

ROMANIAN CHRISTMAS CAROLS FROM VÂLCELE AND ARACI, COVASNA COUNTY – TRADITION, METAMORPHOSES AND FUNCTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

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Representation in the Manuscripts from Romania, under the supervision of D Prof. Dr. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur. He has produced radio broadcasts, has given public lectures in prestigious institutions and has presented scientific papers at national and international symposia of musicology, ethnomusicology and Byzantine music. Author of chapters in collective volumes of ethnological syntheses produced at the "Constantin Brăiloiu" Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, author of studies and articles on musicology, Byzantinology and ethnomusicology, published in Romanian collective volumes and periodicals. He is a member of the Romanian Union of Composers and Musicologists, of the Romanian Section of the International Society of Contemporary Music and of the Romanian Association of Ethnological Sciences. In 2011, he earned a postdoctoral research fellowship within the project "Valorisation of Cultural Identities in Global Processes", POSDRU/89/1.5/S/59758.

ABSTRACT

Traditional caroling in Vâlcele and Araci (Covasna county, Romania) is a calendrical custom representative of the Carpathian traditional culture from the southern area of the Baraolt

Mountains and south-eastern Transylvania. The persistence of this ritual over time is remarkable, despite a hiatus in the oral transmission that occurred in the last three decades of the twentieth century. From I. G. Bibicescu's collections (made in the last two decades of the 19th century) to the contemporary updated versions, the existence of the groups of carolers and hence of the Romanian Christmas carols is an undisputable reality of the local folk spirituality. Our study reveals certain aspects of the continuity of the (recorded) repertoire for over 130 years and of the contemporary enomenon of the Romanian Christmas time ritual, as an illustration of the local community's efforts to preserve the cultural and national identity. The conclusions revolve around the current field researches that have revealed the enomenon of coexistence of traditional culture elements with the latest technological acquisitions in a seemingly paradoxical symbiosis, but which, before long, will generate new identity brands and cultural paradigms.

Keywords: Christmas Time Ritual, Christmas Carols, Traditional Culture, Carpathian Area, Ethnomusicology, Cultural Identity, National Minorities, Multiculturality

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1. Attestations and Repertoire

The first attestation of the carols from Vâlcele, Covasna county, is found in the remarkable monogra of I. G. Bibicescu [1], the first and foremost precursor of the folk collections from the village located at the southern foot of the Baraolt Mountains. Around 1800, upon discovering the treasures hidden in the "dowry chest" of the Romanian folklore from Băile Vâlcele, the author was surprised and grieved at the loss and fall into oblivion (actually, into the community's passive repertoire, according to Constantin Brăiloiu's theory) of the "Romanian songs". In those years, the Romanian villagers contemporary to Bibicescu found the Hungarian songs to be more modern and more "beautiful" than the Romanian ones. The story of the collection is told in the *Preface* of the monogra by the author himself, who relates the context in which he decided to record the existing repertoire and the concrete ways by which he was going to stimulate the "memory" of the informants: by paying one florin to each informant who could provide representative texts (musical and/or poetic, belonging to different genres): songs, *doinas* and carols, old songs etc.) from the

traditional Romanian repertoire of the south-eastern part of the historical region of Transylvania. This is how the collection we know today came together.

The poetic typology of the 17 Christmas carols contained in this monograph reflects a rich repertoire covering a wide diversity of themes. The typological classification that I used to identify the carols in Bibicescu's collection matches, to a very large extent, Monica Brătulescu's classification: type, subtype, theme [3]. We should also mention that Bibicescu's documentary sources were diverse and that the information was completed in several stages, whether it was "written down by Reveca Scurtu" or "by Father Ion Moga from Vâlcele, as narrated by the young boys from that village, in 1884". Both quotations point, subsidiarily, to the method of collecting folklore "by correspondence", which was very popular among amateur folklorists at the end of the 19th century. Annex 1 provides a synthesis of the titles of these Christmas carols, along with their typological classification.

Subsequent to I. G. Bibicescu's collection, the field research conducted in Vâlcele and Araci was materialized, at a scientific and institutional level, in audio archive documents resulting from several collection campaigns, extended by now over a period of 80 years. a) the collections gathered by composer and folklorist Tiberius Brediceanu in 1930 and 1938, held in the Archive of the "Constantin Brăiloiu" Institute of Ethnography and Folklore of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest (AIEF) b) the collection of musicologist Ioan R. Nicola from Cluj, gathered in 1933 (AIEF); c) the collection of ethnographer Nicolae Moldovan (b. 1921 in Vâlcele) gathered on December 24, 1973 and held in Constantin Secară's Archive (CSA) d) the collection gathered by Bucharest ethnomusicologist Speranța Rădulescu in 1980 (AIEF) e) my personal collection of December 2011 (CSA). In the context of this reportorial diversity we find it useful to provide a complete and chronological list to illustrate the diachrony of the recordings of all the pieces, completed with supplementary data on the collection, name of informant (inf.), place and date of collection, name of collector (collect.), storage fund etc. (see Annexes 2-7)

Based on the synthesis of the available data, several preliminary findings have emerged that can be outlined on two complementary analytical levels, i.e. quantitatively and qualitatively.

a) Statistically, the quantitative and gradual loss of the recorded material has been observed with time: from 17 Christmas carols recorded by I. G. Bibicescu, the number decreased to 13 (of which 3 were star songs) recorded by Tiberius Brediceanu (in both campaigns) and 4 recorded by Ioan R. Nicola; later, 16 carols, star songs and church chants were recorded by Nicolae Moldovan, followed by 8 songs recorded by Speranța Rădulescu and 7 by me.

b) Qualitatively, the repertoire has been preserved, both in terms of the poetic texts and in terms of the melodic lines of the recorded songs: compared to the statistics of quantitative linearity, this parameter provides a very good stability over time.

From this perspective we have developed an analytical model based on the diachronic investigation of the pieces considered as representative of the Romanian traditional caroling in Vâlcele and Araci. Through this method we intended to highlight the stratigraphic overlaps of repertoire, on a temporal axis exceeding 130 years – according to Bibicescu – and 80 years – according to the audio documents recorded. To this end, we propose a brief presentation of three carols that confirm, in our opinion, all the necessary and sufficient data required in tracing a clear and obvious continuity.

1) *Oi, și din sara de Crăciun*: published by I. G. Bibicescu with the title "The Sixth Carol" [1, p. 213]. Since olden times, this demanding, large and difficult (both to memorize and sing) piece has been recognized as one of the most representative among the carols sung in Vâlcele and Araci. Speaking about this carol, Nicolae Moldovan considers it "the most exquisite" one and recalls that in his youth, it used to be sung only in some of the more important houses in the village: the priest's, the mayor's and village leaders'.

I managed to identify this song in three archive recordings (ph 14777 a, AIEF, inf. Mihail Ranca, 44 y.o., collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu and L. Olteanu, Vâlcele, 24.12.1938 [ex. 1]; ph 14777 c, AIEF, inf. Constantin Picicoiu, 31 y.o., collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu and L. Olteanu, Vâlcele, 24.12.1938; mixed group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, Vâlcele, 24.12.1973) and recorded by myself (d.a._ST-001.wav_28.12.2011, CSA) with the group of young boys from Araci, in the same commune, on December 28, 2011 (Annex 8.1).

Example 1: *Oi, și din sara de Crăciun*

ph 14777 a, AIEF
Mihail Ranca, 44 y.o., Vâlcele, CV
collect. T. Brediceanu, L. Olteanu, 24.12.1938
transcr. C. Secară, 18.11.2012

The image shows a musical score for the carol "Oi, și din sara de Crăciun". It consists of eight staves of music in a single system, with lyrics written below the notes. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 82. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "O și din sa - ra de Cră - ciu - nu' o Dom - nu - lui mînieu Oi S - a năs - cut și Dum - ne zău - Oi și din ies - lea bo - i - lor o Dom - nu - lui mînieu Oi ie - ra mic d'en - fă - șe - țel O scu - fi - - ță de dor - je - nel o Dom - nu - lui mînieu". The score ends with a double bar line and the word "Finala" above it, followed by a final chord marked with a sharp sign and a stylized 'G'.

2) *Coborât-a (pogorât-a) Dumnezeu*: the second carol can be examined comparatively in three archival recordings (ph 1370–1371 a, AIEF, inf.

Busuioc Lingurar, 63 y.o., collect. Ioan R. Nicola, Vâlcele, 04.08.1933 [ex. 2]; ph 14775 c, AIEF, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o., collect Tiberiu Brediceanu, L. Olteanu, Vâlcele, 24.12.1938; inf. men's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA), to which I added the recording of the group of young boys from Araci, on December 28, 2011 (d.a._ST-002.wav_28.12.2011, CSA; Annex 8.2). According to Bibicescu, this piece was labeled as "The Fourteenth Christmas Carol", as part of a suite categorized by the author as follows: "The following Christmas carols are sung especially by the Greek Oriental Gypsies. It is assumed that the Gypsies adopted them from the Romanians (...). In fact, the Romanians know the Gypsy Christmas carols, which are melodious, more melodious and more meaningful – as father Moga rightfully says – than the Romanian ones" [1, p. 223].

We believe that at this point a few clarifications are necessary. The commune of Vâlcele consists of the villages Vâlcele (the commune residence), Araci, Ariuşd and Hetea, and has a mixed ethnic population: out of a total of 3698 people, 1778 are Roma ethnics (Gypsies), while the Romanian ethnics are 1357 in number and the Hungarians – 552 (given the absence of the 2011 census data, the figures are the ones revealed by the 2002 census). Be it noted that the Gypsies from Vâlcele and Araci are all Romanian speakers; they were not Magyarised during the last century, as it happened in other places in the Covasna and Harghita counties [8, p 138]. However, it is very important to note that from a confessional point of view these Roma people no longer belong entirely to the "Greek Oriental" Christian cult (as the Christian Orthodox cult was called at the end of the 19th century), but were assimilated in a proportion of approx. one third (555) into the Pentecostal cult, which was very active especially after 1990 [8, p.141]. For reasons related to their own religious doctrines, these neo-Protestant cults no longer allow their members to practice Christmas caroling. Therefore, today, the Gypsies from Araci and Vâlcele no longer sing Christmas carols like their forefather, Busuioc Lingurar, that exceptional informant who performed three carols for Ioan R. Nicola's recordings (1933) and no less than six carols for Tiberius Brediceanu's collection (1938). Regarding the last version (recorded by me with the current group of young boys from Araci) we can observe a reverse route of the piece, from carolers of Roma ethnicity (non-existent or very poorly

represented nowadays due to the previously exposed reasons) to carolers of Romanian ethnicity.

Example 2: Pogorât-a Dumnezău

ph 1370, AIEF
inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 63 y.o., Vâlcele, CV
collect. Ioan R. Nicola, Vâlcele, 04.08.1933
transcr. C. Secară, 18.11.2012

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Pogorât-a Dumnezău'. It consists of three staves of music in a single system, all in treble clef. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 150. The first staff contains the melody with lyrics: 'Po - go - ră - tu Dum - ne - ză - uă'. The second staff is a second voice with lyrics: 'Dom - nu - lui, Dom - nu - lui, nos - tru'. The third staff continues the melody with lyrics: 'Cum Dum - ne - zău co - bo - ră - re'. The piece ends with a double bar line and the word 'Finala' written above the staff.

3) *Zoritul* marks the end of the caroling tour, on the second day of Christmas. The song has no chorus and can be included in the star songs category, having an obvious scholarly tinge, by which the history of the world's salvation is seen through the birth of Jesus Christ, as reparation of Adam's sin. I. G. Bibicescu makes an interesting remark on this carol: "it is sung by young boys and married men alike, at one another's homes" [1, p. 221]. The custom is still practiced today, on December 26 as always, when the group of carolers tours the houses they visited on Christmas Eve.

The recordings of this song can be identified in several stages (ph 14749 e, AIEF, inf. [?], collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.05.1930, Vâlcele [ex. 3]; ph 14775 b, AIEF, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o., collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu and L. Olteanu, Vâlcele, 24.12.1938; inf. mixed group and inf. Gipsy children's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA), and end with my own recording of December 28, 2011, together with the group of young boys from Araci (d.a._ST-003.wav_28.12.2011, CSA, Annex 8.3).

Example 3: *Mulțămescu-Ți, mulțămescu-Ți* (Zoritul după colindat)

ph 14749 e, AIEF
inf. (?), collect. T. Brediceanu, 24.05.1930, Vâlcele, CV
transcr. C. Secară, 18.11.2012

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of four staves of music in a single system, all in treble clef. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 160. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff has the lyrics 'Mul - ță - mes - cu - ți, mul - ță - mes - cu - uți'. The second staff has 'Doam - ne Ii - su - se Hris - toa - se'. The third staff has 'Căci ne' ai dat zi - ori fru - moa - se'. The fourth staff has 'și ra - ze prea lu - mi - noa - se.' and ends with a double bar line and the word 'Finala' written above the staff.

2. Tradition and Contemporaneity. Research Methodology

The applied research was directed equally towards the quantitative and qualitative illustration of the dynamic nature of the repertoire, through a series of successive and repeated actions of bibliographic and archival study, accompanied by a field research and collection session conducted for data updating purposes.

During the first stage of the documentation (June 2011), I made the acquaintance of the nonagenarian Nicolae Moldovan, former curator and cultural activist from St. Gheorghe, originating in Vâlcele. After telling me about the traditional caroling custom in Vâlcele and Araci, Mr. Moldovan gave me a tape dating from 1973, containing the recordings of several carols that had been performed in Vâlcele around the Christmas Eve of 1973. On that date, Nicolae Moldovan had identified and recorded a repertoire of 16 songs (carols, orations, star songs and church chants), performed by people aged over 50 and who in local dialect were called *băbări*. As Nicolae Moldovan related in the recording, the young people had become indifferent to the caroling custom in general, and especially to the

old village carols. Those were the times of the socialist industrialization, when many villagers had turned from farmers into commuting workers (travelling daily over large distances of 10 to 50 km, from their village homes to their jobs in the cities) or had even left their places of origin, to live in the cities. The recordings made by Nicolae Moldovan with unprofessional equipment suffered progressive deterioration, due to the following reasons: the poor quality of the original magnetic tape, its storage in improper conditions and the repeated auditions of recordings. Therefore, today, they can be used only as auxiliary documentary material. In this context, I have decided to finalize, as soon as possible, all the technical operations related to the restoration and digital transposition of this tape, which would enable me to make the future musical and literary transcriptions.

I conceived the research in the commune of Vâlcele and in the village of Araci in two stages. The initial stage coincided with the bibliographic and archival research, and was later extended by an exploratory and prospective research of the repertoire in use today. Therefore I considered necessary and appropriate to attend, as an observer, the 21st edition of the carols and winter customs Festival "The Romanian Christmas", organized by the "Michael the Brave" Foundation in Sfântu Gheorghe, between December 10-11, 2011. Besides its inherent spectacular nature, this festival has an important interactive component, through the organization of tours of the groups of carolers to Romanian public institutions and churches, in different places in the Covasna County. At first glance, this activity could be seen as a reflex of the "official carols" of the communist period; however, under the current social and cultural conditions in Romania, it provides a sense of cohesion and affirmation of the Romanian cultural and spiritual identity in the area. In 2011, the mixed group of carolers from Vâlcele toured the major Romanian state institutions in Sfântu Gheorghe, as well as the "Descent of the Holy Spirit" Orthodox Church in Târgu Secuiesc. On this occasion I got to know the group of carolers from Vâlcele, whom I accompanied during the two-day festival.

The continuation of the research with the field component, during the next stage, was the result of my having noticed the important potential of these young people, despite the heterogeneous structure of their repertoire. This time, the target group was the group of young boys from

Araci, whom I recorded in one sitting (on December 28, 2011). The repertoire comprised the three carols mentioned above (*Oi, și din sara de Crăciun...*, *Pogorât-a, pogorât...*, *Mulțămescu-Ți...*) and the registration was completed with a short questionnaire discussion. Later, to complete the information on the Christmas caroling custom (as a syncretic, complex phenomenon) and to demonstrate the stability of the repertoire in the area under investigation, I developed a 32-question questionnaire that I e-mailed to the leader of the group from Vâlcele. Several answers and accompanying information followed, bringing added value to my research. They are presented synthetically hereinafter.

1) Structure and organization of the group

The date of creation of the carolers' group differs from one village to another. The caroling tradition in Vâlcele was discontinued beginning with the '70s (during the period of N. Moldovan's collection); the current group was formed on November 12, 2010, has a mixed gender structure and is in search of its reportorial identity. By comparison, the group of young bachelors from Araci claims itself as the uninterrupted successor of the previous similar groups; the change of generations took place gradually, by replacing one or more individuals, and not by substituting the entire group. Unfortunately, we were not able to verify this claim due to the lack of additional information (discussions with the elderly, documentary evidence etc.). The selection criteria are generally identical for both groups: any young person (only boys, for the Araci group, or boys and girls, for the Vâlcele group), from the age of 15 until marriage. In both cases, married people are no longer accepted.

2) Representativeness and authority of the *jude*

The *jude* is the undisputed leader of the group, who decides its composition, repertoire, time and place of rehearsals and handles the management of the money earned and the organization of the ball following the caroling tour etc. The election of the *jude* is made according to strict criteria: he has "to know all the carols", "to be the oldest [in the group]" (information provided by Cornel Andrei, 28 years old, the *jude* of the boys' group from Araci, on December 28, 2011); "to be a respected person, obeyed by the [other] members", "to have not missed any of the

previous year's activities", "to afford treating the members with drinks after each activity", "to organize the *jude's* yearly feast, for as long as he is a *jude*" (information provided by Dan Ardelean, 22 y.o., *jude* of the carolers' band from Vâlcele, by e-mail, during the month of January, 2012). The date and method of election of the *jude* differ significantly between the two groups. However, the informants have not provided further clarifications on the dates and differences between them: "on the Sunday of St. Thomas" (D. A., Vâlcele), "on St. Nicholas Day... all the boys of the village gather in a pub and there we decide which of us will be elected *jude*" (C. A., Araci). The *jude* is also the one who „gives the pitch” for each carol, singing alone the first melodic line; this applies both to the boys' group from Araci and to the mixed group from Vâlcele.

3) The props and costumes as an expression of identity: the traditional folk costume and the flag

The folk costume of the carolers' group from Vâlcele is a reconstruction of "traces of the old costumes of the people from Vâlcele (who come from the Târnavă Valley) ... not the entire costume, but only the vest and the traditional skirts; we went to Braşov and tried to order them, in order to preserve as many elements of the old costume as possible; we did not have enough money for the kerchiefs worn by the women and for the men's hats and winter caps; we found old photos showing the costume elements" (information provided by Nicolae Cucu, 55 y.o., Vâlcele, on December 28, 2011) (photo 1).



Photo 1: The group of carolers from Vâlcele (photo: C. Secară)

"The caroling is done with a flag" (N. C., Vâlcele). The flag used by the group of carolers from Vâlcele has been recovered and restored in recent years and has several distinct elements: the name of the village is woven on the front side – "Vâlcele" – while on the back it bears the inscription "14 IV 1947", i.e. its date of manufacture. Stylized lilies are embroidered in each of the four corners, while the two free corners are adorned with tricolour tassels. Over the years, it represented both a symbol and a strong identity brand, given that the Romanian flag from Vâlcele was accompanying the young people in some of the most important moments of their lives: the recruitment (leaving for the military service). Since 1990, the flag has been carried by the group of carolers during the entire caroling season (photo 2).



Photo 2: The flag of the group of carolers from Vâlcele (photo: C. Secară)

The flag of Araci is older and, due to some special distinct features, so much more valuable and interesting. It dates from 1936, from the times of the Greater Romania, and on its front side it bears the inscription: "St. Gheorge Society of the Romanian Orthodox Youth of the commune of Araci", while on the back, it has the embroidered date of the society, i.e. "25 XII 1936". The most interesting and valuable element of this flag is given by the image of Saint George, represented as a medieval knight in armour, killing the dragon from the saddle of his horse. Placing the scene amidst a minutely detailed setting (the action takes place in a valley surrounded by high mountains, where Saint George kills the dragon with his spear; on the left side of the valley, on a rock, there is a house resembling a church with a pointed steeple – like the Roman Catholic and/or reformed ones – in front of which a young princess with long, dishevelled hair, is watching the outcome of the battle, her hands clasped as in prayer), places this image among the illustrations of the apocryphal literature and Western medieval legends. In the four corners, the flag is decorated with embroidered lilies in pale colours of blue and pink, symbolizing purity and virginity, while golden tassels hang off the two free corners (photo 3).



Photo 3: The group of carolers from Araci, carrying the flag (photo: C. Secară)

4) The oldness and stability of the repertoire; methods of transmission and learning

There are two different ways of perception, reception-transmission and learning of the repertoire: "for one whole year I visited the old people of the village to collect carols and songs that are specific to the area" (D. A., Vâlcele); "the carols are from immemorial times, they are several hundred years old; they were sung by our parents and grandparents; we have learned them from our parents" (C. A., Araci). As to the informal character of the learning of the songs, two different attitudes draw our attention: "the carols gathered from old people are transcribed in Word format, in approx. 30 copies, each member receives the papers with the carols and Mrs. Cucu Marina teaches us the tunes of the carols; the rehearsals for the caroling season begin around December 3-4, because until December 1 (the National Day of Romania, author's note) we rehearse the patriotic songs" (D. A., Vâlcele) (...) "that is why I am glad that these children have become interested in the old traditions and have put aside the *manele* and clubs; there are about 24-26 young boys and girls" (N. C., Vâlcele); "we have learned them from one another; each year one, two or three persons join the

group; as soon as someone gets married, they leave, for they are no longer allowed to stay in the group" (C. A., Araci).

5) Ritual-Ceremonial Acts and Formulas. Referential Paths

Both the formula for the welcoming of the carolers' groups (*Bună sara, gazdă bună! Primiți colinda noastră? / Primum, bucușoși!*) and the oration (the wishing) uttered by the *jude* at the end of the caroling, roughly preserves the form and content of the oration recorded by I. G. Bibicescu. "At the end of the caroling, after the young boys have received a gift from the host, the carolers' *jude*, i.e. the one chosen to be their leader, says: «*Bună seara, bună seara de Crăciun, jupâne gazdă și jupâneasă găzdoaie! Să dăm laudă și mulțămită că ne-au învrednicit Dumnezeu de am ajuns și Nașterea Domnului, cu pace, cu sănătate și cu iertare de păcate. Acum, luați în nume de bine cinstit orșagul nostru că se areată jupânul gazdă și jupâneasa găzdoaie cu toată casa domniilor lor d-împreună c-un stog de grâu frumos (colacul ce-l capătă), de frumos e frumos, că-i fața Domnului Cristos, c-o bute de vin, c-o mână de galbeni, c-o spată de porc. De unde domniile lor au luat și au golit și pe noi ne-au dăruit, Dumnezeu să le dăruiască cu miia, cu suta, cu darul Sfinției Sale, ca-n veci să nu se sfârșească. Dumnezeu să-i ție întru mulți ani ca să mai poată dăruia feciorași de oameni de omenie, ca aceștia, și mai de omenie de vor fi»" [1, p. 222]. "Bună seara de Crăciun! Jupâne gazdă și jupâneasă găzdoaie, dați-ne laudă și mulțumire, c-am ajuns seara de Crăciun, cu pace, cu sănătate, cu iertare de păcate. Sfânt Anu' Nou, Sfântu' Botez și alte praznice luminate, de la Dumnezeu lăsate, să le-ajungem întru mulți și fericiți ani! Luați nume de bine, cinstită oastea (our emasis) noastră, că jupânul gazdă și jupâneasa găzdoaie s-arată c-o mână de galbeni. De unde dumnealor au luat și-au golit, și pe noi ne-au cinstit, Dumnezeu să le dea cu mia, cu suta, să poată cinsti mulți colindători de seama noastră. În seara de azi, la mulți ani!" (C. A., Araci). "Bună seara, bună seara, seara de Crăciun! Jupâne gazdă, jupâneasă găzdoaie, acum să dăm laudă și mulțumire lui Dumnezeu, că ne-avrednicit să ajungem seara de astă seară, Nașterea lui Iisus Hristos, cu pace, cu sănătate, cu iertare de păcate. Sfântul Anul Nou, Sfântul Botez și alte praznice luminate, de la Dumnezeu lăsate, dorim să le-ajungem, cu dumneavoastră-mpreună, la mai mulți, fericiți ani. Cinstită oastea (author's emasis) noastră! Să luăm în nume de bine, că jupânul gazdă și jupâneasa găzdoaie s-arată c-un colac de grâu frumos (de frumos, e frumos, că-i fața lu' Domnu Hristos), c-o bute de vin, c-o mână de galbeni. De unde dumnealui a luat și ne-a cinstit, Dumnezeu să-i*

întoarcă: cu mia, cu suta, cu darul Sfinției Sale, ca-n veci să nu se cunoască. La mulți ani, seara de Crăciun!" (D. A., Vâlcele). It is interesting to note that in both cases, the noun *orșag* (wish, oration, apud Bibicescu [1, p 403] has presumably lost its original meaning, turning into *oaste*, by way of oral transmission.

There is no pre-established route for the caroling tour. There is, however, an order of priority: "they start with the priest, the mayor, the deputy mayor, parents, relatives, friends and then they continue with the entire village; this year they went caroling for two days in a row" (N. C., Vâlcele).

6) Zoritul

This Romanian caroling custom, rarely encountered nowadays, is typical for the Araci and Vâlcele communities. "On December 26, the second day of Christmas, we go with *Zoritul*, to thank the people who welcomed us by singing *Mulțumescu-ți...*" (C. A., Araci). "On the evening when we go with *Zoritul* (on December 26, author's note), a ball is also held" (D. A., Vâlcele).

7) The Christmas Ball

"After caroling and earning some money, they hired a band and organized a ball, as was the custom; the ball began with a few carols from Vâlcele, then followed the dancing; everybody had fun until morning. The ball was attended by people from Araci, Vâlcele, Ariușd, Feldioara, Hăghig, Podu Olt, Dobârlău, Hărman, from all the neighbouring communes. Each person brought along a basket (as used to be the custom at balls or at New Year parties), each one put their contribution on the table and ate from what they had brought." (N. C., Vâlcele).

This ball is the most eloquent example of the immediate and definite transition from tradition to modernity. "The Christmas Ball starts at 19:00 on December 26 and is held at the Vâlcele Community Centre; this year we were honoured by the presence of over 200 people. All the people who welcomed and treated us when we went caroling receive an invitation to the Christmas Ball from us. Those who have not received invitations may enter by paying an entry fee" (D. A., Vâlcele). In the interview with the Araci group, we asked the following question: Is there a music band in the

village? Answer: "No, there isn't. We hired one from Hăghig, not far from here; some people we know, a band (...) with modern instruments like: organ, saxafon (sic), guitar, drums. "Question (C. S): What repertoire do they play? Answer: "Anything, even *manele*, Serbian dances, anything people ask for" (C. A., Araci).

3. Realities and perspectives. Conclusions

We cannot conclude this study without drawing a few conclusions:

1) The Romanian traditional caroling custom from Vâlcele and Araci has been preserved until today, even despite the reduction and/or substantial transformation of the repertoire; some of the most important pieces have been preserved up to the present time, while maintaining the original poetic and musical structures almost unchanged.

2) Despite the structural similarities, the very small geographical distance and the administrative connections between the two localities, the differences between Araci and Vâlcele are quite significant in terms of transmission and continuity of the carols repertoire. In Vâlcele there was a break spanning several decades. The consequences concern not only the repertoire but also the organization of the current group of carolers, which is based on a mixed gender structure, disregarding the strict criteria of formation of the men's group (or young boys' group, as case may be). For the same reasons, the repertoire is composite, based mainly on cultural borrowings from the anodyne realm promoted by the media. The caroling practiced in Vâlcele is "transitional", meaning that ideally, it could be an attempt to reconstruct tradition, but in fact, it assumes a reinvention thereof. Comparatively, the group of carolers from Araci is better structured and their repertoire is largely identical to the old one.

4) The conservatism of the region is remarkable, considering the almost complete loss of traditional identity and culture that characterizes not only the Covasna county, but also the entire country. However, the conservative attitude is limited only to the preservation of part of the carols repertoire; other identity elements of the immaterial traditional culture (epic, lyric or dancing repertoire, other ritual repertoires etc.) or of the

material one (the traditional costume) were lost and were placed in the realm of "reconstructions" and searches for identity.

4) From the same point of view of the relationship between the preservation/search for identity and renewal/modernization, it appears that the repertoire of other caroling-related customs is fully connected to contemporaneity, both in form and content. One example (conclusive in this respect, offering the certainty that it would not be the only one of its kind) can be illustrated by the way in which the Christmas Ball unfolds and by the music types played at this party organized by the carolers' group. Due to the disappearance of the local traditional musicians, the music is provided by wedding bands (equipped with electronic instruments) from the neighbouring villages or from the Brasov Plain area, whose versatility to play any musical genre requested (including *manele*) is well known and well appreciated.

However, this matter requires further consideration before a final conclusion can be reached.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

The carols collected by I. G. Bibicescu: 1884 [1, p. 209–227]

("Carols; written by Reveca Scurtu from Vâlcele"):

1. *Ia te scoală, gazdă, scoală*, no. 315, "the first carol", p. 209 (II, cosmogonic, 26, robe adorned with stars).
2. *Supt poalele cerului*, no. 316, "the second carol", p. 210 (VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 166, Adam).
3. *Tot pe după munți înalți*, no. 317, "the third carol", p. 211 (II, cosmogonic, 23, the genesis).
4. *Pe supt deal, pe supt deluț*, no. 318, "the fourth carol", p. 212 (II, cosmogonic, 23, the genesis).
5. *Scoal, cioban, nu mai dormi*", no. 319, "the fifth carol", p. 213 (VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 167, the news of the Birth).

("Other carols; written by Father Ion Moga from Vâlcele as sung by the young boys from that commune, in 1884"):

6. *O! Și din sara de Crăciun*, no. 320, "the sixth carol", p. 213 (VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 167, the news of the Birth; 170, the Birth of Jesus and the messengers, 172, the slaying of the babies).
 7. *Bunul Dumnezeu și cu Sânt Ion*, no. 321, "the seventh carol", p. 215 (III, professional, 37, the birth of a miraculous lamb).
 8. *De-ntreabă-și, de-ntreabă-și*, no. 322, "the eighth carol", p. 216 (VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 186, the Crucifixion of Jesus; 187, the origin of wheat, wine and ointment).
 9. *Cine-i în ceste scorturi*, no. 323, "the ninth carol", p. 217 (VII, enlightening and moralizing, no. 151, the dispute among wine, wheat and myrrh).
 10. *Sara de-astă sară*, no. 324, "the tenth carol", p. 219 (VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 173, the Baptism of Christ).
 11. *Sus în poarta raiului*, no. 325, "the eleventh carol", p. 219 (II, cosmogonic, 25, the stealing of the stars).
 12. *Mulțumescu-Ți, mulțumesc* ("*Zoritul* on the second day of Christmas. It is sung by young boys and married men, at one another's homes"), no. 326, "the twelfth carol", p. 221 (VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 166, Adam).
- ("Specimens of the carols performed by the Greek Oriental Gypsies"):
13. *Supt cea poală de dumbravă*, no. 327, "the thirteenth carol", p. 223 (III, professional, 39, the shepherd who has lost his sheep).
 14. *Coborât-a Dumnezeu*, no. 328, "the fourteenth carol", p. 223 (III, cosmogonic, 30, the manna of the field).
 15. *Mulțumescu-Ți, mulțumesc*, no. 329, "the fifteenth carol", p. 225 (VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 166, Adam).

16. *Pe supt roșu răsărit*, no. 330, "the sixteenth carol", p. 226 (II, cosmogonic, 25, the stealing of the stars; VIII, biblical and apocryphal, 177, Virgin Mary with the Baby in her arms and the service in the monastery).

17. *Mulțămescu-Ți Isuse Cristoase*, no. 331, "the seventeenth carol", p. 227 (I, protocolary, 1, the carolers and the host).

ANNEX 2

Tiberiu Brediceanu Collection: 1930 (AIEF)

1. *Tu ești lumina cea sfântă*, inf. ?, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 25.05.1930, ph 14749 c, AIEF.
2. *În orașul Vișlăem*, inf. ?, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 25.05.1930, ph 14749 d, AIEF.
3. *Mulțămescu-Ți, mulțămescu-Ți*, inf. ?, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 25.05.1930, ph 14749 e, AIEF.

ANNEX 3

Ioan R. Nicola Collection: 1933 (AIEF)

1. *Mulțumimu-Ți Isus Hristoase*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 63 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Ioan R. Nicola, 04.08.1933, ph 1369, AIEF.
2. *Coborât-o Dumnezeu*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 63 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Ioan R. Nicola, 04.08.1933, ph 1370-1371 a, AIEF.
3. *Sub cea poală de dumbravă*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 63 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Ioan R. Nicola, 04.08.1933, ph 1371 b-1372, AIEF.
4. *Ce-i în cer și pe pământ*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 63 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Ioan R. Nicola, 04.08.1933, ph 1376 b-1377 a, AIEF.

ANNEX 4

Tiberiu Brediceanu Collection: 1938 (AIEF)

1. *Sub cea poală de dumbravă*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.38, ph 1371 b-1372, AIEF.
2. *Mulțumimu-Ți domn Hristoase*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14775 b, AIEF.
3. *Coborât-a Dumnezeu*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14775 c, AIEF.
4. *Ce-i în cer și pre pământ*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14776 a, AIEF.
5. *Cam pă după munți înalți*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14776 b, AIEF.
6. *Moș Adame, moș bătrâne*, inf. Busuioc Lingurar, 68 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14776 c, AIEF.
7. *Oi, și din sara de Crăciun*, inf. Mihail Ranca, 44 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14777 a, AIEF.

8. *Acum am văzut lumina*, inf. Victor Ranca, 13 y.o. and children's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14777 b, AIEF.
9. *Oi, și din sara de Crăciun*, inf. Constantin Picicoiu, 31 y.o. and men's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14777 c, AIEF.
10. *Zuorile*, inf. Veta Bunde, 21 y.o. and women's group, Vâlcele, collect. Tiberiu Brediceanu, 24.12.1938, ph 14778, AIEF.

ANNEX 5

Nicolae Moldovan Collection: 1973 (CSA)

1. *În orașul Vlflaem*, inf. Mihai Șolcoi and children's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
2. *Trei crai de la Răsărit*, inf. Mihai Șolcoi and children's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
3. *O, ce veste minunată*, inf. Mihai Șolcoi and children's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
4. *Sub cea poală de dumberavă*, inf. men's group (Gypsies), collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
5. *Tatăl cu nouă feciori*, inf. men's group (Gypsies), collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
6. *În coliba păstorească*, inf. Mihai Șolcoi and children's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
7. *Oi, și din sara de Crăciun*, inf. mixed group, Vâlcele, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA. "Given that this carol is very long and difficult to perform, it was sung only to the priest, mayor, village teacher and leading families, who were offering *colaci* (knot-shaped bread – translator's note), drinks and a more substantial amount of money, which was used to organize the Christmas Ball, to which they had free entrance" (Nicolae Moldovan).
8. *Mulțumita* after the caroling tour, inf. ?, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
9. *Bunul Dumnezeu și cu Sânt Ionu*, inf. mixed group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
10. *Mulțumescu-Ți, mulțumescu-Ți, Doamne Iisuse Hristoase (Zoritul)*, inf. mixed group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.

Informants' group: Constantin Bicicoi (a Văduvii), 66 y.o.; Pavel Gancea, 54 y.o.; Aurel Nema, 55 y.o.; Ion Ancu, 62 y.o.; Victoria Cașăș, 51 y.o.; Lucreția Ancu, 54 y.o.; Maria Țifrea, 55 y.o.; Gheorghe Țifrea, 56 y.o.; Alexandru Cașăș (nicknamed *Sandu lu Șândrucă*), 54 y.o.; Ion Cașăș, 44 y.o. "These carols were recorded in Ancu Ion's house; currently these carols are sung by the so-called *băbări*, since the young people nowadays have begun to abandon these customs, which have been preserved only by the older people. These carols were sung in «first audition», without rehearsal, as they are sung every year. Tonight, several people gathered for Christmas Eve and sang as can be heard in the recording. The recording was made by Nicolae Moldovan and his son Nicușor, on this day of December 24, 1973" (Nicolae Moldovan).

11. *Nașterea Ta Hristoase* (Troparion of the Nativity), inf. mixed group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
12. *Acest praznic luminat*, inf. Mihai Șolcoi and children's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
13. "?", inf. group of Gypsy children, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
14. *Mulțumim Iisus Hristoase (Zoritul)*, inf. group of Gypsy children, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
15. *Coborât-a Dumnezeu*, inf. men's group, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.
16. *La o masă rotilată*, inf. group of Gypsy children, collect. Nicolae Moldovan, 24.12.1973, CSA.

ANNEX 6

Speranța Rădulescu Collection: 1980 (AIEF)

1. *Doi unchiași bătrâni*, inf. Maria Boros, 32 y.o., Gavrilă Boros, 16 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Speranța Rădulescu, Eugenia Săndulescu, 13.09.1980, tr 5289 II b, AIEF.
2. *Sub cea poală de dumbravă*, inf. Maria Boros, 32 y.o., Gavrilă Boros, 16 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Speranța Rădulescu, Eugenia Săndulescu, 13.09.1980, tr 5289 II c, AIEF.
3. *Noi umblăm și tot umblăm*, inf. Maria Boros, 32 y.o., Gavrilă Boros, 16 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Speranța Rădulescu, Eugenia Săndulescu, 13.09.1980, tr 5289 II d, AIEF.
4. *La lină fântână*, inf. Maria Boros, 32 y.o., Vâlcele, collect. Speranța Rădulescu, Eugenia Săndulescu, 13.09.1980, tr 5289 II e, AIEF.

ANNEX 7

Constantin Secară Collection: 2011 (CSA)

1. *Mulțămescu-Ți, mulțămescu-Ți, Doamne Iisuse Hristoase*, inf. mixed group, Vâlcele, collect. Constantin Secară, 10.12.2011, d.a._ST-007.mp3_10.12.2011, CSA.
2. *La masa ce s-a-ntâmpat, la nuntă-n Cana Galileii*, inf. mixed group, Vâlcele, collect. Constantin Secară, 11.12.2011, d.a._ST-011.mp3_11.12.2011, CSA.
3. *Coborât-a, coborât-a, Dumnezeu și Sfântul Petru* ("the rich and the poor" theme, sung to the melody of the piece *Mulțămescu-Ți...*, a carol that does not belong to the local repertoire - author's note), inf. mixed group, Vâlcele, collect. Constantin Secară, 11.12.2011, d.a._ST-011.mp3_11.12.2011, CSA.
4. *Anolo, Ianolo*, inf. mixed group, Vâlcele, collect. Constantin Secară, 11.12.2011, d.a._ST-011.mp3_11.12.2011, CSA. "Anolo Ianolo has its origin in the former Old Brașov, currently the Bartolomeu, Strada Lungă, Strada de Mijloc and Stupinul Vechi districts. Not much is known about this carol, apart from the fact that it was sung by the *Junii Brașovecheni* around 1700-1750, although the first documentary evidence of this group of *Juni* dates from around 1820. I know this from my grandfather George Ardelean, who was the president of this group. His grandfather or great-grandfather was one of the founding members of this group, as the Ardelean family was one of the oldest in Brașov, and I have documents certifying the death of the first member of our family, Iacob Ardelean, who died in 1628, at Saint Nicholas Church, located in the Prund Square, in the Schei district"(Dan Ardelean).

5. *Oi, și din sara de Crăciun*, inf. group of young boys, Araci, collect. Constantin Secară, 28.12.2011, d.a._ST-001.wav_28.12.2011, CSA.
6. *Pogorât-a Dumnezeu*, inf. group of young boys, Araci, collect. Constantin Secară, 28.12.2011, d.a._ST-002.wav_28.12.2011, CSA.
7. *Mulțămescu-Ți, mulțămescu-Ți, Doamne Iisuse Hristoase*, inf. group of young boys, Araci, collect. Constantin Secară, 28.12.2011, d.a._ST-003.wav_28.12.2011, CSA.

– literary texts –

1. *Oi, și din sara de Crăciun*

caroling group of 7 young boys
Araci, CV
collect. Constantin Secară
Araci, 28.12.2011

Oi, și din sara de Crăciunu,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, S-a născut și Dumⁿezău.
Oi, și din ieslea boilor,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, și din floarea fânului.
Oi, mititel, defășețel,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, scuticel de dorjenel.
Oi, fașa-i dalbă de mătas',
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, cârpa-i dalbă, păioar'.
Oi, păioară, gălbioar',
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, și steaua li s-a ivit.
Tot pe deasupra soarelui,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, și dau raze ca din sór'.
Oi, și lumină ca din lun',
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, ceșt domn Irod de-mpărat.

Oi, dacă-și văzui și-și crezu,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, c-a născut și Dumⁿezău.
Oi, grele oști și-au ridicat,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, și că iel că și-a tăiat.
Oi, șapte mii de coconași,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, șapte mii și șapte sut'.
Oi, ca să-și tâmple Dumⁿezău,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, Dumⁿezău nu și-a tâmplat.
Oi, c-a fost voia Tatălui,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, Tatălui și-a Fiului.
Oi, să fiți domni buni sănătoși,
Oi, Domnului mⁿeu
Oi, domni buni și-a lui Dumⁿezău!

2. Pogorât-a Dumnezău

caroling group of 7 young boys
Araci, CV
collect. Constantin Secară
Araci, 28.12.2011

Pogorât-ai Dumnezău
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Vreo doi meri și vreo doi peri
Oi, din tulpină depărtari
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Din vârfuri apropiari
Oi, sus în creanga mărului
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Este-un leagăn de mătase
Oi, dar în leagăn cine-mi șade?
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Șade bunul Dumnezău
Oi, dar cu ce e-nfășețel?
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Fașa-i dalbă de mătase
Oi, cârpa-i dalbă, păioară
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Păioară, gălbioară

Oi, vine-un rând de rândunele
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Cu glasuri de feticele
Oi, își cântară-și colindară
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Pe Dumnezeu nu-l sculară
Oi, vine-un rând de porumbei
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Cu glasuri de fecioare
Oi, își cântară-și colindară
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Pe Dumnezeu mi-l sculară
Oi, scoală, Doamne, nu dormi
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Și dă mană câmpului
Oi, și apă izvoarelor
Oi, Domnului, Domnu-i nostrú
Și voi și-a lui Dumnezău!

3. Mulțămescu-Ți, mulțămescu-Ți

caroling group of 7 young boys
Araci, CV
collect. Constantin Secară
Araci, 28.12.2011

Mulțămescu-Ți, mulțămescu-Ți,
Doamne Iisuse Hristoase,
Că ne-ai dat zile frumoase
Și raze prealuminoase!
Sub poalele cerului,
Mese-ntinse, jilțuri scrise,
Dar la mese cine-mi șade?
Șade bunul Dumnezău
Cu Ion, Sfântul Ion
Și-l giudică pe Adam
Măi Adame, moș Adame,

Numai din cel pom mai mare-l,
Mai mare pom înflorit
Din ăla să nu mănânci, Iartă-mi, Doamne,
c-am greșit
Ș-am greșit, ș-am adormit
Io ca-n grabă mi-a venit
Măr în gură mi-a strujit
Iar eu gol m-am pomenit
Cu Nașterea lui Hristos
Să ne fie de folos
De folos, de bucurie.

Slobozirea-n Rai ți-am dat-o,
Din toți pomii să mănânciu!

La mulți ani cu veselie,
Și voi și-ai lui Dumrézău!

Abbreviations

y.o. – years old (referring to the age of the informants)

CSA – Constantin Secară Archive

FAC – Archive of the Institute "The Folklore Archive of the Romanian Academy" of Cluj-Napoca.

AIEF – Archive of the "Constantin Brăiloiu" Institute of Ethnography and Folklore of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest

collect. – collector

ph – phonograph

inf. – informant

tr – tape recorder

transc. – transcription