

Some Byzantine Chironomic survivals in the tradition of Balkan Church Music: The case of Roumanian Orthodox Chant

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It is a commonplace to say that common history and common religion lead to common culture. In the case of the Balkan nations, the state of the Byzantine empire, followed historically by the Ottoman regime, together with the Christian Orthodox religion, formed, apart from the many differences between the various national groups that inhabit the Balkan area, certain common social and cultural axes which, to varying degrees, kept on functioning up to our times.

Such is the case of the church music of the Orthodox national groups, the origin of which is to be found in the so-called Byzantine music, during the late Byzantine period as well as the post Byzantine period. This music, as it usually happens, followed different trends of evolution in the different ethnic environments, yet it kept certain common characteristics all over the Balkan states. These characteristics pertain to the modal structure of the church music, the rules and aesthetics of the musical composition, and the musical notation.

I believe that these survivals have been possible because of the close and functional relation between the local churches and the mother Church, the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This relation has been reinforcing them spiritually and practically on the field of religion. And through this, the Orthodox musical culture has survived up to our times. I also believe that this survival was greatly aided by the Orthodox monasterial situation, especially that of Mount Athos, where Slavic Orthodox monks could come in close contact with the greek-speaking ones.

Practically speaking, the most significant of these survivals is that of the musical notation. For, as it is well-known, a great part of the systematic features of this music is embodied in the nature and the operation of the musical signs and characters. And it is worth noticing that one finds Slavic publications of ecclesiastical music in 'παρασημαντική' musical notation even in recent times, when the use of the so-called western musical notation is generally applied all over the world. Because by means of the *παρασημαντική*, these features are, more or less, maintained in contemporary music interpretation.

Several such publications were produced for the needs of the various Slavic churches. I happened to see a Slavonic Anthology, published probably at the beginning of the century, similar to those published by Θεόδωρος Φωκαεύς in Constantinople in the second half of the 19th century. It belongs to my friend and dear colleague, Lykourgos Angelopoulos, and it contains chants in all Byzantine modes; some of the pieces also indicate the name of the composer: e.g., the *Αναστάσιμα Ευλογητάρια του Πέτρου Λαμπαδαρίου* in the 5th mode (= plagal of 1st mode).

I also happened to see a Bulgarian publication of *Σύντομον Ειρμολόγιον Πέτρου του Πελοποννησίου*, which is in the possession of Simon Karas. All the above publications keep the main melodic formulas of the original compositions, and arrange the melodic phrases so that they fit to the new language.

In the case of Roumania, the phenomenon is rather more intense. It is the particular history of the area, of course, that makes the Greek influence much more strong and evident: the Greek princes of Constantinople, who governed the territories around the Danube for a long period up to the eruption of the Greek revolution of independence, were not only authorized as governors of *Moldovlahia* by the Ottoman power; they were also ambassadors of Greek culture from the capital of the oriental world. And in that culture church music has a great share. Therefore, the activity in publishing is remarkably higher, and the same stands for the activity of composition.

I shall here mention two characteristic examples of this fruitful publishing activity: the publication, in 1891 at Bucharest, of the *Encomia of Holy Friday* in arrangement from the Greek original by *Dimitrie Suceveanu*. And the publication in 1925 of the Holy Liturgy by *Popescu-Pasărea*, a brilliant Roumanian cantor and ecclesiastical composer.

Yet, in all the above cases, we have only the musical texts, but no further indications of how these texts must be sung. We find no rules concerning the musical interpretation and performance. Until now, I have not been able to find any theoretical works on the exact explanation of signs in the actual music of our days. On the other hand, disk recordings give only a very slight idea of that reality; they are usually taped down where the music is easy to get hold of, mainly the big cities. And, generally, this material suffers from a major western influence. In some cases too, there has been a cultural antagonism towards the Greeks, leading to a differentiation in the field of music. One characteristic example is the Bulgarian interpretations of compositions by Ioannis Koukouzelis, which form part of the efforts to demonstrate the hypothetical Bulgarian origin of the great melo-

dist.

Shortly after the fall of the Ceaușescu

regime in Roumania, the Institute of Biblical Mission of the Roumanian Orthodox Church, published the *Cântările Sfintei Liturghii*, "The chants of the Roumanian ecclesiastical liturgy" (1992). In this publication are included the most representative compositions of Roumanian melodists starting from 18th century up to our times. This material covers the three big Orthodox liturgies, and all the periods of the ecclesiastical year.

Furthermore, in the publication are included some *Calofonikee Heermee* composed by Roumanian musicians, some Roumanian carols and other spiritual folk songs, and some Matheemata in the 8 modes. The material of this book comes from the living oral Roumanian tradition, and it was selected and codified by Nicu Moldoveanu, professor of the Department of Orthodox Theology at the University of Bucharest. The work of Prof. Moldoveanu was supervised by a committee, consisting mainly of theologians and clergymen, whose task, according to the preface of the edition, was to choose the chants with the purest possible Roumanian essence and character.

Whether the pieces included in this anthology are of a discrete compositional character or not, it is not the place to discuss here; this is the subject of a future structural and comparative study of the melodies. What makes the edition extremely interesting though, is the fact that, although Prof. Moldoveanu uses sources that are much older and written in the *παρασημαντική*¹, he gives the musical texts in both Byzantine and Western musical notation. And furthermore, in his transcriptions he tries to present in a most accurate and consequent way the melismatic particularities of the actual musical performance. And in doing so, he reveals the survival of a living and functional chironomic code in the Roumanian church music of today.

The existence of chironomy in the Roumanian interpretation of Byzantine music is of great importance, not only for the Roumanians, who managed to carry

and save a very old tradition up to our days, but also for the Greeks, who, as we all know, even today, cannot come to an agreement on how their own sacred music is to be sung.

In the long history of Greek presence and influence in the areas around the Danube, one could search for indications of strong similarities between the savant musical cultures of the Roumanians and the Greeks. I believe that it is not at all incidental that the first musical editions according to the new method were realized in Bucharest in 1820. It is enough, just to have a look at the long catalogue of donators of the *Δοξαστάριον*, published by Petros Efessios: this catalogue is full of names of citizens from Bucharest, among which some are obviously Roumanian².

On the other hand, as Lykourgos Angelopoulos pointed out convincingly in his exposition during the International Musicological Symposium at Delphi on 1986³, it is very likely that at the time of the musical reform (1st half of 19th cent.), the chironomy was generally a living reality. So, in order to make it the simplest possible, the three establishers of the new method neglected quite a few of the signs of the old method, having confidence in the oral tradition. Whether they were right or wrong, one can easily judge. But, if at that time, chironomy existed in Greek interpretations, it certainly existed in Roumanian interpretations too.

Considering now the particularities of the Roumanian society, and the events of Roumanian History, old and recent, one could discover the terms that made the maintenance of this old tradition possible. So, if we co-examine these two factors, (that is, chironomy on one hand, and a non-communicational and slow-developing society on the other), we may arrive at the conclusion that contemporary Roumanian church music can offer an answer to the question: *"How should the Greeks sing their church music?"*.

But, let us come back to the chiro-

nomic code. The preliminary study I carried out revealed practically all the chironomic positions (*θέσεις*) described by the Greek theoreticians: I shall here mention positions with melismatic functions of various types that can be identified as operations of different qualities of character, some of which are not used by the new method. Although, as it is obvious, the musical texts are written in the new method of *παρασημαντική*, their transcriptions give a plethora of citations or figures for the following signs: *οξεία, πεταστή, βαρεία, ομαλό, αντικένωμα, έτερον, τζάκισμα, λύγισμα, στρεπτό, τρομικό* as well as terminating positions using *μικρόν ίσον*⁴; all these positions have many different possibilities of performance.

It is certain, of course, that the subject needs a complete study, theoretical and practical. Nevertheless, we are going to take a quick look at this code, examining the function of only a few signs and combinations, as they appear in the transcriptions by Prof. Moldoveanu. But before that, some remarks have to be made:

- a. Examining the material offered by the book, we should always have the Greek interpretation of Byzantine music in our minds, and its theory, which forms the point of departure for this study.
- b. Under such a point of view, we discover a modal system which, of course, needs to be examined separately, but at first glimpse it is almost identical to that of the Greeks, although some of its functions are different: e.g. there is no sharpening or flattening of the notes towards the dominant ones, unless it is indicated in the Byzantine text. In spite of these differences, the modal system cites directly to its greco-oriental origin. A very characteristic example is that of the long "*Αξιόν*" of the Sunday, a composition of *Macarie Ieromonahul*

(1770 - 1836), with the indication *glasul III* ("3d voice" ~ Ἦχος Τρίτος). In fact, the composition is written in Ἦχος πλάγιος του τρίτου επτάφωνος, which is a major mode based on B flat (= Ζω ύφεση). Similar to what many Greeks did, mainly in Constantinople, the composer adds also the indication *Ajem Syrian*, which

is the mistaken Arabic term *Ajem Ashiran*, the name of the makam of Turkish and Arabic music that corresponds exactly to this Byzantine Ἦχος.

- c. In the texts there are few violations of the rules of musical orthography. The most frequent is that of the replacement of υπορορή by other signs:

Ex. 1

(a)		in the place of	
	ta - a - a - a		ta - a - a - a
<p>Use of <i>Συνεχές Ελαφρό</i> () in the position of <i>Υπορορή μετά Γοργού</i> ()</p>			
(b)		in the place of	
	Tā - ā - ā - ā - ā		ta - a - a - a
<p>Use of successive <i>Απόστροφαι</i> () in the position of <i>Υπορορή</i> ()</p>			

It is probable, though, that such "faults" have their origin in the differences between the Greek and the Roumanian language, and the difficulties of transcribing the original poetry into Roumanian, mainly because of the different number of syllables, while keeping the same melodic formulas.

Now, we will deal successively with two different paradigms of chironomic positions, that of οξεία and that of πεταστή.

1. Positions of Οξεία

In these positions, we are dealing with signs of the new method, ολίγον, κεντήματα and ψηφιστόν.

(a) Ολίγον as a simple accent

The ολίγον is functioning as στήριγμα (= basis). Example (2) and Example(3)

(b) Ολίγον as Οξεία

Example(4)

The operation of οξεία is indicated by the small note before the main φωνή (= note), in the form of an *appoggiatura*.

- d. Given that all musical scales are described by the well tempered western scale, there is no accurate representation of the intervals actually intoned by the Roumanian cantors. There is no information at all about this matter in the edition. And finally,

- e. The chironomic system is only valid for the church music, exactly as it does not pertain to Greek folk songs.

Ex. 2

Ex. 3

Ex. 4

Ex. 5

Ex. 6

Ex. 7

(c) Ψηφιστόν as Οξεία

Example (5) and Example (6) and Example(7)

As it is obvious, it can be combined with ίσον, or any ascending character.

This also happens in a series of successive descents: Example (8)

Sometimes, always according to the transcriptions of Moldoveanu, the function of ψηφιστόν is extended to the following descending character as well: Example (9)

(d) Κεντήματα as Οξεία

Example (10)

In this case, κεντήματα give an ascending *appoggiatura* which works as a bridge,

eliminating the difference between the first and the last and higher note.

(e) Κεντήματα together with

Ολίγον as Οξεία

Example (11)

(f) Κεντήματα together with Ολί-

γον and Ψηφιστόν as Οξεία

Example (12) and Example (13)

In both examples, the embellishing note comes before the second sign which is the κεντήματα. When the κεντήματα come first, then the embellishing note follows: Example (14)

Ex. 8

Ex. 9

Ex. 10

Ex. 11

Ex. 12

(g) Κεντήματα, Ολίγον and Ψηφιστόν in position of Στρεπτόν
The following is found to be a very common analysis in the texts, especially in those with a slow tempo: Example (15)

(h) Ολίγον and Ψηφιστόν in position of Στρεπτόν
This position combines always a character with κλάσμα, that is of double duration, under which is placed the ψηφιστόν, and it is always followed by a descending character carrying a γοργόν.

This grouping is equivalent to an analysis of the character carrying the κλάσμα:
Example (16)

In some texts, the analysis is even more detailed:

Example (17) shows this with a grace-note, and in

Example (18) we observe the same phenomenon with real notes.

2. Operation of Πεταστή

Πεταστή is the more ambiguous character in the Roumanian texts, exactly

Ex. 13

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 13. It features a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of a quarter note 'ta', followed by an eighth note 'ti', another eighth note 'to', and a final quarter note 'te'. Above the staff, there are handwritten annotations: a circled 'A', a double bar line with a downward arrow, and a circled '(c=d)'. The lyrics 'ta-ti-to-te' are written below the staff.

Ex. 14

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 14. It features a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of a quarter note 'ta', followed by two eighth notes 'a', then an eighth note 'a', and a final quarter note 'ti'. Above the staff, there are handwritten annotations: a circled 'B', a double bar line with a downward arrow, and a circled '(c=d)'. The lyrics 'ta a a-ti-i' are written below the staff.

Ex. 15

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 15. It features a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of a quarter note 'ta', followed by an eighth note 'ti', and a final quarter note 'to'. Above the staff, there are handwritten annotations: a circled 'B', a double bar line with a downward arrow, and a circled '(c=d)'. The lyrics 'ta ti to' are written below the staff.

Ex. 16

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 16. It features a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of a quarter note 'ta' followed by an eighth note 'a'. Above the staff, there are handwritten annotations: a circled 'B', a double bar line with a downward arrow, and a circled '(c=d)'. The lyrics 'ta a' are written below the staff.

Ex. 17

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 17. It features a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of a quarter note 'ta' followed by two eighth notes 'a'. Above the staff, there are handwritten annotations: a circled 'B', a double bar line with a downward arrow, and a circled '(c=d)'. The lyrics 'ta-a-a' are written below the staff.

Ex. 18

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 18. It features a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of a quarter note 'ta' followed by two eighth notes 'a'. Above the staff, there are handwritten annotations: a circled 'B', a double bar line with a downward arrow, and a circled '(c=d)'. The lyrics 'ta-a-a' are written below the staff.

like it is in the Greek ones. Therefore, one discovers many different possibilities of this character in the transcriptions of Moldoveanu.

(a) Πεταστή as a simply ascending character

In this case, *πεταστή* has no action other than the ascending second. Sometimes, this behaviour is explicable: that is when the *πεταστή* reaches a stable and immovable note like, for instance, the Ζω flat of Ἦχος Βαρύς. Example (19) In the Greek texts also, the *πεταστή* does not move in cases like this.

(b) Πεταστή as an accent

Example (20) and Example (21) *Πεταστή* is normally followed by descending characters in the Roumanian texts, as it happens in Greek texts also.

(c) Πεταστή before long descending characters

Example (22) with grace-note and Example (23) with real notes.

(d) Πεταστή before short descending characters

Example (24) We notice here that in ex. 24, as well as

Ex. 19

Ex. 20

Ex. 21

Ex. 22

Ex. 23

Ex. 24

in ex. 23, the embellishing action of *πεταστή* is applied to the second half of the duration of the note.

(e) Πεταστή with κλάσμα before descending characters

Example (25)

In this case, the embellishing action of *πεταστή* is now applied to the first half of the duration of the note. *Πεταστή* has the same action if followed by a descending note with *κλάσμα*:

Example (26)

(f) Πεταστή with κλάσμα before short descending characters

Example (27) and Example (28)

As it is obvious from ex. 27, this combination can support two syllables.

Speaking about *πεταστή* in the transcriptions of Moldoveanu, it should be pointed out that its chironomic nature is sometimes suppressed, and there seems to be no evident explanation for this phenomenon. Generally speaking, it is not at all obvious why *πεταστή* sometimes loses its embellishing function. It is likely that its performance can be embellished or left without ornamentation, depending on the mood of the performer, something that often happens with Greek *ψάλτες* too.

On the other hand, in several cases, the *πεταστή* is used in a way violating

Ex. 25

Ex. 26

Ex. 27

Ex. 28

Ex. 29

Ex. 30

the rules of musical orthography: for instance, as an accent followed by ascending characters: Example (29)

In other cases, πεταστή is transcribed in a way which fits rather to the οξεία: Example (30)

And vice versa, ψηφιστόν is sometimes transcribed as πεταστή: Example (31)

It is probable, however, that errors like these originated in the editing procedure. Or during the collection of the material, what is especially likely to happen when one deals with an oral tradition.

Unfortunately, the space available does not permit the presentation of other paradigms. Yet, it is necessary to make some

Ex. 31

remarks on the consequences of the phenomenon that I, though partially and insufficiently, have tried to describe here. For the above mentioned reasons, indicating a close relation between Greek and Roumanian church music, I believe that this phenomenon offers a strong

argument in favour of those Greek theoreticians of modern times who support a rather 'melismatic' interpretation of the Byzantine music. In many of the Roumanian interpretations, I clearly discover the doctrine of scholars like Παναγιώτης Κηλτζανίδης⁵, like Αγαθάγγελος Κυριαζίδης⁶, like Βασίλειος Παπαρούνης⁷, like Θεοδόσιος Γεωργιάδης⁸, like Χαράλαμπος Οικονόμου⁹, and like Αβραάμ Ευθυμιάδης¹⁰. And above all, the doctrine of Simon Karas who, in his *Θεωρητικόν*¹¹, deals in detail with the chironomic function of the signs and the characters of

Byzantine music, not hesitating to use some of the signs belonging to the old *παρασημααντική*, in order to describe the melismatic nature of the art of melurgy in a most accurate and precise way. It is very well known that these ideas find a strong opposition. Yet, the oral tradition has in many cases verified such a point of view, as Lykourgos Angelopoulos has very clearly stated in his above mentioned exposition at Delphi (1986). And, I think that the case of Roumanian church music offers yet another verification.

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Notes

NOTE 1

Makarie Ieromonahul, Vienna, 1823/ Anton Pann, Bucharest, 1835/ Anthology of Neamt, Ierodiakonul Nectarie Frimu, 1840/ Ștefanache Popescu, Bucharest, 1860-1875, and many others. There are also publications of the Holy Synod of the Roumanian Orthodox Church from 1951 and 1961 etc.

NOTE 2

e.g. Γιάνκος Ρακκοβίζας, Μιχαήλ Φιλλιπέσκος and Τίτος Μαϊνέσκος etc.

NOTE 3

Unfortunately, the Acta of this symposium have not yet been published.

NOTE 4

The term should be understood not as an element of the old Παρασημαντική, but as it is used by Simon Karas, in order to describe certain types of chironomies, Karas 1982 181- 83.

NOTE 5

Constantinople, 1881.

NOTE 6

Constantinople, 1906.

NOTE 7

Athens, 1939.

NOTE 8

Athens, 1963.

NOTE 9

Paphos, Cyprus, 1940.

NOTE 10

Thessaloniki, 1972.

NOTE 11

Karas 1982.

