B
SO IO - HO SE - NE SPO - RO - DE - LA GHE - VA MA - RI - A

v.m.

B
SO IO - HO SE - NE SPO - RO - DE - LA GHEVA MA RI - A [22".7^d]

A B

*Oi temnui narojdenia
Oi temnui narojdenia
Bojoho sina
Scio iohovo jedne sporodila
Gheva Maria*

*He was born at night time
He was born at night time
God's son
He gave birth to Him
Virgin Mary*

*A urodiusea sam Isus Hristos
Iz Gheve Pani
Sop nedoznala vraja Jidova
Bojui Taine*

*Jesus Christ was born
Blessed Virgin Mary
So that Herod couldn't find out
Of God's mystery*

*Tolki znalo tri anhola
Iz nebez lichiucih
Temnu noci iasnui zvezde
Hrista zlaviusce*

*Only three angels knew of it
Angels from Heaven
During a dark night illuminated by a star
Jesus glory to the cross!*

*Au horoghi Ierusalimi
Tam devo stalo
Malcic ghichia
Nove rojdenia
Ves svit usialo*

*But in the city of Jerusalem
The miracle showed to the world
A little child
Newborn
Illuminated the whole universe*

*Usialo nebe i zemniu
Se razni tvite
Sco gruzistvu sade za tvile*

*He illuminated the Heaven and the Earth
And different flowers
So that at Christmas orchards flourished*

*Sade tzvituchi Vinohrade
Venovi tvite
Sop vozraduvasi ves merhrisceni
Sei male ghite*

*Orchards and vineyards flourished
The wine's flowers
So that all mankind enjoy
and also the children*

*Oi udarte udarte
Nam calaci daite
Hrista slavliusciu!*

*Let's knock at the door
Give us some bread
For the Holy Cross!*

Carol n. 3

[♩ = 48 ca.]

SFIT SME - SLE - NI

A B

[d. 4'31"]

A B

We have also analyzed and transcribed the *colinda Sfit smesleni* (Carol n.3), without providing the words but only the melodic and rhythmic structures.

The way of reference, surely plagal, as the melody extends a fourth under the *modalis*, is the ipoionian “from time immemorial designated as the mode of popular song the *modus lascivus* of ecclesiastical execration and because, in bulk, it is by far the predominating mode in the extant folk-song record⁶⁴”. As for the *colinda Oi temnui narojdenia*, to a first part A with a more reduced *ambitus* (F4-Bflat3), follows the B which extends both to the high tone (up to Aflat4) and

⁶⁴ Bronson 1969: 86.

in low tone (Lab3).

From a rhythmic point of view we note that we have a binary and regular scansion that we highlighted with the hatched bars albeit without an indication of time.

4. Conclusions

During our research we have observed that there is a pacific coexistence with Romanian carols given by the normal transit from a Ukrainian Christmas carol to a Romanian one during the carolling. Most probably the Ukrainian carols pertain to traditions of antique origin connected to the ritual transmitted from generation to generation and the songs were assimilated into the Ukrainian carolling rite without distinction of historical importance.

Referring to the distinction of religious carols and worldly carols, we observed that in Sfântu Gheorghe the Ukrainian carols are exclusively religious carols and are connected with the Ukrainian representation of identity. It was only with the arrival of the strangers that the repertory changed, incorporating also the Romanian carols. We might say that these carols, a mix of archaic Ukrainian songs and Romanian songs of common diffusion, are fully functional during the rites happening on 6th January, which is Christmas Eve according to the Julian calendar. These carols probably belong not only to an oral tradition, and we may suppose that they derive from a liturgical tradition of the old orthodox rite

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