

## Particularities of the Harvest Song from Alba County

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**Abstract:** *The present paper starts from my personal experience of field research, together with the researcher and professor Ioan Bocșa in the area of the Apuseni Mountains in Alba County, namely of the repertoire of harvest songs in the area. This activity materialized in the publication of the volume “Traditional vocal music from the Apuseni Mountains”, author Ioan Bocșa, where some of the melodies proposed for analysis in this paper are published, as I wished to complete the stylistic conclusions, by consulting other literary sources that contain pieces collected from the researched area.*

**Keywords:** *harvest song; “huhurezat”; field research; Alba County; Ioan Bocșa;*

### Introduction

The aim of the present approach is a subjective foundation based on the curiosities aroused by the repertoire of harvest songs that I heard for the first time during a field research approach conducted by Ioan Bocșa during the years 2010 - 2012 in the area Apuseni Mountains, Alba County. I had the chance to participate in these field researches that concerned 28 villages. The project was completed in 2013 with the publication of the volume *Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni (Bazinul Arieșului și Văile Aiud, Geoagiu, Galda)*. In total, 566 folk songs were “saved” from the field<sup>2</sup>, of which 290 carols, 14 army songs, 8 songs belonging to the wedding repertoire, 34 songs from the funeral repertoire, 15 harvest songs, 80 old-style songs, 17 modern-style songs and 31 dance songs. In addition to the field research, my biggest contribution consisted in the literary transcription of all the texts, and later in other work necessary for editing the volume.

In addition to the harvest songs that are recorded in Ioan Bocșa’s volume, the volumes that formed the basis of the analytical chapter are *Cântecele de seceriș ale poporului roman* by Elisabeta Moldoveanu and *Cântecul ceremonial al cununii de la seceriș*, authors Lucia Iștoc and Elena Hlinca-Drăgan. In the two collections we find an anthology of harvest songs made up of collections recorded over the course of a century, the musical material in the two volumes being very similar. What distinguishes the two volumes is the classification and systematization of the melodic types: in the work of Elisabeta Moldoveanu<sup>3</sup> the melodic types also have the geographical space as a defining criterion<sup>4</sup>, and in the volume of Lucia Iștoc and Elena Hlinca-Drăgan<sup>5</sup> the criterion relies on musical structures.

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<sup>2</sup> These data are specified in the preface of the mentioned volume, the tracks recorded in the field can be found on the DVD attached to the volume; Ioan Bocșa, *Traditional vocal music from the Apuseni Mountains [Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni]*, Media Musica Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> The musical anthology includes 335 songs.

<sup>4</sup> The author highlights two types of typologies, one literary and one musical. Iștoc, Lucia. & Hlinca-Drăgan, Elena. 2010. *The Ceremonial Song of the Harvest Wreath [Cântecul ceremonial al cununii de la seceriș]*. Cluj-Napoca: Centrul Județean pentru Conservarea și Promovarea Culturii Tradiționale, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> The musical anthology totals 320 songs, the last 4 being chanted verses.

By consulting these two basic materials, together with the above-mentioned volume, I wanted to provide as broad a picture as possible of the morphological characteristics of the repertoire of harvest songs in the researched area.

## 1. Research methods and methodological tools used in the research

The collection stage that took place previous to the publication of the volume *Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni* involved the methodological stages established by the researchers in the field<sup>6</sup>: the preparation stage, the actual collection stage, the stage of processing the collected material (musical transcription, literary transcription, classification of the musical material, etc.) and editing. The technical tools used were a recorder and a notebook for writing down the texts. Regarding the collection itself, I wrote about the importance of this moment in a previously published article: “When meeting with potential informants, the most important thing is to gain the informant’s trust in order for them to be able to open up emotionally in the face of such a challenge. The professionalism, tact and experience of the collector are very important at this stage, because the moment is delicate, for the informant, from a psychological, emotional point of view. I give just one example: many pieces from the targeted repertoire are not part of the active fund, the informants had memory problems, finding it difficult to remember songs, some of which they had not sung in decades.”<sup>7</sup>

From a morphological point of view, there is a large diversity of structural-musical particularities of harvest songs, so the criteria that were the basis of their analysis are: types of versification, music scales (major and minor; cadences), rhythmic system, architectural structure, ornamentation, etc., abiding by the analytical principle generated by the phrase “from simple to complex”. In order to centralize all the parameters involved in the analysis, I used an *Excel* table in which I entered the data relevant to the analysis (identification data of the piece, title of the piece, collector, year of collection, form, number of melodic lines, type of verse, system of cadences, the musical scale, the rhythmic system, literary themes, and possible remarks), from which certain statistics can be extracted later regarding the stylistic particularities of the songs.

The sample of songs included in the area of the research covers a period of approximately 100 years, having been traversed by many researchers such as: Béla Bartók (1910), Ioan R. Nicola (1955, 1958, 1959), Elisabeta Moldoveanu (1956), Ovidiu Bârlea (1965), T. Graur (1972), Lucia Iștoc (1982), and Ioan Bocșa (2010-2012).

## 2. Stylistic Aspects of Harvest Songs

### 2.1. Generalities

According to the ethnomusicologist Ileana Szenik, the harvest songs are part of the repertoire of spring and summer customs<sup>8</sup>, having a rich repertoire, compared to other productions of this repertoire. They are sung on the road, by the group of women returning from the field to the host’s house; a virgin girl wears a wreath of wheat on her head, and those

<sup>6</sup> In the article there is an extensive detailing of the stages; Pătraș, Andra-Daniela. 2019. „Etapă ale demersului cercetării folclorice cu aplicabilitate la zona Munților Apuseni. De la culegere la editare”. In *Ars Musicalis. Lucrările simpozionului tinerilor cercetători Romeo Ghircoiașiu*, ed. by Cristina Șuteu, 56–64. Cluj-Napoca: Editura MediaMusica.

<sup>7</sup> Pătraș, Andra-Daniela. 2019. „Etapă ale demersului cercetării folclorice cu aplicabilitate la zona Munților Apuseni. De la culegere la editare”. In *Ars Musicalis. Lucrările simpozionului tinerilor cercetători Romeo Ghircoiașiu*, ed. by Cristina Șuteu, 56–64. Cluj-Napoca: Editura MediaMusica, p. 58.

<sup>8</sup> Szenik, Ileana. 2010. *Folklore [Folclor. Modul de studiu pentru studii universitare prin învățământ la distanță]*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura MediaMusica, pp. 139-140.

who attend this procession water the wreath and also the girl who wears it as a sign of abundance for the coming harvest.

Considering that the researched region represents a mountain area, this type of repertoire is not native to it, which was another factor that caused interest in its research. In the field, it was explained to us that people used to go harvesting in the plains; sometimes they stayed the whole season, and at the end they were paid with products for the work done and thus won their bread for a whole year<sup>9</sup>.

As part of the present research, I included 34 songs, the first 15 being from the volume *Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni*, and the next 14 from the work *Cântecul ceremonial al cununii de la seceriș*. I opted for adding the songs from the second book because the transcription provides their identification data as well and thus they were easier to follow. I provide a table of them (Table 1), with the number assigned to them in the collection, the title of the piece and the village from which they were collected.

Numerical order	Number in collection	The title of the song	Village/Commune
1	57	Cununa trăbă udată	Ocoliș
2	58	Adă apă la cunună	Poiană, Bistra
3	59	Hai cu apă la curună	Sălciua de Sus, Sălciua
4	60	Adu apă la cunună	Mănăstire, Lupșa
5	61	Adă apă la cunună	Valea Șesii, Lupșa
6	62	Adă apă la cunună	Valea Lupșii, Lupșa
7	63	Hai cu apă la curună	Poșaga
8	64	Draga mea, holdă de grâu	Geomal, Stremț
9	65	Adă apă la cunună	Mușca, Lupșa
10	66	Noi venim din drum, departe	Izvoarele, Livezile
11	67	Draga mea, holdă de grâu	Stremț
12	68	De unde, curuna, vine	Poșaga
13	69	Noi merem pă drum de piatră	Vidolm, Ocoliș
14	70	Dragu mi-i la sășerat	Livezile
15	71	Adă apă la cunună	Bistra
16	144	Hai cu apă la curună	Sălciua
17	150	Adă apă la cunună	Bistra
18	153	Cine n-a udacununa	Ocoliș
19	153a	Noi vinim pă drum de piatră	Ocoliș
20	154	Cine n-a uda cununa	Ocoliș
21	155	Adă apă la cunună	Lupșa
22	156	Hai cu apă la cunună	Lupșa
2. 3	157	Adă apă la cunună	Lupșa
24	158	Adă apă la cunună	Lupșa
25	159	Adă apă la cunună	Lupșa
26	159	Adă apă la cunună	Lupșa
27	160	Adă apă la cunună	Mușca
28	176	Noi vinim pă drum de piatră	Poșaga
29	177	Hai cu apă la curună	Sălciua

<sup>9</sup> Bocsa, Ioan. 2013. *Traditional Vocal Music from Apuseni Mountains [Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni]*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura MediaMusica, p. 16.

30	178	Hai cu apă la curună	Sălciua
31	216	Adă apă la cunună	Izvoarele
32	247	Adă apă la cunună	Bistra
33	247a	Adă apă la cunună	Bistra
34	248	Adă apă la cunună	Bistra

Table 1. *The title of the pieces and their place of origin*

## 2.2. Literary theme

Notes related to the harvest ritual will not be included in this work, as there are many relevant reference sources in which it is described in detail. Related to literary themes, Elisabeta Moldoveanu offers a complex typology found in harvest songs from Transylvania<sup>10</sup>, divided into themes and motifs.

The literary themes and motifs found in the songs from Alba County are:

- the wreath watering ceremony;
- the work description;
- the allusion to marriage;
- the request addressed to the host to prepare the reward;
- the setting of jobs for women and men;
- the final greeting to the host.

I offer an example of a text (Table 2) in which we encounter several themes from those mentioned, within the same song:

<b>The lyrics of the song</b>	<b>Literary motifs/themes</b>
Noi vinim din drum de piatră, Di la holdă săcerată, Holdă ca păretele. Sășerară fetele. Fetele o săcerară Și ficiorii o legară. Fii, gazdă, cu voie bună, Că noi ț-aducem curună, Nu fi, gazdă, supărat, Că noi holda ț-am gătat. Frunză verde de alună, Hai cu apă la curună, Frunză verde castravete, Hai cu apă, că ni-i săte. Cine n-a uda curuna, Să n-ajugă săptămâna, Curuna trebe udată, Fata trebe măritată. Trecui, bade, pângă tine Nu țipași apă pă mine. Asta casă-I lăudată Că ne udăși cu apă.	- work description  - setting jobs for women and men  - greeting to the host  - wreath watering ceremony  - allusion to marriage  - wreath watering ceremony

<sup>10</sup> Moldoveanu, Elisabeta. 2000. *The Harvest Songs from Romania [Cântecurile de seceriș ale poporului român – tipologie muzicală și literară]*. București: Editura Academiei Române, pp. 49 – 113.

Da care nu ne-o udat, Nu știu gazda s-o culcat Ori izvoarele-o săcat.	
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Table 2. *The text of song 153a from the volume “The ceremonial song of the harvest wreath”*

I have noticed that there is a tendency to mix literary motifs/themes within the same song, basically using short descriptions of one motif and then introducing another, also with a short versified development. The initial motif, found in 23 songs out of 34, is that of the wreath watering ceremony, the title of the song being “*Adă apă la cunună*”.

### 2.3. Structural-musical considerations

From a stylistic point of view, there is no unity of the repertoire contained in the volume *Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni*, “the most obvious influences coming from the areas of Bihor and the Mures Valley”<sup>11</sup>. Adding the pieces of the previous collection (Table 1, pieces 16-34), I found that these are melodic variants of the melodic pattern of the pieces in Ioan Bocșa’s volume. Next, I detail the predominance of morphological parameters.

Most of the ritual songs analyzed are in minor scale (there is only one example of major scale) with sound structures that have a pre-pentatonic or pentatonic scale, with the finale on E. The sound material is based on the pentatonic structure  $E - G - A - B - D$ , with the pyknon ( $G - A - B$ ), half of which also include the note  $D$  in the scale. The amplified melodic variants in terms of musical material and number of melodic lines are based on the sounds of the *Aeolian* mode scale, chromatic notes being very rare within the scale. The melodic formulas are mainly developed on adjacent sounds, we encounter big intervallic leaps (fourths or fifths) in the initial formulas, some melodies being richly ornamented. The melody is either melismatic or syllabic. The cadences are placed on the fundamental note, most of the interior caesuras are on steps 3, VII and 4 ( $G - D - A$ ). The general melodic profile is descending.

The verse belongs exclusively to the acatalectic tetrapody, the stanza being made up of two, three or four melodic lines (Fig. 2) of the AB type, or through the varied repetition of the AAB or ABB type, when the form has 3 melodic lines; when it is made up of four melodic lines the architectural principle is the ABCD series.

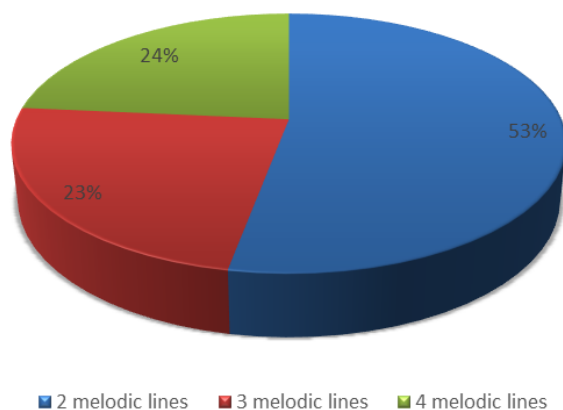


Fig. 1. *Graphic regarding the proportionality of the number of melodic lines*

<sup>11</sup> Bocșa, Ioan. 2013. *Traditional Vocal Music from Apuseni Mountains [Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni]*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura MediaMusica, p. 16.

Regarding the rhythmic system, most of the songs are based on the distributive rhythmic system (26 songs); a number of 8 songs are in giusto syllabic bichrone (Fig. 3). The rhythm is adapted to the “steps of the ceremonial walk”<sup>12</sup>, represented by the use of rhythmic durations of quarter notes, or quarter notes alternating with half notes, in a slow tempo, which allowed melodic ornamentation.

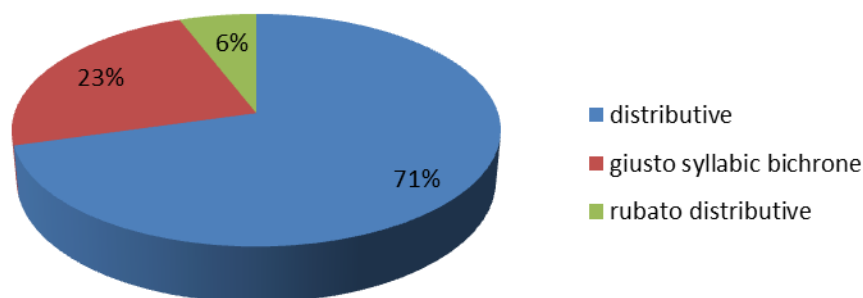


Fig. 2. Graphic regarding the percentage of rhythmic systems

In addition to the harvest ritual songs, the research also included songs from other genres that have texts with literary themes taken from the harvest songs, which Lucia Iștoc and Elena HlincaDrăgan classify as “ritualized songs”<sup>13</sup>, being proper song melodies, with a pentatonic melodic structure, typical old-style cadence system ( $A - D - E$ ), architectural structure of 3 melodic lines and tetrapodic verse. Melodies 216, 247, 247a<sup>14</sup> and 248a are classified as actual song melodies. They have 4 melodic lines, a system of cadences on the sounds  $B - G - A - E$ , a general descending melodic profile, a sound structure of a minor scale. Melody 70 (*Dragu mi-i la sășerat*) is an army song, with lyrics about the harvest. What these pieces have in common with the harvest songs is the ceremonial rhythm, in a slow tempo, with a richly ornamented melodic line due to the tempo that allows it.

#### 2.4. The *Huhurezat*

Already during the collection conducted in the field, a distinct “sound phenomenon” attracted our attention which we had not encountered before in other musical genres. Researching the literature, I found that it is called “*huhurezat*” and that it is only found in the harvest songs of Apuseni. It consists in the addition of an element at the end of the musical stanza made up of undetermined sounds. “An aspect worth mentioning is what I met on Arieș Valley, in the variants of a song (no. 60, 62), namely, the *huhurezat*. Thus, at the end of certain stanzas, a high-pitched sound is emitted, on the vowel “u”, followed by three or four other descending sounds, on the syllable “hu”. We found it particularly interesting that the source singers sang the “*huhurezat*” in the same pitch, on the same sounds, even if, at our request, they changed the register in which they sang the melodic part, which gives the moment a strong ritual-archaic charge.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Mîrza, T. 1979. „Ritmul vocal acomodat pașilor din mersul ceremonios, un tip distinct al ritmicii populare românești”, în *Lucrări de muzicologie*, (10): p. 245 - 257.

<sup>13</sup> Iștoc, Lucia. & Hlinca Dragan, Elena. 2010. *The Ceremonial Song of the Harvest Wreath [Cântecul ceremonial al cununii de la seceriș]*. Cluj-Napoca: Centrul Județean pentru Conservarea și Promovarea Culturii Tradiționale, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Collected by Béla Bartók in 1910.

<sup>15</sup> Bocsa, Ioan. 2013. *Traditional Vocal Music from Apuseni Mountains [Muzică vocală tradițională din Munții Apuseni]*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura MediaMusica, p. 15.



- the *huhurezat* can be noted rhythmically with some precision;
- the manner of their emission is also resembling;
- the effect perceived from the auditory point of view is similar;
- the notation method is similar;
- approximate intonation.

As a possible hypothesis, I can state that the shouting manner encountered in the ancient practice of the Romanian song comes close to the manner of *Sprechgesang* performance, which can be considered a branch of it, or an unpolished face, which leads us to think of it in a reversed direction: its origins.

### 3. Conclusions

The harvest song is a vocal genre, performed by a group of women, found in the region of Transylvania. Due to the seasonal movements of the reapers from the mountains to the plains, a repertoire that is not typical of the mountainous area has been formed in the Apuseni Mountains. Following in the footsteps of the villages visited by Ioan Bocșa and a team of students between 2010 and 2012, we found that other researchers had also been to those villages. We collected the harvest songs from those villages together and they amounted to a total of 34 songs. Most of these are ritual harvest songs, the others being songs from other musical genres such as proper old-style songs or army songs.

The characteristics of the harvest song are: minor scales, two or three melodic lines, with a slow tempo, the rhythm accommodates the steps of the ceremonial walk. The same melodic type was collected in most villages. A special and unique element is the presence of the *huhurezat*, which we found in some of the melodies.

### 4. References

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