

On the Interdependencies Between Life Style and the Style of Spring Carols of the People of Podlasie*

J. Katarzyna Dadak-Kozicka

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University of Warsaw

Premises and Theses

A hundred years ago Bela Bartók and Zoltan Kodály — at that time still students of composition at Budapest Music Academy — began their shared field research into Hungarian folklore. Looking for inspiration for their own work, they came across chants of exceptional musical and textual value. The recognition of the old, original style of peasant songs turned out to be the discovery of native musical culture with ancient roots. The ritual context and texts of the chants, with their archaic versification, poetics and symbolism¹, revealed a spiritual culture of great beauty and wisdom. That so-called “old style” of Hungarian songs (mainly pentatonic, in *tempo rubato*), different from the new style of, for instance, the dance music of Gypsy bands, which for a long time had been identified with Hungarian folklore, became the inspiration for the work of Bartók and Kodály and gave rise to a new trend in ethnomusicological research².

A century and a half ago Oskar Kolberg began to document, in 34 volumes of *Lud* [*The People*]³ the stylistic, functional and genre richness and variety of folklore throughout Polish lands. The volumes of *Lud* demonstrate that the songs of particular regions and ethnic groups reveal their musical and cultural meanings when regarded as an element of a ritual, situation and life

* This paper is a translation of the author’s article ‘Styl pieśni — styl życia. Rozważania ilustrowane przykładami folkloru Podlasia’, *Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny* IV, 2005, pp. 201–222.

of a local community. It is here that the variety of style, content and function finds its justification.

However, the idea that songs should be documented and analysed within the context of the culture of a given village — which today seems obvious to folklorists and ethnomusicologists — has not been fully taken into account in research so far⁴. The fact that the scenarios of rituals are a form of drama shaped by a thought-out system of behaviours, orations and songs and dances (a drama played out at the appropriate time: seasons, time of life, and location), should encourage a holistic, as well as contextual, analysis. The systems of songs, orations, dances and behaviours, both in the case of annual and familial cycles, reveal an inner dynamic of the ritual and an extension of meanings which lead to a particular kind of culmination. At a wedding, this might be the capping of the bride, with the themes of songs about hops and the lavender wreath which falls off the girl's head; in the spring rituals of Podlasie this might involve songs with the theme of hemp — “konopielki”, or harrow — *woloczebne*, i.e., wishing songs — spring carols. The differentiation of styles of consecutive songs influences the dramatic development of the ritual (independently of whether this is done consciously or not); this concerns both the words and the melodies. The originality and richness of musical qualities and the differentiation of expression of the songs is related, among other things, to the degree of their archaicity. It is a trace of the songs' links to often very distant, perhaps even pre-Christian times. The different varieties of musical-textual archaicity of the songs also reveal the transformations in the perception of the world and understanding of life by consecutive generations of musicians. It may be assumed that the climax of the dramatic development of a ritual is constituted by chants of particular ritualistic significance and clearly delineated stylistics, which usually indicates their belonging to archaic layers of folklore and established tradition. The reconstruction of the meanings of rituals requires the recognition that both cycles, annual and familial, also have their dramatic development and culmination⁵. Thus the need for integrated research into folklore concerns analysis and interpretation of songs in the context of a ritual or performance situation (defining its place

and function in a given ritual and its dramatic development), and establishing the place of a given ritual within the annual or familial cycle.

The two cycles need to be regarded as parallel, since they constitute a whole as a story about human life (family rituals) and the life of nature (annual): life which is born /reborn/, reaches maturity /culmination/ and dies away to be resurrected /born again/. The cycles reveal both the similarity and the interdependence of the life of man and of nature, and the important differences. As the once organic bond between man and nature⁶ becomes looser, the latter become more pronounced (the process was hastened by Christianity with its emphasis on the exceptional nature of human life, which undergoes not so much rebirth as resurrection). Such a perspective allows one to reconstruct the religious-worldview basis of a culture expressed through a given type of chant, which is important for interpreting their symbolism and for investigating the interdependencies between the content, expression and style of the songs, and the purpose of the ritual.

This approach presupposes that in folklore everything has a meaning. That a folk culture — especially its spiritual and ritual foundation — had been shaped as an interpretation and contemplation of the world, and of life. Thus, for instance, seeking deep meanings and causes for the arrival of violent winds which bring a change in the weather, the breaking of ice and the freeing of the rivers, the return of birds and the awakening of life in the spring, or the dying of the seed in the earth in the winter in order to germinate and — thanks to the sun and the rain — to give harvest in the summer, all of this was expressed through poetic and symbolic ritual art. The philosophical and religious sensitivity of the country folk assumed that the world provides what might be called a book of life, and that the manifold stream of life (of nature and of man) flows according to laws which deserve respect, admiration, gratitude and awe. Ritual art intertwines in a distinct manner knowledge about life and the world with the appropriate emotions: the art of life demanded that one should be afraid of that which is threatening, admire that which is great, express gratitude for the goodness and not hide one's awe when faced with the mysterious. Perceiving the world as an organic whole which functions (or rather lives) according to a "higher", anthropomorphic model, allowed one to

assume that religious values determined both the content and the ranking, and also the conservatism of archaic ritual chants. They were the main form of expression of faith and of learning about life, with a great power of influence. Thus, in ritual chants one should look for the model and the impulse to the good life — the most desirable virtue⁷. Winter and spring carols, being the wishing songs, are particularly interesting in this respect.

Without going into detailed discussion regarding the composition of a ritual, I will turn my attention to the interdependence between the musical features of chants which play a significant role in a ritual and the sphere of their meanings. The general question is: *can the differentiation of style of the extant ritual songs tell us something about the differentiations in the lifestyles of those who created and sang them?* The significant coexistence of songs in the “old” and “new” styles in established rituals allows one to assume that that is the case⁸. However, one needs to be careful when drawing comparisons, since differences in the style of the songs (related to their genre, age and function) cannot always be related directly to their “content” as an expression of a model of life. What is important is the manner in which the age of the song — a complex issue in itself — is correlated with its style: do we read it only in the archaisms of musical and textual properties? Are the words and the melody “ageing” uniformly? What about the question of the differentiation of the function and the genre of the song? These questions appear quite universal: surely there must have always coexisted in rituals chants of religious-ritual, reflective and contemplative nature, as well as dance, entertainment ditties?. Since ritual songs — within the framework of the same ritual — show a significant differentiation of musical and textual properties, one is entitled to assume that the degree of their archaicity may be correlated both with various musical preferences, and cultural, “life” values. If comparisons between ritual and dance chants reveal mainly difference of functions, then juxtaposing ritual themes which are close in meaning (here it is useful to have knowledge of the role and place of songs in a ritual) may reveal the evolution of the approach to the purpose of the ritual — i.e. to the model of life on which it is founded. It may also reveal the evolution of the values

and musical devices correlated with cultural changes — even perhaps giving expression to them.

To sum up: one can assume that, both now and at earlier periods, the main functions of ritual chants were religious-philosophical and communal, while the purpose of dance ditties was shared entertainment, and that here there has been no change for centuries. Kolberg's documentation demonstrates that this general claim can be made more detailed, since the content and symbolism of ritual chants of consecutive "historical layers" may depict different visions of the world and models of life; it may also reveal a transition from the religious view of the world to a more earthly ideal of life as a social norm of the "good life". At times it may even happen that dance songs replace the ritual ones⁹. Thus in order to consider the relationship between the style of a song (melody and text) and the lifestyle, one should first pay separate attention to that which we call the style of folk songs, and then to that which sociologists of culture regard as lifestyle. Lastly, in the light of these concepts one needs to examine ritual songs, such as the carols from Podlasie, and find out what they can tell us today.

The Style of Folk Songs

For ethnomusicologists, the traditional definitions of musical style provided by historians or theorists of music, which describe it as those features of compositional technique which are typical for a specific period, nation or composer, are of little use¹⁰. More applicable are the definitions of art historians, who assume that style is above all the norm of correctness concerning cohesive works, and a category which orders artistic events from geographical and historical perspective¹¹. However, the most fruitful approach seems to be that of literature scholars: style is the manner of formulating an expression (spoken or written) where the choice of language, form and poetics — whether conscious or not — is made according to the purpose of the expression, the character of the addressee, and the social and aesthetic norms¹². In musical style what is of importance is the question of the quality, adequacy of the content and the language, the information-carrying power of that which ma-

kes an artistic expression (in songs: musical-poetical) suggestive, individual, appealing, even evoking rapture.

Like Bartók and Kodály in the twentieth century, Polish ethnomusicologists¹³ have also paid much attention to the questions of style of the songs being investigated. A classic example of this was the search by Antonina Wozaczyńska for the essence of the style of the songs of the Kurpie people¹⁴, in particular the archaic chants of this people who inhabited the forest by the river Narwia. Significant features of that style (according to the records of the songs made by Władysław Skierkowski and published in the years 1928–32 in the four issues of *Puszcza Kurpiowska w pieśni*) concerned the principles of melodic-tonal (pentatonics without semitones, modalisms), metro-rhythmic (variable or complex metre) and performance organisation of the songs (slow tempo and melismatics). Many researchers have also taken an interest in the texts of folk chants, but mainly in their form; the content was taken into account, in a somewhat general manner, by those who systematised the songs.

Research into the style of folk chants often involved the question of what is their basis, their permanent backbone, their “proto-form”: is it the melodic-tonal formulation (e.g. phrases of magical incantation), or metro-rhythmic models which reveal the frame of folk versification; but there was a tendency not to ask questions about the “proto-content”. Ludwik Bielawski, adopting the versification structure of the text as the basis of the form and metro-rhythmic structure of the songs, attempted to create not only a basis of the rhythmic system of Polish folk songs¹⁵, but also a model of transformation of speech into folk song. Although the author emphasises that he wanted to sketch out the consecutive steps in the metro-rhythmic organisation of songs, there are many indication that this model may also serve as a basis of categorising the process of shaping and evolution of folk songs. These are its proposed stages: i) poetic transformation (from colloquial speech to the language of chants); ii) versificational transformation (continuous verse formation, distichs, stanzas); iii) formal transformation (expanding verse structure through repetitions, refrains, interjections etc); iv) musical-rhythmic transformation (rhythm framed within metre); v) ornamental transformation (melismatic mo-

dification of rhythm or syllabisation of consonants); vi) the final shaping of the sound and interpretation of the song (tempo, performance manner etc)¹⁶.

This conception cannot be translated directly into a model of evolution of songs (chants of some peoples never reached the phase of text versification, and their form results from the repetition of a melodic-rhythmic-colour phrase making use of particular words or phrases, as happens for example among the Saami people, and which makes their chants original and archaic¹⁷). However, following the evolutionists, the assumption can be made that lower levels of formal organisation preceded the more complex ones (e.g., verses preceded stanzas). For this reason I assume that, in order to define clearly the issues involved, the general division into the old and the new style of songs is fundamental. Archaic songs have a characteristic structure and a particular set of musical and textual properties and qualities: sentence-like structure of melody, determined either by one or two-verse text, organised along either pentatonic or modal formulae, often with free or changeable metre, slow tempo and often extremely rich (harvest songs!) melismatics. The newer repertory is usually characterised by dance rhythms (using repeated rhythmic formulae of various, mainly triple measure dances¹⁸), moderately lively to very fast tempo, and melodies lacking melismatic features, originating, more or less clearly, from the major-minor functional system, and finally the symmetricity of musical forms built on a few dominant models of versification (dominance of six- and eight-syllabic verses in the stanzas).

To this one should add the issue of the song's content, its poetics and its vocabulary. It is significant that the text of old ritual songs is saturated with metaphors and symbols. This aspect is particularly important for our discussion — its co-appearance with a set of musical features regarded as archaic may be presumed to supplement the characterisation of the "old" style of ritual songs¹⁹. Consideration of the text of the songs is also necessary in view of the definition of style adopted here at the start: the question of adapting the musical language, poetics and symbolism to the message of the song and the meaning of the ritual, in order to fulfil the purpose of the expression. It is — seemingly — a sung affirmation of life, religious in its essence. Its form and content is linked to social and aesthetic norms shared by

people who regularly brought these chants to life in order to express respect, joy and awe of life, and also fear of the threats it brings.

Definitons: the Manner of Living or the Style of Life

In a search for definitions of the concept of life style, I refer to the sociological-cultural research conducted in the 1970s by Zespół Prognoz Społecznych [Social Prognoses Unit], headed by Andrzej Siciński (its members were, among others, Aldona Jawłowska, Elżbieta Tarkowska, Anna Pawełczyńska, Eugenia Jagiełło-Lysiowa, Marcin Czerwiński and Edmund Mokrzycki). The results of their research was reported in the publications: *Styl życia. Koncepcje i propozycje* [*Life Style. Ideas and Proposals*] (1976) and *Styl życia. Przemiany we współczesnej Polsce* [*Life Style. Changes in Contemporary Poland*] (1978)²⁰. The authors take as their starting point the distinction between two basic categories of sociology of culture: the style and the manner of life (also quality, level or conditions of life). In the introduction, Siciński makes the point that the way of life applies to the whole, constituted by the forms of activities of the individual, social groups and the community, as well as the environment and the conditions in which these activities are undertaken (1978 pp. 9–10). Research into the manner of living stresses the issues of social conditions and status, the material basis of living and socially modelled activities.

By introducing the category of *life style* sociologists wanted to distinguish certain particular systems of activities resulting from choice, a more or less conscious shaping of life, accepted, and not merely determined by the situation or conditions. Life style stresses distinctiveness and differentiation of cohesive behaviour of groups of people and their motivation; it reveals that which makes their behaviours meaningful. One can assume that, in the final analysis, this leads to examining the world-view assumptions or the philosophical-religious basis of activities, which give them meaning, expression, direction and also flavour. Siciński remarks that while the manner of living stresses economic, material issues, life style is concerned with cultural ones. While research into the manner of life gathers great quantities of individual data processed in respect of various variables (standardised, averaged) and develo-

ped in order to aggregate the data, research into the style of life starts from hypothetical typologies of style as general qualities of activities, in order to verify them empirically at a later stage (1978, pp. 11–12). Life style is thus a qualitative and teleological category, which allows one to form an integrated view of the issues. It is a category which relates to the meaning of activities, revealing that which is important and stands out clearly, what makes groups of people distinct, what requires questioning as to reasons and motives for action, what people identify with, what expresses their inner depth. Distinguishing life styles should also thus concern artistic preferences. It might be the case that participation in artistic culture provides — apart from issues of world-view, exceptionally difficult to research — the key to the knowledge of various models of life styles²¹. What seems important here is the character of human bonds formed on the basis of the worldview and expressed in the folk song.

Life style is thus the category which reveals the nature of human bonds, and not only the relationships between particular types of activity. As a sociologist, Siciński emphasises that life style: i) provides evidence of belonging to a community, a manifestation of bonds which are sometimes not apparent but significant (giving a sense of self-definition, identity, security and support within the group); ii) manifests and strengthens the sense of permanence of a group, distinguishing it from other communities; iii) shapes the perception of the meaning of one's own behaviours, enabling the development and expression of personality in a socially acceptable manner (p. 387). Let us add that a particular life style is often highly valued and desired, and here music-making provides one of its best examples, while the description of the integrative functions of ritual fits in well with the sociologist's definitions. Thus, if the style of folk songs determined the choice of form and language of the utterance in respect of its purpose (e.g. contemplation of mystery and apotheosis of life), then life style can be regarded as a choice of the way of life based on the existential values approved on the individual level and valued on the social level.

In the study *Elementy stylów życia ludności wiejskiej. Próba diagnozy społecznej i prognozy* [*Elements of Life Styles of the Rural Population. Attempt at Social Diagnosis and Prognosis*],²² Eugenia Jagiełło-Łysiowa draws a picture of the life style characteristic of the Polish village in the first half of the twentieth century. This style was a continuation of nineteenth-century, or even earlier, models, which at the same time, especially after 1945, underwent increasingly faster and more visible changes bringing it closer to city life. According to Jagiełło-Łysiowa, the characteristic features of the traditional life style of the peasants are:

- ownership of land and “bread-giving” work on the land, a “deeply moral work”²³, the basis of not only economic sufficiency of the family and the locality, but the foundation of the whole system of values and social bonds (pp. 87–89);
- idealisation of the features of one’s own community and culture, supported by a philosophy emphasising the value and permanence of peasant life (pp. 87–88);
- fundamental importance of the family and the locality for the individual life and for work on the land, and, linked to it, permanent division of tasks and roles in relation to gender and age (typically female tasks: housekeeping and bringing up children, and, in the area of agriculture, growing flax and vegetables; men’s domain includes field work *sensu stricto* and such tasks as looking after the horse²⁴, p. 91);
- a strong sense of local community, associated with, among other things, communal responsibility for working the land and collaborating in fieldwork (disinterested help in accidental misfortunes, p. 92);
- subordinating life, including time of rest and “free time” generally, to the work on land as the “particularly moral” foundation of existence (p. 94); at this point the sacral nature of work (term not used by the author) would be worth describing, since it shows the link between work and ritual as the main and particular form of rest;
- time of work and time of rest constitute a cultural whole; rest — i.e. mainly celebrating — has a communal and spectacular character (p. 95);
- economic differentiation within a local community is blurred, particularly

during celebrations, and the whole of human activity is under the control of the community (p. 96);

- universality of peasant artistic creativity: spiritual and material culture often border art (music plays a particular part here, p. 99)
- moderate consumption means that fashion has little influence on the life of the country and peasants are resistant to external economic stimuli (p. 100);
- the most important issues of birth, life and death are subject to beliefs; attitude to them is characterised by calm and dignity (p. 101);
- increasingly apparent distinctiveness of emancipating groups of the young (better education, professionalisation of work) does not affect the shared values and devotion to tradition or respect for the elders (p. 98);
- gradual change does not alter the basic conservatism of peasant culture and respect for living (not just bookish or professional) wisdom, which makes peasant culture a “storehouse of ancient, traditional national culture” (p. 99).

The author emphasises that gradual acceleration and expansion of the area of cultural change, especially after 1945, begins also to affect the economic and moral spheres (p. 120). Land is no longer seen as the mainstay of existence, and work on the land as a moral obligation with its own autonomic value. Issues of work efficiency begin to be linked to appreciation of profit; agricultural work loses its religious dimension. The changes thus affect also — following the model presented by Jagiełło-Lysiowa — the spheres of belief and social life: there is an opening up to models of city life and values which are alien to traditional culture. What is involved, for example, is the individualisation of the life model, subordinating it to the practised profession — often chosen for economic and prestige reasons — a profession chosen out of many possible ones, separated from the private sphere, usually not involving formation of permanent human bonds or communities. It is thus apparent that opening up to supra-local communities, national and supranational, does not guarantee the creation of real, deep inter-human bonds; the sense of sharing a culture (mainly under the influence of family and school) has a different source and character and local art, being an expression of a community’s identity and

tradition, dies out. Population becomes more mobile: it involves not only the migration from the countryside to the cities, but also a change of social and professional position (higher status, kind of work, social role). Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the sense of direct, existential bond with nature disappears: land is no longer perceived as Mother-earth, provider of nourishment. Nature and its cycle of life is no longer the object of special attention, a source of respect and contemplation as a metaphor of life in general, the mystery of its rebirth and dying, so significant for mankind. The change of attitude to life (increasing importance of economic issues) probably also changes the prevailing type of sensitivity, including artistic sensitivity. The traditional poetics of folklore, operating through metaphors and symbolism, are no longer legible and valued, and contemplativeness becomes definitely unfashionable.

One can remark, referring to the earlier definition, that the traditional rustic life style was not a matter of choice; it was strongly determined by living conditions in the countryside. When those changed, life style and folklore evolved as well (however, the question of what gave impetus to these changes is worth consideration). More important than determination of lifestyle by external conditions seems its deep acceptance by the country people, an awareness of a particular kind of life “bound to nature” and in accordance with “God’s will”, an expression of which is work on the land (also animal husbandry or horticulture) and ritualism.

One should also mention a degree of narrowing in the description of the changes in peasant life style and their causes: namely, while Jagiełło-Łysiowa does discuss the role of contacts between the city and the countryside and the influence of urban civilisation on that style (also on the social structure of the countryside and the city: the category of peasant-factory worker), she ignores certain aspects of spiritual culture. The reason for this probably lies in the period during which this research was carried out (particularly the two post-war decades), and in the fact that sociological-cultural research was then dominated by the social-economic perspective.

The influence of Marxist ideology, although being rejected by that time, was still discernible in the researchers’ aloof attitude towards issues of spiritual culture, and particularly in their helplessness when faced with religious

issues. Research into spiritual culture concerned mainly matters of education or professional qualifications, readership, memoir-writing or art-creation in general. What is also lacking in this study is a discussion of the question of the influence of the manor house (and the culture of the nobility and gentry in general) in the countryside, an influence which remained very strong until the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly in relation to custom and to art. True, Jagiełło-Łysiowa remarks that the rustic life style was a category which also included models characteristic of the manor; she points to some life style features shared also by the peasants. It seems, however, that a limited view of spiritual culture made it difficult for the author to recognise the true influence of the manor house on the life model adopted by the peasants, on their life style and rituals. This aspect is crucial to our study, and finds interesting confirmation in, for example, the folklore of Podlasie.

Analysis and Interpretation: What Spring Carols Tell Us About the Life Style of the Inhabitants of Podlasie

The model or the ideal of life relating to particularly desirable qualities is suggestively revealed by the wish-lists exchanged on particular occasions. If we want to find out what peasants desire most, it is best to consult carols known as wishing songs²⁵. Spring carols preserved in Podlasie to this day are of particular interest: they are sung when nature awakens to life, during rituals which at one time marked the beginning not only of the new season — spring, but also the new year²⁶. On the first day of Easter, after the sun set, groups of men would go from house to house: they would start by knocking on the window and asking whether they could “cheer the house up”. Then, after singing an Easter song (most frequently *Chrystus zmartwychwstan jest/Christ is risen*) and reciting humorous wish-orations (sometimes these followed the carols), they would sing carols, i.e., wishing-songs for the head of the household (the “Master” theme), the young master (the “Young Master” theme) and for girls of marriageable age²⁷. Various regional names of these chants, such as, for instance, *konopielki* [word derived from hemp] or *wółczebne* (*wółczebne*[word derived from the harrow]), use the symbolism of texts and

rituals: konopielka (a dioecious plant also called “little sow”) — a symbol of marriageable girl, “włóczebne” the name of the gift offered to the carol singers, but also of the levy introduced by Zygmunt August in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, payable until the eighteenth century — dependent on the number of “włóka” (30 morgs), i.e. land; the symbolism of *włóczebne* refers to harrowing — “scarifying and levelling the surface of the soil by skimming off the top layer with a ‘włóka’ — a harrow”²⁸ to enable the land to take in seed. These names also reach back to old traditions, extending at least as far as the sixteenth century.

In accordance with the premises stated at the beginning of this article, I will compare a number of themes of carols which play the main part in the spring rituals of Podlasie. Musical and textual analysis of selected songs (*konopielki* and *włóczebne*) and their interpretation in the context of the rituals and social-spiritual culture of Podlasie will allow us to verify the thesis that these songs reflect a particular picture and model of life, which changed together with the style of the songs.

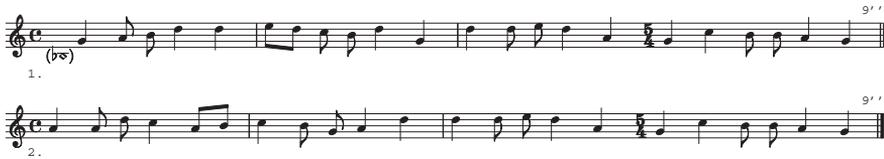
Three songs, representing the main themes of spring carols sung to marriageable girls, have been selected for analysis: *konopielka* [*hemp song*], *zieziuleńka* [*cuckoo song*] and *nowina* [*news song*]²⁹ (since carols for girls were preserved best, and their symbolism fits together to present a clear picture of life). The song “Siwa raba zieziuleńka” is a beautiful, poetic-metaphorical picture of a young girl preparing for marriage and taking on procreational duties; in this case carols for girls about to be married have features of chants of initiation rituals. The song [original text is given in Appendix A] represents the *zieziuleńka*³⁰ theme (recorded in the district of Korycin, voivodship of Białystok, by Janina Szymańska; text from pp. 26–27, music from p. 170 from the work quoted earlier).



The melodic form (which demonstrates generally common features with the next *konopielka*) is shaped by the continuous verse; ie., twice repeated 8-syllable line (4 + 4 syllables) divided in the middle by a three-syllabic interjection-refrain: the exclamation “hej, łośa”. The song is thus musically and textually clearly divided into two expanded phrases: the first consists of three bars, extended by the refrain, kept in duple metre, and the second, constituted by two triple bars which “suspend” the melody on the third degree in order to move it smoothly to the next verse. The melody, contained within the ambitus of the sixth, uses pentatonic (anhemitonic pentatony “do”) motifs *g-a-h-d-e*, emphasising the third-fifth systems: *g-h-d*, which do not show functional gravitation. The simplicity of its form and expression demonstrates inventive and non-standard (variable rhythm and metre, irregularity of form, mobility of melodics) use of very simple means.

The text of *zieziuleńka* is rich in poetic images, symbolic meanings and metaphors. The cuckoo of the title is, according to Kolberg (volume V of *Mazowsze*³¹) — “a demonic bird, it foretells death or marriage, the loss of maidenly beauty”. This cuckoo has already managed to “cuckoo” all the orchards (orchards are like images of a family in which maidens await marriage), apart from one, in which stands a stag (a solar animal, symbol of fertility, light and rebirth — antlers! — and also male passion³²). He has nine (!) amazing antlers: in the smithy on the tenth antler the fire never goes out, and the smith who strikes there “never puts out the fire” (erotic-procreational symbolism). “Złotny kowalczyk [golden smith]” is asked to forge a ring for the finger (symbolising fidelity and unity of the married couple) and a wreath for the head of the bride. The singing ends with an extended hint requesting refreshments and an invitation to the wedding in the autumn.

The song *Ej, moście moście, trwaweńka rośnie* [original text is given in Appendix A] (from the quoted work by J. Szymańska, from the district Trzciannie, voivodship Łomża, text p. 17, music p. 169) represents perhaps the most common “hempen maiden” theme.



The form of the song is determined by the continuous structure of the text: to each verse (10 syllables: 5 + 5 with an 11-syllable refrain: 5 + 6) corresponds an extended musical sentence, repeated with minor modifications adapted to consecutive verses. The sentence is constructed out of two extended two-bar phrases with variable metre: the first one has an arched shape (wavy from the second verse), the second descending-sequential, ending with a five-bar cadence formula. The verses flow into each other quite smoothly; however, if the first phrase (10-syllable) concerns text which moves the “action” forward, then the second phrase (11-syllable) is a constant refrain with the symbolism basic to the song. The melody of both phrases which begins the whole, moving within the sixth but emphasising the fifth $g - d$, bears traces of pentatonic influences (the significance of the system: $g - a - h - d - e$ particularly in the first three phrases). However, the last bar stresses the fourth system $g - c$, with cadence meaning (it does not change within the whole of the song). The lack of a leading sound and functional gravitation is significant. As early as the second verse in the melody (it is created by modified first musical sentence repeated until the end of the song with minor variations) the fourth framework gains significance: $a - d$ in the first phrase and $g - c$ in the second. The alternating of the phrases with the characteristic transposition of the cadence by a second down recalls the formulae of archaic wedding chants from south-eastern Poland (e.g. the capping song from the Sandomierz area *Starszy druzba, marszałek*³³).

The text of this *konopielka* is again a poetic, metaphorical-symbolic image of life awakening in the spring: peacock feathers (peacock losing feathers in the spring and growing them again in the autumn symbolises rebirth of life, particularly its fertility: after all, the peacock’s tail is at its most magnificent during the breeding season) fall onto green grass (abundant, fast-growing, like

hemp or a girl). A wreath plaited from peacock feathers is blown off the head by a violent wind (a typical spring element, forerunner of the reawakening powers of nature), carrying it to the “fast-flowing dunaj” (turbulent waters of the river symbolise the rebirth of nature’s vital powers, as necessary as they are dangerous). Three fishermen-brothers, probably waiting for the “catch”, are asked to fish out the wreath. As their prize they will receive: a peacock wreath, a golden ring, and the “young one”, i.e., the girl. One can assume that the three attributes and stages of marriage correspond to the prizes (peacock wreath — symbol of maidenhood and potential fertility, ring — symbol of unity and unbreakability of marriage, lastly the “young one herself” — the bride). The constantly repeated refrain recalls two symbols: “dunaj” (river as a symbol of flowing life) and “koniceńka” (a diminutive term for a horse, typical for eastern borderlands, symbolising the boy — the other “young one”). The extended ending of the chant, which usually brings a simplification of the rhythm and faster tempo, is a hinted request for gifts and — missing in this version — invitation to the forthcoming wedding.

Both songs are characterised by musical “old style”: simple continuous verse form and sentence-based structure (repeatability of sentence with modification), variable metre, small ambitus and pentatonic or pentatonising melodic formulae. Texts of the chants create images with rich symbolism, and the symbolism (as well as the musical style) of the cuckoo song seems more archaic: it emphasises the issue of fertility rather than marriage.

Other musical and textual qualities are represented by the “news” theme song [original text is given in Appendix A] (*Dobry wieczór panno/Good evening, maiden*, op. cit. pp. 21 and 170; from district Szudziałowo, voivodship Białystok).



The simplicity of the melody is combined with regularity, being almost schematic: four one-bar motifs make up the system: a b c b. The four-bar melody operates using formulae with constant rhythm: four eights two crotchets (only in the third measure — motif c — are there four crotchets). Its march character is correlated with functional gravitations: major triple notes, tonic and dominant, are the basis of the melody, intertwining in consecutive phrases. The text corresponds to the new style of this melody. Its structure (12-syllable verses in a 6 + 6 syllable system are supplemented by the 4-syllable refrain, followed by a repetition of the second 6-syllable motif), and the content present qualities different from those analysed earlier. The text (mostly devoid of symbolism) is a description of a “fine maid” waiting for matchmakers who are coming from afar. The description of her rich clothing, not at all a peasant girl’s outfit, is significant; for instance, her dress is of silk, embroidered with gold. The vocabulary also points to the influence of the manor house; it may also be a (stylised?) recollection of the way of speaking (and also dress and manners) used “at the manor”; manifestations of the “learned style” are also apparent in, for instance, the names of towns to which the matchmakers wandered by mistake on their way to the bride-to-be: Minsk, Riga, Warszawa. The gifts offered by the bride-to-be (for instance, a “little pink bouquet”) are also not typically peasant ones. Lastly, the hinted request for refreshments brings new motifs: alongside the traditional eggs there is also a request for “four ducats for us to go with the tea” — a drink hardly ever encountered in villages in the nineteenth century. Both the meagreness of symbolism, and the rhymes and vocabulary of the “news” song, clearly indicate an evolution of the poetics and the meanings of this carol. The wishes found in the “cuckoo” and “hemp” songs, with their original and varied symbolism of life and fertility (metaphors emphasising man’s manifest bond with nature) are replaced by different ones. We can clearly observe that the picture and the ideal of life become more “materialistic” (poetic inventiveness is directed at the description of the richness of the clothing, the matchmaking and the wedding party), and aspires towards a change in social-cultural status: the mention of three bottles of wine — the “old Berlin” points clearly to its direction.

Thus, while in what seems to be the most archaic chant, i.e. the “cuckoo” song, the main motif seems to be the contemplation and apotheosis of life and fertility, of perpetuating the species, and in the “hemp maiden” song the motif is initiation into married life (in both cases the rich symbolism makes apparent the bond between human life and nature, represented by the elements of water and wind, and the world of plants and animals), the “news” song represents a more secular, materialistic attitude to life, emphasising external possessions: a picture of the prosperity and high status of the bride-to-be and the matchmakers. The process of the evolution of the style of the song would thus run from the old musical style (pentatonisms, variable metre, continuous verse structure) to the new one (functional, marching melody). The “style” of the words of the carols, their content, language, poetics and symbolism, correlates with this change. The wishes and symbolic images contained in the quoted chants refer to different sets of values: from the religious approach to life as a superordinate value (not just individual, but relating to mankind as a whole), to praising prosperity and functional values. One might well be reminded here of the sequence of values proposed by Max Scheler: hedonistic, functional, living, psychical-spiritual, religious³⁴.

Analyses thus confirm that archaic ritual chants have a clearly religious meaning (at times one can even discern pre-Christian elements in them). They provide an example of what amounts to a “philosophy of life”: contemplation and apotheosis of its various, mutually dependent forms. The philosophy of life glimpsed in the songs with newer musical properties often presents a somewhat different picture: there is less religious symbolism, and there is emphasis on social, entertainment and economic-material values. The model of life — and ritual songs are initiation chants, introductions into consecutive stages of life — concerns there not so much the sanctity and superordinate value of life, as prosperity. The change of lifestyle in the countryside is linked to the de-sacralisation of rituals; there is also a change in the character of ritual chants; the religious function gives way to the social-cultural, socialising and entertainment ones, losing its meaning (since in a hierarchy of functions it can either be the highest one, or not exist at all; the Absolute cannot be subordinate to anything else). The increasingly important playful function

of the song in a ritual which is being de-sacralised also changes its content: however, its therapeutic-social dimension does not go too deep. All the quoted carols are characterised by cohesion of musical and textual features and ritual meanings; it thus might be said that the new style of song in a sense expresses a new life style; or at least a perception of such a tendency may be justified and supported by examples.

The interdependence of the style of the song and the life style, observed in folklore in the second half of the twentieth century (documentation from the 1970s held at the Phonographic Archive of the Institute of Arts of Polish Academy of Sciences) is confirmed by Kolberg's volumes of *Mazowsze*, and in particular its volume 28, describing Podlasie. The significance of that region (Poland's eastern borderland, dividing West and East Slavs and constituting the boundary of "Latin Europe"), with its separate culture and unique features of folklore results from, among other things, the fact that Mazovian and Russian influences collided in this area: the earlier Russian colonisation was from the thirteenth century overlaid by Lithuanian (short-lived) and Masurian settlements. Beliefs (Russian Orthodox, Greek Catholicism, Catholicism) and languages, rituals and art, came into contact, traditions of the gentry and the peasants coexisted and interpenetrated each other in a unique manner. Of particular interest was the coexistence of neighbouring yeoman and manor house cultures, especially that of minor gentry which preserved its own customs. Coexistence of various traditions favoured the nurture of their separateness, a fact discussed by Oskar Kolberg in volume V of *Mazowsze* ("Obraz etnograficzny" *Mazowsze stare. Mazury. Podlasie*, Kraków 1890). At the same time he remarked that

[...] the eastern part of the old Mazowsze and Podlasie is inhabited mainly by minor gentry [... which] differs little [from the peasants] in their customs and rituals, but having cast off [...] the brevity and simplicity of country folk they have become pretentious, particularly in more recent times³⁵.

Field research carried out a hundred years after Kolberg demonstrates the process of strong influence of the culture of the gentry on that of the peasants. It also documents the stability of the "yeoman tradition" in songs, with its

meaningful simplicity and vitality, with the ideal of life shaped many centuries ago, suggestively revealed in the spring carols.

Appendix A

Siwa, raba z'iez'iuleńka

Siwa, raba z'iez'iuleńka, hej, łała, siwa raba z'iez'iuleńka!
Wszystkie sady obkowała, hej łała, wszystkie sady obkowała!
jeszcze w jednym nie bywała, hej łała, ...
A w tym sadzie jeleni stoi ...
Na jeleniu dz'iewięć' rogi ...
Na dz'iesiesiątym kuz'nia stoi ...
A w tej kuz'ni kowal kuje ...
Nigdy ognia nie zgasuje ...
Oj ty złotny kowalczyku ...
ukujże mnie złotny pierścień ...
Złotny pierścień na ręczkę ...
pawy wieniec na głowę ...
A ty Kasiu bądź' wesoła ...
Wez' kluczyki, skocz do stoła ...
A od stołu do szafeczki ...
Wynies', wynies' gorzałeczki ...
My gorzałkę wypijemy ...
tobie Kas'iu dz'ękujemy ...
Ażebys' ty rosła, rosła ...
a w jes'ieni za mąż poszła ...
A bodaj'smy doczekali ...
Tobie w swaty pojechali ...

Ej, moście, moście, trawenka rosnie

Ej, moście, moście, trawenka rosnie, (ref.) tam na dunaju mas koniceńka, mas!
Pawki chodziły, piórka gubiły, ref. ...
Pawki zegnała, piórka zebrała, ref. ...
Które drobniejsze w fartusek zbierała ...
z tech bujniejszych wianusek uwiła ...
Wianusek uwiła, na główkę włożyła ...

Skąd się wzięły trzej bujne wiatry? ...
 i zanieśli na bystry dunaj ...
 Skąd się wzięły trzej rybackowie? ...
 Trzej rybackowie, wszystkie trzej braciowie ...
 I złowili ten pawi wieniec ...
 Złowili i na główkę włożyli ...
 Co nam będzie za nagroda? ...
 Za nagroda spod niewoda? ...
 Piersemu będzie ten pawi wieniec ...
 drugiemu będzie ten złoty sygnet ... [w innych wersjach: “złocisty pierścieniec”]
 trzeciemu będzie – ja sama młoda ...
 a sama młoda jako jagoda ...
 Ty, Tereska, bądź wesoła ...
 weź klucyki, skoc do stoła ...
 a od stołu do safeńki ...
 i wynieś nam gorzałeńki ...
 i do tego siem par pisek ...
 siem par pisek na półmisek ...
 na półmisek, na cynkowy ...
 na obrusie serwetowym ...
 jasno wstęgo okrężywszy ... [częściej: “i kiełbaso okrężywszy”]
 litrem wódki zawiersywszy

Dobry wieczór, panno

Dobry wieczór, panno, bądź od nas witano, hej, nowina bądź od nas witano!
 przywitaj się z nami, ładnie zaśpiewamy, hej, nowina, ładnie zaśpiewamy!
 Proszę podać rączkę, złożymy obrączkę, hej nowina ...
 Nasza pani ładna, ma suknia jedwabna, hej ...
 Suknia jedwabna, złotem wyszywana, hej ...
 półbuciki hojne, do spaceru zdolne, hej ...
 Dla ciebie, dziewczyno, jest wielka nowina, hej ...
 swatowie jadą, ot z wielka paradą, hej ...
 Jadą, jadą hojnie, na konikach strojnie, hej ...
 trzy mili jechali, do panny błędzili, hej ...
 Jeden na kasztanie, drugi na bułanie, hej ...
 trzec’i na s’iwym, a czwarty na gniadym, hej ...
 Sto mil jez’dzili, do panny błędz’ili, hej ...

Byliśmy w Mińsku, Rydze i Warszawie, hej ...
Teraz panienczko prosze nie żałować, hej ...
Jednemu daruje bukiec'ik różowy, hej ...
drugiemu daruje bukiec'ik mirtowy, hej ...
Trzec'iemu daruje, sygnałek oddaje, hej ...
a z czwartym sama na kobiercu staje, hej ...
Teraz panienczko, prosze nie żałować, hej ...
I coś podobnego dla nas podarować, hej ...
Pół kopy jajek to dla nas za mało, hej ...
kope, trzy i cztery, żeby wszystkim stało, hej ...
Cztery dukaty dla nas do herbaty, hej ...
trzy butelki wina, starego Berlina, hej ...
Co z żyta zrobione, w gorzelnii spędzone, hej ...
przez trąby przegnane i dla nas sprzedane, hej ...
Byśmy wypijali, wesoło śpiewali, hej ...
panny, panienczki razem przepraszali, hej ...

Notes

- 1 For instance, the motif of the peacock — the bringer of rebirth, later also of freedom — from the pentatonic ballad *Röpulj páva, röpulj* in *tempo rubato* became the basis of Zoltan Kodály's *Variations for Orchestra* and his compositions for mixed and male choirs.
- 2 For example, the collection of edited folk songs by Bartók and Kodály *Magyar népdalok* (Budapest 1906), the works *Erdelyi magyarság. Népdalok* (Budapest, 1923), *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs* (New York 1951) by B. Bartók or *A magyar népzene* by Zoltan Kodály (Budapest 1937).
- 3 From 1857 to 1890, i.e. until Kolberg's death, 34 volumes of folklore documentation appeared in the series *Lud, jego zwyczaj, sposób życia, mowa, podania, przysłowia, obrzędy, gusta, zabawy, pieśni, muzyka i tańce* [*The People, their customs, manner of living, speech, legends, proverbs, rituals, superstitions, games, songs, music and*

dances] and *Obrazy etnograficzne (Ethnographic Pictures)*; here the whole is referred to as *The People*.

- 4 A model work is Stephen Feld's *Sound and Sentiment*, Philadelphia 1982.
- 5 The annual cycle of natural life (in Europe related mainly to solstices) leads from the awakening to life in the spring, through the summer apotheosis, autumn fruition, until dying away in winter. The familial cycle corresponds to this: birth, initiation into maturity: marriage and death as the beginnings of a new, different life.
- 6 The studies of Mircea Eliade which assume that in folklore and traditional cultures everything has its meaning, and the main role of the researcher is to reveal these meanings, provides many examples of this. (*Traktat o historii religii*, Warszawa 1993).
- 7 The full picture of the world as framed within the ritual cycles today turns out to be incomplete, since over the years the rituals have been transformed and reduced: familiar rituals often contain vestiges of ancient, extinct customs, transformed in terms of content and style, with diluted meanings and incorporated into wholes which change their meanings.
- 8 The prominence given to the question of style is the result of the conviction that this is a collective category, which also contains information about the form, the genre and the function of the songs.
- 9 Cf. Jadwiga Sobieska, *Ze studiów nad folklorem muzycznym Wielkopolski*, Kraków 1972.
- 10 Zofia Lissa, *Styl*, in: *Encyklopedia muzyki*, ed. A. Chodkowski, Warszawa: PWN 1995, p. 854.
- 11 Jan Białostocki, *Styl*, in: *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*, vol. 11, Warszawa 1968, pp. 80–81.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Among others, Anna Czekanowska, Ludwik Bielawski, Jan Stęszewski, Katarzyna Dadak-Kozicka, Piotr Dahlig, Ewa Dahlig, Zbigniew Przerembski, Arleta Nawrocka.
- 14 *Pieśni kurpiowskie, ich charakterystyka i struktura w świetle zbiorów W. Skierkowskiego*, Wrocław 1956.
- 15 *Rytmika polskich pieśni ludowych*, Kraków 1970.
- 16 Ludwik Bielawski, 'Rytm w rejonie Bałtyku', in: *Tradycje ludowe w kulturze muzycznej*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 58–59.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 61–62.
- 18 Regarded by Bielawski as typical for the younger folklore formation (op. cit., p. 61.)
- 19 Comments on this subject can be found in works from the first half of the nineteenth century, those by Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski, Żegota Pauli, Oskar Kolberg.
- 20 Both works were edited by Andrzej Siciński and published by PWN, Warszawa.
- 21 Sociologists start their research by assessing the time available and its allocation; work and education are obviously important, but particularly significant for style-creation are also: consumption of goods, satisfying intellectual and aesthetic needs, participation in culture and recreation (p. 15), participation in social and political life, public and religious activities, and models of human interrelationships (p. 16).
- 22 *Styl życia. Przemiany...*, op. cit., 1978, pp. 81–142.
- 23 One has the impression that the author also had in mind the sacral nature of work, although she does not employ this term, steering clear of religious issues.

- 24 They have their expression in ritual symbolism, including also the songs (e.g. horse — man's affair, flax — woman's).
- 25 Janina Szymańska, *Słowo śpiewane. Interpretacja tekstów folklorystycznych*, Warszawa 2001.
- 26 New Year falling in the spring was typical for many archaic cultures, and not only European ones (according to the Torah the month of *nisan* (the turn of March and April) is the beginning of the year; also in the Bible months are counted from *nisan*).
- 27 J. Szymańska, op. cit., pp. 10–13. Best preserved are carols for girls (documentation comes mainly from the second half of the twentieth century, from field research conducted by the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, particularly by Janina Szymańska). It should be added that the singing of carols was accompanied by ritual behaviours, for instance rocking the girl by two lads on their interlaced hands (op. cit., p. 19).
- 28 J. Szymańska (op. cit., p. 11) refers here also to the well-known study of carols by P. Caraman from 1933.
- 29 All of these come from the quoted work by J. Szymańska (arrangement of the musical part — J.K. Dadak-Kozicka).
- 30 Example from the study by J. Szymańska, op. cit.
- 31 *Dzieła Wszystkie Oskara Kolberga*, vol. 28, Wrocław-Poznań: PTL 1964, p. 95.
- 32 M. Oesterreicher-Mollwo, *Leksykon symboli*, Warszawa 1992, p 58.
- 33 Two five-bar phrases (four eighths + three crotchets) make up the pentatonic melody: $e^1 e^1 a^1 a^1 g^1 a^1 e^1 / g^1 g^1 a^1 a^1 e^1 g^1 d^1 // e^1 e^1 a^1 a^1 g^1 a^1 e^1 \dots$ etc., in which two formulas, the fourth and the fifth, cadencing on e^1 and d^1 , constantly intertwine.
- 34 Maks Scheler, *Istota i formy sympatii*, 1986 Warszawa: PWN (I discuss this in the study 'Pionowy wymiar antropologii muzyki', in: *Muzyka*, No. 2, 1999, pp. 112–132).
- 35 *Dzieła Wszystkie Oskara Kolberga*, volume 28: *Mazowsze V*, Wrocław 1964, pp. VII–VIII.