

# Summary:

## Ioannes Koukouzeles' "Method of Theseis" and its Application

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*In memory of Jørgen  
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The theme of this contribution is a central issue of the Psaltic Art as it addresses both the history of Byzantine/Postbyzantine chant and its theory. The "Method of *Theseis* of the musical signs" by Ioannes Papadopoulos Koukouzeles, the Maistor, is the most widespread and well-known method of Byzantine Chant ever since its appearance in the earliest dated Koukouzelean Akoluthiai MS, EBE 2458 (AD 1336). *Exegeseis* of the method were later made by Petros Peloponnesios (+ 1778), Gregorios Protopsaltes (+ 1821) and Matthaïos of Vatopedi (+ 1849).

In the MSS a variety of titles for this method are found, many of them including the expression "The musical signs, sung through the eight modes". The wording "Method of the *theseis*" is first documented in the treatise by Manuel Chrysaphes (mid 15th c.), who actually coined "*thesis*" as a technical term, but it is also found in the MSS Dionysiou 570 (end of 15th c.) and Xeropotamou 307 (ca. 1767-70).

Manuel Chrysaphes tells that Ioannes Koukouzeles followed Ioannes Glykys in composing a method of musical signs, and this statement is confirmed by many occurrences of a method ascribed to Glykys in the musical manuscripts. Although there are many similarities between these two important methods, they differ in many respects as well. Together they constitute the main source for the nomenclature of the neumes and *theseis* in the period of fully developed Middle Byzantine Notation (1177 - ca. 1670). In addition, the old anonymous list of signs from MS Laura GAMMA 67 (10th c.) should be included in a compa-

rary study, for which a table in three columns is presented above. It is worth noticing that the signs in Laura GAMMA 67 are called "*melodemata*" (meaning "whole musical phrases"), not just "*semaidia*" ("signs"). Evidently, Glykys and Koukouzeles set some of the *theseis* in different modes, but especially in modes Second plagal and Barys there are many correspondences. These two methods have inspired many teachers through the centuries and will probably continue to do so.

The 15th c. theoretician Ioannes Plou-siadenos stated that "there are many *theseis* of the musical signs". The nomenclature of signs and *theseis* (or *cheironomi-ai*) is manifold, referring either to the graphic shape of the signs, to the movement of the melody implied by the sign, or to other features of the chant practice, and, as the Byzantine chant tradition is a living one, new *theseis* were continuously created.

The *theseis* of Koukouzeles' and Glykys' methods belong primarily to the Sticheraric style, especially the ones named after a 'great sign' (*hypostasis*), whereas the *theseis* with descriptive names mostly are common to the Papadic (*Asmatikon/Psaltikon*) and the Sticheraric styles. In the MS Kostamonitou 86 (first half of 15th c.), a second row of text in red ink offers mnemonic help for the singer through "asmatic" syllables and brief quotations from suitable stichera. In the same MS, a kind of sticheron in honour of the Mother of God, reminding of the poetry of the fifteenth-syllable verses, is adapted to the melody of Koukouzeles' method by Markos Blates.

Gabriel Hieromonachos and Manuel Chrysaphes have in their treatises dealt with the etymology and grouping of the musical signs, stressing the unity of the interval signs and the *hypostaseis*, which together produce the actual melody (= *melos*). Founded on the basic manuals of the Art of Chanting (the *Protheoria* or *Papadike*) and Koukouzeles' Method, the singers have been trained to put the *theseis* correctly together in each mode, and therefore the characteristics of each of the three great genres, the Sticheraric,

the Papadic, and the Heirmologic, have been preserved through the centuries. The pedagogic force of the method is that a singer learned a *thesis* by seeing it before his eyes and remembering the melody (= *melos*) at the same time.

The theme of *exegesis* of the *theseis* and the analytic transcription of the melodies into the notation of the Three Teachers in 1814 is vast in itself, and can – due to the limits of time and space – not be dealt with here.