

ON COLLECTING 'TESTIMONIA' OF BYZANTINE MUSICAL PRACTICE

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The primary sources for our knowledge of Byzantine music (the musical MSS proper) have for long been a rather well defined lot, at least so far as the period down to the end of the Empire is concerned.

A systematic and exhaustive collection of all the 'testimonia' of the actual use of the music, the liturgical training and practice in other words, that will be found scattered in all kinds of more or less literary texts from the entire Byzantine millenium still remains a demanding and time-consuming desideratum.(1)

The present note offers a few small specimens of the kind of material that may be expected from a perusal of texts belonging to a literary genre, which would normally not be considered a storehouse of such information - historiography.(2)

In the 10th century historian John Caminiata, whose lively account of the Fall of Thessalonica to the Saracens of Crete on the 31th July 904 can now be found in the CFHB (3), we find the following passage: (chapt. 10,4 & 6-7; p. 11-12)

4 τὰ δὲ περὶ τῆς ἁρμονίου μουσικῆς τῶν ᾠσμάτων, ἢ τῶν
ῥυθμῶν τὰ ψυχοτερεπῆ μέλη καὶ τῶν τῷ θεῷ κειληρωμένων
σπουδάσιμα πῶς τῷ λόγῳ σημανῶ;

6 τὸ δ' ἀπὸ τούτου, καὶ μάλιστα' ὅτι τῆς εὐρύθμου τῶν
ᾠσμάτων ἐμνήσθη ἡδυφωνίας, οὐκ οἶδα τίς γένωμαι ἢ ποῖ
τῷ λόγῳ χωρήσω, ποῖον δὲ παραλείπω τῶν ἠδίστων ἐκείνων
καὶ εὐτάκτων μελωδημάτων, οἷς συνέψαλλον καὶ συνεόρτα-
ζον ἄνθρωποι ταῖς οὐρανίαις δυνάμεσιν. 7 εἰ γὰρ τις τὴν
μουσικὴν ἐκείνην, τὴν ἐκ παντὸς στόματος ὑφ' ἐν τῷ θεῷ
ἀναπεμπομένην τοῖς ὕμνοις ἐν ταῖς πανδήμοις συνάξεσι,
τῷ ἤχῳ τῶν ἑορταζόντων ἀγγέλων, ἐνθα εὐφραϊνομένων
πάντων ἢ κατοικία, ἐξεικονίσαι θελήσειεν, οὐδὲν τοῦ
δέοντος ἀμαρτήσεται.

("4. But how should I describe the care for the harmonious music of the ecclesiastical chant, or the soul-delighting melodies of the singers and the painstaking efforts of those devoted to God?

6. But now, in particular since I have mentioned the beautiful and harmonious sound of the canticles, I don't know what to do and how to go on with my description, and which of those very sweet and well-structured songs I should pass over in silence; those songs by which men used to sing and celebrate together with the heavenly hosts. 7. For if anyone should wish to compare that muse, which from every mouth as with one voice is sending up to God the hymns in the services attended by the whole congregation, with the singing of the celebrating angels in that place, where the abode of all the blessed is to be found, he would not miss anything essential.")(4)

A little further on (chapt. 11,2) we find a passage containing more practical information:

2 ἐκεκλήρωτο γὰρ ἐν ἑκάστῳ τούτων τάγματα ἱερέων, δι' ὧν ἡ μυστικὴ τελεῖται λατρεία, καὶ ἀναγνωστῶν συστήματα, δι' ὧν ἡ τῶν ᾠμάτων σπουδάζεται ὑμνηδία, ἁμοιβαδὸν τοὺς στίχους ἀλαλάζοντες, καὶ ταῖς χειρονομίαις τῶν μελῶν τὸν φθόγγον διατιθέντες, καὶ μεγάλην τιμὴν καὶ ἀξιολόγητον χορείαν συνιστῶντες, τῷ τε εἶδει τῆς ἀστραπιτοῦσης στολῆς τὰς τῶν ὀράντων θέλγοντες ὄψεις, καὶ τῇ τεχνωμένῃ τῶν ψαλμῶν λύρᾳ τὴν ἀκοὴν κατατέρποντες.

("2. In each of these (i.e. the churches of the Holy Wisdom and St Demetrius) colleges of priest were assigned, by whom the holy services are being celebrated, and associations of 'readers', by whom the hymnody of the canticles is being performed. They chant the verses alternately (in antiphons), and regulate the sound of the melodies by gestures of the hands, thus forming a large and impressive chorus, and by the display of their glittering vestments they charm the eyes of the spectators, and by their artful performance of the psalms they bring pleasure to the ears.")

This passage reflecting the situation c. A.D. 900 - at least as far as the greater churches of the metropolitan sees are concerned - is interesting, demonstrating as it does, the highly professional (and sumptuous!) specialisation among the city clergy. We are informed that the double chorus practice was an established fact, and we find the important information on the use of cheironomy (5); one of the oldest explicit references to this conducting technique.

Another good example is the information on the musical interests of the iconoclast emperor Theophilus (829-42) first found in the 'Theophanes Continuatus' (ed. Bekker, CB, 106,17-107,5 or PG 109, coll. 120-21) (6):

ις'. Ὑμνοὺς δὲ τινὰς ποιῶν καὶ στιχηρὰ μελίζων
 ᾄδουσαι προετρέπετο· μεθ' ὧν καὶ τὸ τοῦ τετάρτου
 ἤχου, Εὐλογεῖτε, ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ὄγδον, "Ἀκουε,
 κόρη, ᾠδὴν μεδαρμοσάμενος καὶ ῥυθμὸν παρασχών, ἐν
 τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίᾳ εἰς πάντων ἐπήκοον ᾄδουσαι
 διαύρῃσατο. Φέρεται δὲ καὶ λόγος τις ὡς αὐτὸς
 οὗτος ὁ θεόφιλος ἔρωτι τοῦ μέλους βαλλόμενος,
 καθάπερ πατέρες περὶ τὰ ἔκγονα, κατὰ τὴν Μεγάλην
 Ἐκκλησίαν ἐν φαιδρᾷ πανηγύρει οὐ παρητήσατο τὸ
 χειρονομεῖν, δοῦς τῷ κλήρῳ αὐτῆς λίτρας ὑπὲρ
 τούτου χρυσοῦ ἐκατόν. Καὶ τὸ στιχηρὸν δὲ τὸ
 κατὰ τὴν βαΐαφόρον, "Ἐξέλθετε, ἔθνη, ἐξέλθετε
 καὶ λαοί, τῆς ἐκεῖνου (v.l. ἐκεῖνης) φασὶν εἶναι
 τόκον ψυχῆς.

("He made some hymns and composed settings of stichera, and ordered that they should be chanted. Among those he also adapted the 'eulogeite' of the Fourth Mode from the 'akoue, kore' according to the eighth ode and gave it a (new) rhythmical structure (or melody), whereupon he ordained it to be chanted to the congregation in God's church. And the story goes that this very Theophilus, affected by his love for the music, like a father for his offspring, at a solemn festival in the Great Church did not refrain from conducting the choir, offering the clergy of the church 100 gold pounds for this. Also the stich-

eron for Palm Sunday 'Exelthete ethne, exelthete kai laoi' is said to be a child of his inspiration.")

With a different opening:

Ἐπιλοτιμεῖτο δὲ καὶ μελωδὸς εἶναι. διὸ καὶ
ὕμνους ποιῶν τινὰς ... κτλ.

"His ambition was also to be a composer of ecclesiastical music. Therefore he made some hymns ..." etc.

and a few other minor variations, this chapter is found in the Synopsis historiarum of John Skylitzes (rec. I. Thurn. CFHB V, 63 (chapt. 11)), and consequently also in the Chronicle of George Cedrenus (PG 121, col. 1000 CD - the CB edition has been inaccessible to me) (7).

John Zonaras (8) reduced this description to the following (CB ed. vol. III, 366,16-367,2; PG 134, col. 1404 B, or ed. L. Dindorf, Vol. III,409):

ἐπιλοτιμεῖτο δὲ καὶ μελωδεῖν· λέγονται μὲν οὖν
καὶ ἕτερα ἐκείνου ποιήματα, πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις δὲ
καὶ τὸ κατὰ βαῖοφόρον ἑορτὴν ἀδόμενον στιχερόν
τὸ "Ἐξέλθετε, ἔθνη, ἐξέλθετε καὶ λαοί·"

"His ambition was also to be a composer of hymns; and as a matter of fact a number of compositions are said to be by him, among which is the sticheron 'Exelthete ethne, exelthete kai laoi', chanted at the feast of Palm Sunday."

The information on the first composition (setting) by Theophilus is not altogether clear. It appears that what the emperor actually did was to adapt and arrange the closing words (or refrain) 'Εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔργα Κυρίου, τὸν Κύριον' of the heirmos of the eighth ode of John the Monk's Canon for the Holy Martyrs (9) - the "Ἄκουε, κόρη, παρθένε ἀγνή" (10); a setting in the Fourth Mode, as tradition calls for.

The other composition mentioned; the sticheron for Palm Sunday 'Exelthete ethne' in the Fourth Mode (11) belongs to the stan-

standard repertoire of the Triodion-section of the Byzantine Sticherarium (12). The text is a *sticheron idiomelon*, which ought to imply that both the words and the music (in the original version, anyway) are the work of Theophilus. The information on Theophilus' authorship is a useful correction of the highly contradictory ascriptions for this text found in certain sticheraria considerably younger than the Theophanes Continuatus and the subsequent historians.(13)

The anecdote (omitted by Zonaras) about the last iconoclast emperor paying the clergy in cash for their permission to conduct the choir has - at least to the modern reader - an ironical touch.

Finally I shall quote a small example of a more subtle nature, illustrating how Byzantine man was imbued with ecclesiastical music and hymnology. Even when jesting and mocking, he would quite naturally have recourse to liturgical material.

ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ Μανουὴλ ὁ Ἄγγελος, ὃς δεσποτικῆ ἀξιώματι παρὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τετίμητο, φυχῆ χρησάμενος, ἠνίκα τὸ Ῥωμαϊκὸν ἐτρέπετο στρατεύμα, περὶ τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην ἀπῆει καὶ δεσπότης ἀνομάζετο, ταύτης τε κυριεύων καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτήν, ἐρυθροῖς δὲ γράμμασι τὰς αὐτοῦ γραφὰς ἐπεκύρου. πρὸς ὃν καὶ ἀπέσκηψέ τις τῶν πρέσβεων παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἰωάννου ἀποσταλεῖς, ὡς εἰς σὲ καὶ μᾶλλον ἁρμόσει τὸ εἰς Χριστὸν ψαλτῶδούμενον, σὲ τὸν βασιλέα καὶ δεσπότην.

(Georgius Acropolita. ed. Heisenberg, chapt.26; 43,19-44,1)
(14)

("But his (i.e. Theodore Angelus') brother Manuel Angelus, who had been raised to the dignity of despotes by his brother, took to flight, when the Greek army was being routed. He went away to Thessalonica and was called despotes (lord), being master of the city and its surrounding area; and he would sign his letters in red characters. So he was jeered at by one of

the emissaries sent by the emperor John (Dukas Vatatzes): "Those words that are being chanted of Christ 'you, the king and lord' will fit you perfectly well (or: even better?)."

It should be noted that Heisenberg in his edition did not care to put the liturgical quotation in inverted commas.

This text "You, the king and lord,/ angels celebrate in hymns incessantly./ But I prostrate myself before you/, crying like the Publican:/ God, have mercy upon me,/ and save me."/ is one of the so-called *stichera katanyktika* in the fourth plagal mode, for Sunday evening (in the period of Lent).(15)

Notes:

(1) From a yet unpublished Birmingham (Manchester) Symposium paper by Jørgen Raasted on Byzantine liturgical music and its meaning for the Byzantine worshipper, I quote the following statement: "What we have to do in order to draw a picture of the effect of Byzantine religious music on the mind of the worshippers would then, simply, be to read Byzantine literature from one end to the other and to make the necessary excerpts. It is quite simple, but it is going to take some time! In between we might with profit consider the question from a different angle: Instead of asking the Byzantine WORSHIPERS about their attitude towards the singing of their church, we might ask the Byzantine COMPOSERS about their intentions."

(The examples quoted in the present article may not be as 'speculative' as those called for by Raasted - they are not so much concerned with the mind of the worshipper as with practical information. For all that, they are interesting enough in their own right. The passages from *Caminiata* and the *Theophanes Continuatus* (via George Cedrenus) have already been quoted and commented upon by George I. Papadopoulos in his old and nowadays almost unobtainable *Συμβολαὶ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς παρ' ἡμῖν ἐκκλησιαστικῆς μουσικῆς*, Athens 1890, 225; cf. 241). My reevaluations of the passages owe nothing to my Greek predecessor. The *Theophanes*-passage is also referred to by Schlotterer (see below).

It is indisputably true that the systematic collection of 'testimonia' is going to take quite a bit of time, but it might prove worthwhile.

As far as the older sources are concerned, this systematic collection and evaluation of the evidence of music and musical practice has already been carried very far by Reinhold Schlötterer in his *Inaugural-Dissertation: Die kirchenmusikalische*

Terminologie der griechischen Kirchenväter, Munich 1953. Indeed, the author offers much more than the title of his study implies, with numerous references to later authors (right down to the Fall of Constantinople).

(2) By contrast to e.g. theological literature in the broadest sense of the term.

(3) *Ioannis Caminiatae De expugnatione Thessalonicae. recensuit Gertrudis Böhlig*. CFHB Vol. IV (Series Berolinensis), Berlin & New York 1973.

On Caminiata (with literature), see H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner. Erster Band. (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft XII.5.1.)*, Munich 1978, 357-359.

(4) Cf. the German translation: *Die Einnahme Thessalonikes durch die Araber im Jahre 904. Übersetzt, eingeleitet und erklärt von Gertrud Böhlig. (Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber 12)*. 1. Auflage 1975, Graz Wien Köln, 26-27.

(5) The original meaning of the verb *χειρονομεῖν* is of course 'gesticulate' and the like (LSJ 1985); this word does not occur in G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961. Du Cange, *Glossarium*, 1746 for the meaning 'conduct' (a church choir) refers to Cedrenus, the Continuator Theophanis and the Prodromic poem "In hegumenum" (= Hesselring-Pernot, III), where the substantive *χειρονόμος* (v.l. *χερονόμος*) can be found (v.60). Cf. also E.A. Sophocles, *A Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, New York 1900, 1163.

The loci celebrati for the use of the term *χειρονομία* in older Byzantine literature are found in Constantine Porphyrogenetus, *De Cerimoniis*, II,52 (ed. Reiske), 748,13&16, and 757,7.

In later literature, in particular of course the treatises on musical questions, references to cheironomy are numerous. See e.g. *THE HAGIOPOLITES, A Byzantine Treatise on Musical Theory Preliminary Edition* by Jørgen Raasted. *Cahiers de l'institut du moyen-âge grec et latin (University of Copenhagen)* 45, Copenhagen 1983, 32, and *GABRIEL HIEROMONACHOS Abhandlung über den Kirchengesang* Herausgegeben von Christian Hannick und Gerda Wolfram. *MMB Corpus Scriptorum De Re Musica Vol. I.*, Vienna 1985, *passim* (index s.v. *χειρονομέω, χειρονομία, χειρονομῶν*).

On the use of cheironomy and the so-called 'cheironomic signs' of the musical notation, see Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*. 2. Edition, Oxford 1961, 287-288 (with references). In a much older publication of Wellesz, *Byzantinische Musik (Jedermanns Bücherei - Abteilung: Musik Herausgegeben von Johannes Wolf)*, Breslau 1927, 43 we find the following succinct and clear description: "Der Vorsänger selbst teilte mit der Hand und durch bestimmte Zeichen, die seine Hand formte, dem Chor die Entwicklung der melodischen Linie mit; naturgemäss konnte dies nur eine Unterstützung des Gedächtnisses sein und den Zweck haben, der Erinnerung nachzuhelfen. Diese Art der Zeichengebung wird Cheironomie genannt". Cf. also p. 58 of the same book.

According to Byzantine tradition this way of conducting goes back to Cosmas and John Damascene, the latter also being credited with the invention of the neumatic system of notation.

Cf. further Schlötterer, op.cit.(note 1),11-12, and The Treatise of Manuel Chrysaphes, the Lampadarios edited by Dimitri E. Conomos. MMB Corpus Scriptorum De Re Musica Vol. II, Vienna 1985, especially 81-82 (on Western evidence for cheironomic practice!).

(6) Hunger, op. cit.,339-343 (with literature).

(7) On Skylitzes and Cedrenus and the latter's dependence on the former, see Hunger, op. cit., 389-394 (with literature).

(8) Hunger, op. cit., 416-18 (with literature).

(9) With the incipit 'Δεῦτε πιστοὶ ἅπαντες '.

(10) See e.g. the Menologium Romanum II, Rome 1889, 70. Cf. H. Follieri, *Initia Hymnorum Ecclesiae Graecae*, Vol. I, Vatican City 1960, 73.

(11) See e.g. the Triodion Romanum, Rome 1879, 611. Cf. Follieri, op. cit.,486.

(12) Cf. STICHERARIUM edendum curaverunt C. Hog - H.J.W. Tillyard - E. Wellesz Codex vindobonensis theol. gr. 181 phototypice depictus. MMB I. Sticherarium, Copenhagen 1935, 225r/v, and now also STICHERARIUM ANTIQUUM VINDOBONENSE edendum curavit Gerda Wolfram. Pars principalis. MMB X, Vienna 1987,201r/v.

(13) The vast majority of the sticheraria do not exhibit ascriptions for the individual settings. But certain 14th century MSS, somehow connected with the Koukouzeleian tradition, are an exception from this rule. Thus the Athens MS EBE (gr.) 883, 253r in marg. off the 'ἐξέλθετε ἔθνη' has θεοφίλου δεσπότης καὶ - κοσμά <μον>αχοῦ, while another sticherarium the Sinai. gr. 1230 (A.D. 1365), 212r in marg. has λέοντος δεσπότης. In the Milan, Ambros. gr. 44, 222v there is no separate ascription for this text, but on f.222r off the sticheron Ὁ πλεῖστος ὄχλος κύριε.. we find the ascription ἀνδρέου ἱεροσολύμων τὰ γ . ("This plus the two following stichera, by Andrew of Jerusalem").Furthermore, the text immediately following the ἐξέλθετε ἔθνη' is labelled 'τοῦ αὐτοῦ' (by the same (composer)).

14) Georgii Acropolitae opera recensuit Augustus Heisenberg. Volumen prius, Leipzig 1903.

15) Printed e.g. in the Triodion Romanum, 818.