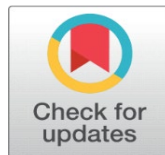
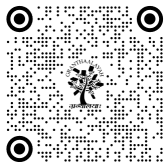


JINGLE BELLS IN THE HISTORICAL WAYS OF CAROL SONGS

Fancy D. R. ¹, Solomon Asha Joseph ², Leena Liz Mathew ³, Dr. Saran S. ⁴ 

^{1,2,3} Assistant Professor, Department of English, Christian College, Chengannur, Kerala, India

⁴ Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English, University Institute of Technology, University Regional Centre, Pathiyoor, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India



Corresponding Author

Dr. Saran S., srn.s@rediffmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Carols traditionally held a central place in the celebration of the Christmas season. It is believed that the angels sang the first carol on the day of Jesus' birth on the first Christmas night. But Carols before the birth of Jesus come to our attention as we travel through history. The beginning of the carol is detailed in history as it was part of the Winter Solstice celebration. There was also a time when carols were written and sung for all four seasons. May carols, Harvest carols etc. were celebrated. Thus in the beginning, Christmas carols were more secular rather than sacred and religious. The secularization didn't destroy the significance of this carols, it only took the celebration back to its roots and reminded us of the social significance of early secular carols. However, it is a fact that the tradition of singing carols at Christmas only continued later. Many carols today have little to do with Christmas. Are they good signs that carols are becoming secular like in the early days? In the world of music, many songs have been composed about Sacrifice, Love and Peace. How Christmas carols have lasted so long, remaining in people's minds for centuries and millennia? A study in search of the roots of the Christmas Carols is intended here. An attempt has also been made to associate the immortal Christmas Carols to the centuries in which they were born.

Keywords: Carols, Christmas, History, Music, Tradition

1. INTRODUCTION

Christmas, New Year and holidays are the time to make the best memories of life. In the last week of December, the streets will be dying of Christmas rush, awe-inspiring with stars and decorative lights all for Christmas. Christmas is a holy day that evokes the message of brotherhood, love, joy and sharing. It is a celebration of peace and tranquility. The world welcome Christmas by preparing haystacks and stars, exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees in churches and homes, exchanging greeting cards, cutting cakes, and welcoming carol groups that arrive at homes led by Santa Claus. A star that rose in the sky was the guide for the shepherds who first came to know that Jesus Christ was born in a manger. His birth was for the renewal of the world. Those memories evolved into star lights in homes on Christmas days. The belief that Jesus was born in a stable is the reason for preparing

a manger. The manger is made by lining up small figures of all those associated with Christmas, and the figures of Jesus, Mother Mary, Joseph, and Shepherds are mainly used. Santa Claus arriving with gifts is an unavoidable part of this celebration. The children believe that Santa Claus with white beard and hair will arrive in a wagon, dressed in a red coat and pointed hat. Cards with greeting messages were often exchanged at Christmas time. It is said that Christmas is not complete without tasting the cake. Christmas trees are the main attraction of the celebrations. It is generally seen in the shape of a pyramid. Along with the decorations, the practice of hanging gift packages on the tree is also popular.

Christmas reminds us Christmas carols that grace the scenes of star clusters. Carols about the birth of Jesus, gifts, joy, Santa Claus and snow are always heard on Christmas nights. Where did the carol songs that come before us with the message of love and peace come from? How are they part of Christmas celebrations? Here is an attempt to unveil the history behind the Christmas Carols.

Carols are songs sung during Christmas. The French word 'carole' means 'to dance in a circle', while the Latin word 'choraula' means 'to dance in a circle with singers' and 'choraules' means 'to dance with a flute'. Carol is also related to the Greek word 'khoraulēs', meaning 'flute player'. The meaning given to the word 'carol' now is 'Song of Praise and Joy'. In contrast to the religiousness, carols celebrate the happiness and peace within the minds of humanity. [2]

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At least a few have already traveled to discover where the carols originated. A few of these are "The History and Significance of Christmas Carols" (2021) by Saskia Egeland-Jensen, "The Surprising History Behind your Favorite Christmas Carols" (2022) by Eliza Roland, "The History of Christmas Carols" (2022) by Franklyn Johnson-Williams, "The Surprising History of Christmas Carols" (2022) by Nora Loreto, "The History of Christmas Carols" (2023) by Mark Cartwright, etc.

Although most of these articles refer to the history of carols, they narrow down to their favorite carols and sources. Purpose of this article is to present a historical overview of major carols from beginning to the present day. Without entering into details, an attempt has been made here to analyze the state of carols in each century.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Christmas and Christmas carols are often defined as rituals relevant only in the Christian denomination. But by studying the ancient history, we understand that all this had a secular background. An artificial excitement is one of the characteristics of Christmas Carols since the time of their birth. An attempt is made here to expose the origins of beautiful carols confined within the four walls of religion and to reflect how secular once they were. There do not seem to have been any studies assessing the status of carols in each century since the first century.

This study will undoubtedly be a surprise to the modern generation who have come to understand carols only as associated with Christmas celebrations. It also helps to understand the fact that Christmas was a historical reality and the carol songs played an unparalleled role in propagating this historical fact.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Bible mentions that the birth of Jesus Christ was celebrated with music. Historical records show that in the first century, people, often seen as successors to

angels, composed carols specifically for Christmas celebrations. However, history also reveals that the origins of carols are not rooted exclusively in Christianity. Many carols evolved from songs sung by pagans during seasonal celebrations, particularly those welcoming winter, which eventually became associated with Christmas. This paper aims to explore the history and origins of carol songs, examining the historical challenges they faced and analyzing the significant developments in their growth. The study employs a qualitative methodology, involving an in-depth analysis of the history of carols to uncover their evolution and significance over time.

5. THE ORIGIN OF CAROLS

During the Winter Solstice celebrations thousands of years ago, carols were initially sung in Europe as hymns. The Winter Solstice, typically occurring on December 22, marks the shortest day of the year. During these celebrations, people would dance around stone circles and recite pagan songs. Over time, these songs evolved into Christian hymns that celebrated the birth of Jesus. [5]

Figure 1



Figure 1. The sunrise during the winter solstice [10]

6. CAROLS FROM 1ST TO 10TH CENTURY

Carols were originally sung during all four seasons, but early Christians in the first century continued the tradition of linking carols specifically to Christmas. From the 2nd century onward, Christmas carols began to be performed indoors under the guidance of Christian authorities, rather than by popular demand. Historical records indicate that special carols were composed for Christmas celebrations as early as 129 AD. The New Daily mentions that the earliest known carol, "Angel's Hymn," was written in 129 AD. These early Christmas carols were primarily written in Latin and were known as hymns.

For example, the fourth-century Roman Christian poet Prudentius wrote "Corde Natus ex Parentis" (Of the Father's Love Begotten) and St. Hilary of Poitiers wrote "Jesus Refulsit Omnium" (Jesus, Light of All the Nations). More Christmas-themed music emerged during the 4th century, with Latin hymns like "Veni Redemptor Gentium" by Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, which articulated the theological doctrine of the Incarnation, particularly in opposition to Arianism. "Corde Natus ex Parentis" by Prudentius (d. 413 AD) remains popular even today.

From the 8th century onward, many composers began creating Christmas carols, but since these were in Latin, they did not gain widespread popularity among the general public, who were more familiar with pagan songs. By the 1200s, interest

in Christmas celebrations had waned considerably. This trend changed in 1223 when St. Francis of Assisi introduced indigenous plays in Italy, incorporating short hymns and songs into the performances. Although some parts were in Latin, the majority were in languages that the common people could understand. These plays often featured non-Biblical stories. St. Francis replaced traditional carols with vernacular songs that resonated with the audience, turning Christmas music into a platform for broader musical reform. Despite opposition from the church, folk musicians enthusiastically embraced these new carols. As a result, carols began to evolve independently, shifting from a strictly sacred tradition to a more secular one. These carols eventually spread across European countries, with singers performing more often in homes and on streets than in churches. The Christmas sequence, also known as prose, originated in monasteries in Northern Europe and was expanded upon into a sequence of rhymed stanzas in the ninth and tenth centuries by Bernard of Clairvaux.

7. CAROLS FROM 11TH TO 20TH CENTURY

Carols were integrated into religious services much later, around the 12th century. The Parisian monk Adam of St. Victor played a significant role by drawing upon popular songs, which began to resemble what we now know as Christmas carols. However, only a small number of these early carols have survived to the present day. These carols often told stories of Mary and Jesus encountering different individuals in Bethlehem, and during both this period and the Elizabethan era, many carols were based on fables.

In the 15th century, carols began to gain widespread popularity across different regions, particularly as they became associated with Christmas celebrations. New carols, telling the stories of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, were composed in multiple languages. The tradition of Christmas songs in local languages was significantly influenced by Francis of Assisi in the 13th century, especially in France, Germany, and Italy. In England, Christmas carols were documented as early as 1426 in the work of John Awdlay, a chaplain from Shropshire, who recorded twenty-five carols sung by 'wassailers' who traveled from house to house.

A significant collection of late medieval Latin songs, titled *Piae Cantiones*, was published in 1582, including Latin versions of carols like "Christ Was Born on Christmas Day," "Good Christian Men, Rejoice," and "Good King Wenceslas." The popular carol "The 12 Days of Christmas" also originated in the 16th century. Martin Luther introduced folk melodies to Christmas carols, aligning them with his religious views. However, the Puritan movement in England led to a decline in Christmas celebrations, which affected the tradition of carol singing.

During the period from 1647 to 1660, carol singing was banned in England by Oliver Cromwell, a military and political leader who believed Christmas should be a peaceful, solemn event. This led to the near disappearance of carols until the Victorian era. Despite the ban, carol singing persisted in secret until William Sandys and David Gilbert revived the tradition by publishing collections of Christmas carols in England. By the 19th century, carols had become integral to Christmas celebrations once again, with "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" considered one of the oldest surviving English carols. Another well-known carol, "O Come All Ye Faithful," has a complex history, often traced back to its Latin version, "Adeste Fideles," which may date back to 1640 or earlier.

The 18th-century carol "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" was originally penned by Charles Wesley, a co-founder of Methodism. The original lyrics began with the lines:

"Hark how all the welkin rings,
Glorious the King of Kings."

In 1754, George Whitefield, a Methodist preacher, revised these lines, contributing to the version we recognize today. The Victorian era marked the revival and flourishing of Christmas carols. In 1822, William Sandys and Davies Gilbert published a collection of Christian hymns, both old and new, which were popular in England at the time. This revitalized interest in carol singing, leading to the formation of carol choirs that performed for money and food during the Christmas season. Felix Mendelssohn composed the familiar tune for "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" in 1840, and the influence of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, brought continental Christmas carols to England.

Before carol singing became widespread, official carol singers known as 'waits' performed in towns and villages. These groups, led by local leaders, had the authority to collect money during Christmas Eve, also called 'watchnight' or 'waitnight.' The term 'waits' referred to the shepherds watching over their flocks when angels announced the birth of Jesus. This tradition contributed to the resurgence of carol singing in England, leading to the establishment of orchestras and choirs.

By the 19th century, carols were deeply embedded in Christmas traditions, performed in homes, churches, and public celebrations. Popular songs of this era included "Silent Night, Holy Night," "Little Town of Bethlehem," "Good King Wenceslas," and "Away in a Manger." "Away in a Manger" first appeared in American magazines during the 1880s, often claimed to be a 16th-century German lullaby. "Silent Night, Holy Night" was initially performed on Christmas Eve 1818 at the Nikolauskirche in Oberndorf, with music by Franz Xaver Gruber and lyrics by Joseph Mohr. This carol became the world's most popular Christmas song, translated into over 100 languages.

The publication of Christmas carol books in the 19th century expanded the appeal of these songs, with many carols featuring secular themes such as Santa Claus, snowmen, and holiday cheer. William Sandys' 1833 collection Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern included well-known songs like "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," "The First Noel," "I Saw Three Ships," and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." This period also saw the rise of new carols, including "Good King Wenceslas" and "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," a New England carol. [4]

Figure 2



Figure 2 [9]

In the 20th century, carol singing continued the Victorian tradition. *Carols Old and Carols New*, published in 1916 by Charles Lewis Hutchins, was a scholarly collection that is now rare due to its limited print run. Another significant collection, *The Oxford Book of Carols*, was first published in 1928 by Oxford University Press and became a widely used source among choirs and church congregations in Britain. The popular carol book series *Carols for Choirs*, published by Oxford University Press in 1961 and edited by David Willcocks and Reginald Jacques, has since expanded to a five-volume set, including arrangements from various sources and contributions from modern composers. [6]

8. CAROLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Since the start of December, carols can be heard around the world, bringing a message of love and filling Christmas nights with music. While we often refer to them as carols, some of these songs do not have an explicitly religious theme. Despite this, caroling is closely associated with Christian traditions and also plays a role in preserving various national customs and family traditions. Among the most beloved carols of the 21st century, according to connoisseurs, are "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen", "In the Bleak Midwinter", "Joy to the World", "Silent Night, Holy Night", "O Come, All Ye Faithful", "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming", "The Boar's Head", "Fum, Fum, Fum", "O Come, O Come Emmanuel", and "Go Tell It on the Mountain".

The tradition of broadcasting a Christmas Eve carol service began in 1928, with the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, leading the service over public airwaves. A modern twist on caroling is the "Dial-A-Carol" tradition, an annual event at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where people can call in to request a carol performance over the phone.

9. CONCLUSION

A Christmas carol is a unique phenomenon. Despite being a fairly common tune, it has endured through the ages, unlike many other songs about love, bravery, and loss. What makes Christmas carols so enduring, keeping them alive in people's minds for centuries? Interestingly, many carols aren't even specifically about Christmas. For instance, the popular "Jingle Bells" was originally written as a song for relieving stress. Some argue that "Do You Hear What I Hear?" carries undertones of paranoia, "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" explores complex Freudian themes, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" embodies forced exuberance, and "Dominic the Donkey" reflects a fear of otherness. Despite these interpretations, carols have only recently become a cultural staple and a lens through which we can understand today's musical landscape. Many modern carols also have little to do with Christmas, yet they still connect us to a long history, serving as windows to the past. They remind us of where we've come from and provide hope for the future. Through carols, we not only enjoy the present but also learn about the evolution of music over time.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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