

# ***THE SOLDIER'S SONG. MELODIES FROM THE MARAMUREȘ REGION***

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## **ABSTRACT**

In folklore, the term "soldier's song" ["cântec de cătănie"] designates on the one hand songs of war, and on the other, conscription songs; considered as a literary form, they do not have their own melodies, but rather melodies belonging to non-occasional lyrical songs. The soldiers' songs from the Maramureș region that provide the analytical framework for this paper, are tied to the conscription ceremonial, i.e. the party held in honor of the young lads leaving for military service. While these songs share the same musical characteristics as other melody types in Transylvania, evidence has been found of another widely performed genre in the Maramureș region, the so-called *hore nouă* melodies, which have a strong regional flavor.

**Keywords:** military service, *hore nouă*, Maramureș

The emergence and evolution of the genre are linked to the historical period when the compulsory military service was introduced on the territory of the Habsburg Empire, at the end of the eighteenth century. Its popularity across the Romanian territory extends particularly to the regions of Bihor, Transylvania, Maramureș and Bucovina. The custom of organizing a ceremony for the young

lads leaving for their military service generally consists of the same elements in the areas with a mixed Romanian-Hungarian population. Placing it into a particular genre first requires the identification of the function and thematic content of the poetic text, which is closely linked to the functions of the musical aspects. In this respect, the soldiers' songs belong to the relatively recent category of occasional lyrical songs, performed in groups, exclusively by men.

The long-term military service performed in foreign places meant, for the young men, "abandoning their ordinary way of life, while for their families, besides the feelings of concern, the loss of a helping hand at home"<sup>53</sup>. Thus, the ceremonial represents a ritual of transition and passage and was invested with the significance of a "threshold", of an important moment in life.

Usually, the general literary themes that occur in soldiers' songs are: the young man's sorrow for being separated from his family and sweetheart; the packing of the clothes in the suitcase for departure; his sadness for leaving the farm animals unattended and the household tools unused; outbursts of revolt against the unjust order of things – the fact that he has been conscripted at such a young age; the spiritual comfort he finds in nature – the leaves of the forest, the grass of the field; countdown to departure and the whistle of the train. The soldiers' songs from Maramureş contain literary themes of a rare expressive power, which reveal, among other things, the impetuous and unruly temper of the people of Maramureş, dissatisfied with the foreign rule: *Decât la Neamţu cătană,/ Mai bine-n codru cu pană,/ Că decât la Neamţu slugă,/ Mai bine-n codru cu frunză.; Frunză verde ca iarba,/ Tună drace-n ce-i tuna,/ Tună-n firu paiului/ Şi-n condeiu Neamţului,/ Să nu poată altu scrie,/ La feciori în cătănie.*

Among the first field collections and research studies on soldiers' songs were those conducted by Béla Bartók. In the 2nd volume of the collection of *Romanian Folk Music*, the author included 24 songs on military themes, while in the 3rd volume, he organized 90 military-related texts into 5 thematic categories, with most texts originating from Bihor, as well as from the Mureş, Arad, Timiş, Hunedoara, Cluj, Alba, Bistriţa-Năsăud, Satu Mare and Severin regions. Between 1963 and 1973, the Cluj ethnomusicologist Traian Mîrza carried out an extensive research in the villages of the Bihor region. There was one particular vocal song that stood out from the vast musical material collected (1640 melodies), entitled *A feciorilor când mărg la sântare*, which, by its specific characteristics, i.e. its uniform musical features, was made the subject of a separate study: *Cântecul de cătănie din Bihor, o specie distinctă a liricii ocazionale* [The Soldier's Song from Bihor, a Distinct

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<sup>53</sup> Ileana Szenik, *Folclor muzical*, Editura MediaMusica, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 121.

Form of the Occasional Lyrical Song]<sup>54</sup>. This study provides a thorough description of the ceremonial and of the characteristics of the material collected from Bihor, along with an inventory of the researchers and relevant works written in the course of time, to which, in an attempt to complete the list, we will add some more examples. Other regional collections were conducted in the 1960s by Ilarion Cocișiu (southern Transylvania – 7 melodies), Viorel Ganea and Mihai Weber (villages in the counties of Brașov, Sibiu – 12 melodies), Eugenia Cernea (the regions of Meseș and Barcău, Sălaj), in the 1970s by a team of researchers from the Cluj Folklore Archive Institute (the Meseș-Plopiș region, Sălaj, the Huedin region, Cluj – a few hundred melodies), in the 1980s by Ioan R. Nicola (the Sibiu region), Zamfir Dejeu (the Hășdate – Turda region – 40 melodies, Huedin and the Transylvanian Plain), and after the year 2000 by Ioan Bocșa (the Sălaj region – 26 melodies, the region of the Apuseni Mountains – 14 melodies). Soldiers' and military songs were also found in many parts of the extra-Carpathian area (the Timiș, Vâlcea, Olt and Caraș-Severin regions). However, as evidenced by the relevant collections, the genre was most prevalent in the intra-Carpathian space.

Soldiers' songs have no tunes of their own and therefore borrow tunes from other genres, belonging to the general repertoire of (old-style and new-style) songs proper, dance songs, slow tempo songs or even *doinas* and songs of mourning. By local or regional convention, the association between text and melody can acquire a ritual character, being performed in a measured, ceremonial rhythm and thus serving a ceremonial function. In general, however, the same melodic types are associated with other literary texts as well, so that “from a musical point of view, in most parts of the country, the soldier's song does not have a melody of its own, and, in some more restricted areas, it does not have a unitary character either”<sup>55</sup>.

In Transylvania, the most common melodic types have four lines, tetrapodic verses, measured rhythm, giusto, corresponding to the ceremonial paces. Melodies are generally based on a major hexachord or Mixolydian mode, sometimes expanded with leaps of a fourth, and with the cadence falling on the 1st degree, or, in certain regions, on the 2nd degree (Bihor).

This paper focuses on the soldiers' songs from the Maramureș region, selected from the Folklore Archive Institute of the Romanian Academy, Cluj Branch (unpublished material, personal musical transcription) and from folk-song collections, totaling a number of 39 pieces (see Appendix).

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<sup>54</sup> Traian Mîrza, *Cântecul de cătănie din Bihor, o specie distinctă a liricii ocazionale*, in “Lucrări de Muzicologie”, vol. 6, Cluj-Napoca, 1970.

<sup>55</sup> Traian Mîrza, *Cântecul de cătănie din Bihor, o specie distinctă a liricii ocazionale*, in “Lucrări de Muzicologie”, vol. 6, Cluj-Napoca, 1970, p. 119.

The structural analysis of the material has revealed that out of the total of 39 pieces, 22 share common morphological characteristics, specific to the Transylvanian repertoire. Comparatively, the other 17 soldiers' songs have a distinct personality due to their specific musical characteristics, revealing definite stylistic peculiarities, strictly related to the Maramureş region.

The following two tables group the material into these categories, highlighting the parameters underlying the musical classification:

[Table 1 ] **I. Soldiers' songs set to tunes from other genres**

Source/Code/ No.	Musical Genre	Architectonic structure	General melodic profile/ cad.	Rhythmic system
Mg. 2558 II a	New-style song	ABC	VII 3 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2558 II t	New-style song	ABC <sub>addit. rf.</sub>	VII 3 1	Divisionary
Mg. 446 c	New-style song	ABC	VII 3 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2473 I	New-style song	ABC	VII 5 1	Divisionary
Mg. 867 k	New-style song	ABC	VII 6 1	Divisionary
Râpă p. 59	New-style song	ABC <sub>addit. rf.</sub>	VII 3 1	Rubato
Mg. 865 a	New-style song	A <sub>addit. rf.</sub> BC <sub>addit. rf.</sub>	5 4 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2556 II o	New-style song	ABC <sub>composed rf.</sub>	VII 3 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2572 II r	New-style song	ABC <sub>addit. rf.</sub>	5 1 1 Maj.	Divisionary
Mg. 2582 II	New-style song	ABC <sub>addit. rf.</sub>	2 3 1 Maj.	Divisionary
Mg. 2582 II a1	Old-style song	AABB <sub>cad</sub>	3 3 VII 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2582 II p	Old-style song	AABB <sub>cad</sub>	4 4 VII 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2558 II x	Old-style song	ABCD	5 3 VII 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2944/7	Old-style song	ABCD	4 VII 7 1	Divisionary
AV No. 182	New-style song	A <sub>addit. rf.</sub> BCD <sub>addit. rf.</sub>	1 2 3 1 Maj.	Giusto syllabic
AV No. 355.	New-style song	ABCD	1 5 3 1 Maj.	Divisionary
Mg. 2664 I j	New-style song	ABCD	1 3 4 1 Maj.	Divisionary
Mg. 2582 II d	New-style song	ABCD	5 5 3 1 Maj.	Divisionary
AV No. 354	New-style song	ABB <sub>v</sub> CD <sub>addit. rf.</sub>	VII 5 4 1 1	Divisionary
Mg. 2558 II a1	New-style song	ABCDE	55 1 1 1 Maj.	Divisionary
AV No. 46	New-style song	ABCDE	35 5 1 1 Maj.	Divisionary

Mg. 2582 II z	New-style song	ABCDEFGH	5 V 7 4 7 551	Divisionary
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[Table 2] II. Soldiers' songs set to tunes from Maramureş

Source/Code/No.	Musical genre	Architectonic structure	General melodic profile	Rhythmic system
GP No. 57	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AAAA	1 1 1 1	Giusto syllabic
GP No. 56	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AABB	1 1 1 1	Giusto syllabic
GP No. 54	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AABC	3 3 VII 1	Giusto syllabic
GP No. 53	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AA <sub>cad</sub> BC	3 4 3 1	Giusto syllabic
AV No. 425	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AABB <sub>cad</sub>	3 3 3 1	Divisionary
BB No. 128	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AAB <sub>rf</sub> C <sub>rf</sub>	5 5 1 1	Giusto syllabic
BB No. 93	<i>Hore nouă</i>	ABCD	VII VII 5 1	Giusto syllabic
GP No. 52	<i>Hore nouă</i>	ABCD	VII 3 5 1	Giusto syllabic
GP No. 58	<i>Hore nouă</i>	ABCD	VII 3 5 1	Divisionary
GP No. 59	<i>Hore nouă</i>	ABCD	5 1 5 1	Divisionary
GP No. 60	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AABB <sub>v</sub>	1 1 1 1	Giusto syllabic
GP No. 51	<i>Hore nouă</i>	ABA <sub>v</sub> B <sub>v</sub>	1 1 1 1 Maj.	Giusto syllabic
BB No. 70b	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AAB <sub>rf</sub> B <sub>rf</sub>	1 1 1 1 Maj.	Divisionary
BB No. 73a	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AAB <sub>rf</sub> B <sub>rf</sub>	V 1 V 1 Maj.	Divisionary
Mg. 2613 IIj	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AA <sub>v</sub> BC	1 V 1 1 Maj	Giusto syllabic
IRN No. 216	<i>Hore nouă</i>	AABB <sub>cad</sub>	1 1 V 1 Maj.	Giusto syllabic
GP No. 55	<i>Hore nouă</i>	ABCD	5 5 1 1	Giusto syllabic

The soldiers' songs set to tunes from Maramureş share the following characteristics:

- The **texts** have tetrapodic verses (acatalectic and catalectic), with the missing syllable being substituted only in two melodic variants by the syllables *măi* (GP No. 56) and *mă* (BB No. 70b), which have a widespread occurrence; the alternation between acatalectic and catalectic verses, with the 2nd and 4th lines usually ending on an accented beat, involves the process of elision (BB No. 73a *Decât la Neamţu cătan'*); the melodized

interjection, which broadens the size of the musical stanza, was identified in the melody GP No. 59 in the form of the syllable *hai!*

- Although the literary themes of the soldiers' songs do not usually allow the presence of **refrains**, we have identified 3 variants in the Bartók collection, with the following categories of refrains:

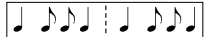
BB No. 128 – refrain composed of 2 disyllabic tetrapodic units

*Daina, mândră și daina re*

*Și iară, mândră, daina;*

BB No. 70b and 73a – refrain composed of 2 disyllabic tetrapodic units, with the replacement syllables *la, la, la;*

- the measured **rhythm** of these melodies, particularly frequent in this area, is based on rhythmic structures typical of the bichronic giusto syllabic system, consisting of alternations of eighth notes and quarter notes, with the tempo ranging between eighth note equals 130 to 190.

The most frequent rhythmic structure is choriamb - choriamb , supported by various rhythmic structures (choriamb + iamb, iamb; iamb, iamb + antispast; iamb, iamb + choriamb), typical of the genre of *hore nouă*, which is very popular in the Maramureș region.

**Example 1:** Gheorghe Gh. Pop, *Folclor muzical din Maramureș*, No. 60

**60. MINDRĂ-Î PANA CLOPULUI**

Mag. B 21 / 1993 Inf. Petreus Ștefan - 36 ani  
viaară și voce  
febr. 1976 - Glod

Lento ♩ = 130

*Mîn-dră-i pa-na clo-pu-lui Cum mni-o sta la va-ră-n cui*

*Mni-s-o col-bu-i pa-na Pî-nă cînd m-ai li-be-ra.*

Other soldiers' songs in giusto syllabic rhythm have also been found in the regions of Banat (*Neamțule, nu ți păcatî*<sup>56</sup>, *Cântă cucu-n vârful dă nuc*<sup>57</sup>) and Sibiu (*Nu-mi pare rău că-s cătană*<sup>58</sup>).

<sup>56</sup> Nicolae Ursu, *Cântece și jocuri populare românești din Valea Almăjului*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1958, No. 74.

<sup>57</sup> Nicolae Ursu, *Folclor muzical din Banat și Transilvania*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1983, No. 214.



- in terms of **sound structures**, out of the total of 17 Maramureș songs, 11 are in minor keys, and 6 are in major keys. The songs in minor keys are based on a minor pentachord, with leading note and a leap of a fourth, and extended in the melodic versions up to the Aeolian mode; sometimes the F sharp is missing or is used only as an ornament, and not as a syllable carrier. The final cadence invariably falls on the 1st degree. The variants in major keys exhibit major hexachord structures with a leap of a fourth and with the range extended up to the Mixolydian (F) and Ionian (F sharp) mode.
- the **architectonic** structure, just like rhythm, is a characteristic element of these melodies from Maramureș. As shown in Table 2, all of these songs consist of four-line stanzas, according to the following architectonic principles: repetition (AAAA); repetition and chaining (AABB); chaining (ABCD). Repetition can bring rhythmic/melodic variation or, in most cases, cadential variation;
- the general melodic contour of the stanzas, resulting from **the succession of cadences**, is varied: unilinear, descending, arch-shaped, combined arch-shaped. Another peculiarity of the melodies in major keys is the fact that the cadences of one or more melodic lines invariably make a cadential leap down a fourth (G - D). As a matter of fact, the large intervallic leaps (fourth, sixth, octave) occur not only cadentially, but also in the initial and final formulas of all the melodic lines, as a stylistic feature characteristic of most folk genres from Maramureș.

The conclusions of the present study reinforce the observations made by Traian Mîrza and the researchers at the Folklore Archive Institute of Cluj-Napoca regarding the songs set to military- and conscription-related texts, according to which they can be classified into:

- soldiers' songs with their own melodies and with a ceremonial character;
- soldiers' songs set to melodies of old-style songs proper;
- soldiers' songs set to melodies of new-style and dance songs proper;
- melodies of Hungarian origin.

The diversity of the melodic types also depends on the specific characteristics of the folkloric region. Compared to the soldiers' songs from Bihor, studied by Mîrza, we can conclude that, although they do not have their own melodies, the soldiers' songs from Maramureș are imbued with a strong “local flavor”, distinguishing themselves clearly from the repertoire of other regions. We believe that research should be continued to identify new melodic types of soldiers'

songs and their circulation across the Romanian space, as well as those inspired by the Hungarian repertoire, or that exist in both Romanian and Hungarian variants.

Despite the fact that nowadays these songs have lost their functionality in the practice of the custom, they have remained deeply engraved in the memory of the village communities.

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## Appendix

[Table 1] **Soldiers' Songs from Maramureș**

Source	Number/Code	Title
The Folklore Archive Institute of the Romanian Academy, Cluj Branch	Mg. 446c	<i>Mai am o zi și mă duc</i>
	Mg. 865 a	<i>Un soldat când a plecat</i>
	Mg. 867k	<i>Nu fi supărată mamă</i>
	Mg. 2473 I	<i>Cucule, aripă neagră</i>
	Mg. 2556 Ilo	<i>S-o dus badea-n cătănie</i>
	Mg.2558 IIa	<i>Când am plecat în armată</i>
	Mg.2558 IIlt	<i>Când eram să mă petrec</i>
	Mg.2558 IIx	<i>Plânje-mă maică cu dor</i>
	Mg.2558 IIa1	<i>Bate ceasu unu</i>
	Mg. 2572 IIr	<i>Râtule cu iarbă rară</i>
	Mg. 2582 IId	<i>Trimis-o-mpăratu carte</i>
	Mg. 2582 IIp	<i>Io mă duc, mândră, mă duc</i>
	Mg. 2582 IIz	<i>De unde vii tu oare</i>
	Mg. 2582 IIa1	<i>Vine-on tren cu tri vagoane</i>
	Mg. 2582 II	<i>Cine-o făcut drumu-n munte</i>
	Mg. 2613 IIj	<i>Io mă duc, mândră, mă duc</i> (published in <i>Cântece de cătănie</i> , No. 77)
Mg. 2664 Ij	<i>Tună drace-n ce-i tuna</i> (published in <i>Cântece de cătănie</i> , No. 8)	
Mg. 2944/7	<i>Io mă duc, mândră-n cătane</i>	
Gheorghe Pop, <i>Folclor muzical din Maramureș</i>	No. 51	<i>Eu mă duc mândră-n cătane</i>
	No. 52	<i>Eu mă duc mândră-n cătane</i>
	No. 53	<i>Eu mă duc mândră-n cătane</i>
	No. 54	<i>Eu mă duc mândră-n cătane</i>

Source	Number/Code	Title
	No. 55	<i>Eu mă duc mândră-n cătane</i>
	No. 56	<i>Eu mă duc, mândră, mă duc</i>
	No. 57	<i>Eu mă duc, mândră, mă duc</i>
	No. 58	<i>Eu mă duc mândră-n cătane</i>
	No. 59	<i>Eu mă duc, mândră, mă duc</i>
	No. 60	<i>Mândră-i pana clopului</i>
Béla Bartók, <i>Volkmusik der Rumänen von Maramureș</i>	No. 70b	<i>Măi, Neamțule, limba re</i>
	No. 73a	<i>Decât la Neamțu cătană</i>
	No. 93	<i>De unde cătană pleacă</i>
	No. 128	<i>Împărate, Împărate</i>
Alexandru Viman, <i>Cu cât cânt, atâta sunt</i>	No. 46	<i>Mărs-o badea-n cătănie</i>
	No. 182	<i>Mi s-o dus badea-n armată</i>
	No. 354	<i>Într-o sâmbătă spre seară</i>
	No. 355	<i>Când am plecat în armată</i>
	No. 425	<i>Eu mă duc mândră-n cătane</i>
Ioan R. Nicola, <i>Curs I</i>	No. 216	<i>Eu mă duc, mândră, mă duc</i> (published in <i>Cântece de cătănie</i> , No. 16)
Isidor Râpă, Constantin Arvinte, <i>Maramureș viață nouă</i>	p. 59	<i>Du-te bade, fă-ți armata</i> (published in <i>Cântece de cătănie</i> , No. 91)