

"Testimonia" of Byzantine musical practice, chiefly collected from nonmusical (literary) sources, II.¹

Bjarne Schartau

1. Introductory remarks

The primary sources for our knowledge of Byzantine music (the musical and liturgical MSS in the proper sense, including the so called *typika*) 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. But a systematic and exhaustive collection of all the 'testimonia' of the actual use and impact of the music, in other words chiefly the liturgical training and practice, 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 systematic collection of such excerpts is going to take quite a bit of time, but appears to prove worthwhile.²⁾

Among the earlier collections of literary evidence of musical practice the *Lexicon* of Charles du Cange³⁾ (1688), the *Euchologion* of the Dominican J. Goar ⁴⁾ (1730), and the rather unsystematic and in some respects not too reliable, but important, compilation by George I. Papadopoulos, "Contributions to the History of our Ecclesiastical Music" (in Greek) published in 1890.⁵⁾ As far as the older sources are concerned, the systematic collection and evaluation of the evidence of music and musical practice was already carried very far by Reinhold Schlötterer in his Inaugural-Dissertation: *Die kirchenmusikalische Terminologie der griechischen Kirchenväter* (1953),⁶⁾ which includes references also to later authors (right down to the fall of Constantinople).

Whereas my first collection of *Testimonia* confined itself to historiography, this contribution will consist in the presentation of a few, hopefully illustrative, examples, taken from various literary genres.

2. Examples

My first specimen will be a famous *locus* in Nicephorus Gregoras (*Byzantina Historia*, VIII,14,3),⁷⁾ where the author offers a rather lively account of the Easter Celebrations at Macedonian Strumica:

Nikephoros Gregoras, VIII,6 (PG 148, col. 565)

ζ. Τῆ δ' οὖν ὑστεραία πανηγύριον ἀνύσαντες πορείαν ἔς τι γινόμεθα πολίχνιον, ὡς εἰπεῖν ὑπερνέφελον, Στρούμμιτζαν οὕτω πως ἐγχωρίως καλούμενον, ὑψηλῶ τῶ ὄρει

¹ Paper read at the international symposium *Chant Byzantin, État des recherches*, at *Fondation Royaumont* (France), december 1996. The paper is the second of three contributions on *Testimonia* ..., the first being published in CIMAGL 57 (1988), 159-166 and the third in CIMAGL 68 (1998), 53-62.

ἀπειλημμένην, ὥστε τοὺς ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπάλξεων καθημένους ἀνθρώπους ὀρνίθων τισὶν εὐοικεῖναι, εἴ τις κάτωθεν ἐκ τῆς πεδιάδος ὀρῶη. Ἐνταῦθά γε μὴν καὶ τὸ θέιον ἐτετελέκειμεν Πάσχα· ἀνιαρῶς μὲν καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἀρχήθεν ἡμῖν συνήθειαν· ἐτετελέκειμεν δ' οὖν. Λήρος γὰρ τοῖς ἐκεῖ παῖδευσιν ἅπασα καὶ ῥυθμὸς καὶ μουσα ἐμμελῆς ἱερᾶς ὑμνωδίας, βάρβαρον ἡσκηκόσι γλώτταν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ ἦθη μάλα γέ τοι εὐφυῶς προσήκοντα σκαπάνῃ. Οὐ γὰρ μιξοβάρβαρον μὲν, εὐρυθμον δὲ τὸν ἦχον προὔφερον, ἵνα τις ᾖν καὶ αὐτός, ὥσπερ οἱ Μιξολύδιοι καὶ εἰ δεῖ λέγειν οἱ Μιξοφρύγιοι, ἀλλ' ὅλον βοσκηματώδη καὶ ὄρειον καὶ ὀποῖον ἂν οἱ νομάδων ἄσειαν παῖδες, ὁπότε πρὸς ταῖς ῥαχίας καὶ ταῖς νάπας τὸ ποιμνιον ἄγοιεν «ἄρη ἔν εἰαρινῇ, ὅτε τε γλάγος ἄγγεα δεύοι.» (Ιλ. Β, 471 = Π, 643)

"On the next day having completed a full day's journey, we came to a small town, virtually [situated] above the clouds, and in the local language called something like Strummitza, positioned on the mountain top in such a way that the men who were sitting in the battlements looked like some kind of birds, if someone happened to see them from the plain below. There we managed to celebrate Holy Easter - in an unpleasant way and contrary to our old traditions - but somehow we managed to celebrate it. Because to these people any kind of training and rhythmical order and melodic arrangement in the sacred hymnody is nonsense, seeing that they speak mainly a barbaric language and have manners most befitting men of the spade. For they did not produce the sound (or mode?) - where there was any such - in a quasi-barbaric way, yet still in good rhythm, such as the Mixolydians and, if one may say so, the Mixophrygians would do, but [they produced] a sound entirely characteristic of shepherds and people of the mountains; such as sons of nomades might sing, when they are leading their flocks to the ridges and the woodlands 'in the season of spring, when the milk drenches the pails'". (Ilias II, 471 = XVII, 643).⁸⁾

I do not intend to discuss in detail this interesting passage that might in itself deserve a separate paper; I only wish to point out that in my opinion the main problem seems to be to establish, what is actually the author's point in offering this description - or in other words; what is he in reality trying to describe? What has been the real stumbling block for these refined Byzantines, accustomed to the excellent chanting in the great churches at Constantinople, Thessalonica and elsewhere? Is Gregoras just concerned with *aesthetics*, or does he also, however vaguely, suggest the possibility of a musical 'desacration' of the Divine Liturgy by these Slav barbarians? Anyway, even taken at face value, this passage speaks eloquently of how the liturgical standards (or rather lack of such!) in provincial Macedonia A. D. 1326 impressed people coming from Byzantium proper. Perhaps the key-word might after all just be *difference*.

The next brief specimen is a good example of the kind of information that may sometimes be gathered from descriptions of specific, liturgical events in a historical context.

Pseudo-Phrantzes (Macarius Melissenus: "Chronicon maius"), III,13,4 (Grecu, 448)⁹ late 16th century, but obviously using older source-material when describing the election of Georgius Scholarius as Patriarch Gennadius, offers an interesting description of the traditional ceremony at the *installation* of the Patriarch, from which I quote the following:

Pseudo-Phrantzes (Makarios Melissenos), III, 13,4 (Grecu, 448)

... καὶ ὁ μέγας πρωτοπαπᾶς τοῦ παλατίου ἐποίει «Εὐλογητόν», εἶτα καὶ μικρὰν ἔκτενήν· καὶ ὁ μέγας δομέστικος ἔψαλλε τὸ «ὅπου γὰρ βασιλέως παρουσία» καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς, εἶτα τὸ «Δόξα» ὁ λαμπαδάριος ἐκ τοῦ ἐτέρου χοροῦ «καὶ νῦν» τὸ «ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν οὐρανῶν» καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ τέλος τοῦ τροπαρίου, ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀνιστάμενος, ... Εἶτα οἱ χοροὶ ἔψαλλον τὸ «Εἰς πολλὰ ἔτη δέσποτα» ἐκ τρίτου καὶ ἀπόλυσιν.

"... and the Archpriest of the Palace would sing the "Evlogetos [(ho) Theos (h)emon, pantote nun kai aei ...]" followed by the small ektene. And the Megas domestikos [the supreme commander of the army] chanted the "(h)opou gar basileos parousia"¹⁰ etc; then followed the "Doxa ..." and the "Kai nun" from the lampadarios of the other choir and then the "(h)o basileus ton ouranon"¹¹ etc. At the completion of the troparion, the emperor would rise,Then the choirs would chant the "Eis polla ete despota" thrice, and the congregation was dismissed."

There is at least one world of difference between this text and the liturgical scenes depicted by the 15th century Cretan Neilos (Nathanael) Bertos.¹²

Neilos Bertos (Wien, Ö.N.B., hist. gr. 91, 114^v)

Ἄκουσον πῶς τὰς ψάλλομεν τὰς ἑορτάς, πιστέ μου.
 ἄρχεται γὰρ ὁ εἷς χορὸς καὶ ψάλλει τὴν δοχὴν του.
 ὁ ἕτερος ἀργολογεῖ, γελᾷ καὶ χαχαρίζει.
 πίνει καὶ ὀλιγούτικον κρασὶν διὰ τὸ φλέγμα.
 καθὼς ἀποκουράζεται καὶ ἄνεσιν ἐπαίρνει,
 καὶ κρίνει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον - ἐκεῖνον ὅπου ψάλλει.
 «καὶ τὸ ἔσχημάτισεν, δὲν ξεύρει πῶς τὸ λέγει.»
 κρυφολογούν τὸν δὲ κρυφά, παίζουσι τὸν σὺν κοπέλλῳ.
 ἂν ἦτον καὶ διδάσκαλος, ἂν ἦτον προκομμένος,
 ἂν ἦτον ἀτυχὸς πολλὰ, τὸ ἴσον δὲν ἤξεύρει,
 ἢ ἐκεῖνος ὁ ἀναίσθητος ἐμπαίνει εἰς τὸ μέσον.
 λοιπόν, οὐδὲν ἐντρέπεται, διάκρισιν οὐκ ἔχει.
 ἂν ἀρχίζει καὶ αὐτὸς χωρὶς νὰ τοῦ εἰποῦσιν.
 φωνάζει, ταραχίζεται, σὺν βοῦδι μπουκαλιέται.
 Ἐκεῖ θωρεῖς τοὺς λαϊκοὺς καὶ πίνουν καὶ μεθύουσιν.

ἀργολογούσιν τὸ λοιπόν, φόβον Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔχουν.
 γυναῖκες, ἄνδρες, ὅλοι των γελοῦν καὶ χαχαρίζουν.
 μόιρα θωροῦν τοὺς φίλους των καὶ ἀγαπητικούς των.
 μία τῆς ἄλλης ὀμιλεῖ ποῖα κάλλια ἔν' ἐν<ε>ιμένη,
 καὶ ἂν τὴν στέκει ὁ σουλουμάς - ὁμοίως καὶ κομμαάδιν,
 καὶ πολεμοῦν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν πορνεῖον οἱ ὄθλιοι.

"Now listen how we chant the feasts, believer.
 The one choir starts chanting its half-verse (doché).
 The other choir is chatting indecently, is laughing and cackling.
 It even drinks a little wine for the phlegm,
 while it is resting out and taking it easy,
 and criticizing the other choir, the one that is chanting.
 "This one is badly phrased, it does not know how to sing it."
 It speaks of it behind its back, mocks it like a lad.
 And should there be a teacher, and should there be a diligent singer,
 he will be quite unlucky, he does not know the ison.
 And he without feeling goes right into the middle [of the hymn]
 Thus, he has no shame, he has no discretion,
 but even he starts chanting without their having told him.
 He shouts, he gets upset, he bellows like an ox.
 There you may see laity drink and get drunk.
 They just chat indecently, yes, they have no fear of God.
 Women, men, all of them laugh and cackle;
 Some are watching their friends and their lovers.
 One talks to the other about which of them is most *à la mode*,
 and if the make-up becomes her; just a little bit more,¹³⁾
 and those miserales are turning the church into a brothel."

I think this entertaining, highly satirical passage, originally written in unrhymed, 15-syllabic verse, should be allowed to speak for itself!

My last specimen but one is of a quite different nature. It has already been quoted by several of my predecessors, beginning with Crusius (1584)¹⁴⁾. The oldest literary evidence for the fixation of Turkish ("Persian") music by means of the Byzantine notation is in all likelihood to be found in the *Ekthesis chronike/ Σύνοψις ἱστοριῶν* (usually ascribed to Konstantinos Laskaris (1434-1501)), where we read as follows:

Ekthesis chronike (Sathas, Bibliotheca graeca medii aevii, VII, 589)

Ἔμαθε δὲ καὶ ὅπως οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι οἱ ψάλται γράφουσι τὰς τῶν μελωδούντων φωνάς, ἄρισε γοῦν ἵνα τραγωδήσῃ τις Πέρσης ὄνπερ εἶχεν αὐτὸν ἐκλεκτὸν ἐπιστήμονα. ἔτραγῶδει οὖν ἐκεῖνος τὸ τεσνέαιον, ὃ δὲ κύρ Γεράσιμος καὶ Γεώργιος ὁ ψάλτης ἔγραψον τὰς φωνάς. τελειώσαντες δὲ καὶ σχηματίσαντες αὐτό, ἄρισεν ὅπως ψάλλωσι καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ αὐθέντη τὸ αὐτὸ τεσνέαιον, ὄντος καὶ τοῦ

Πέρσου ἐκεῖ. ἔψαλλον γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ ὑπὲρ τὸν τραγωδήσαντα πρῶην, ἤρεσε τῷ βασιλεὶ καὶ ἀπεδέχθη καὶ ἐθαύμασε τὴν τῶν Ρωμαίων λεπτότητα. ἔδωκε δὲ αὐτοῖς δωρεὰς καὶ ὥρισεν ὃ, τι ἂν αἰτήσωνται δοῦναι αὐτοῖς. ὁ δὲ Πέρσης πεσῶν προσεκύνησεν αὐτοὺς ἐκπλαγεὶς τὸ παράδοξον.

"He [the Sultan Mehmet II] had also heard of how the Greek cantors write down the intervals (notes) used by the singers. Consequently he ordered a Persian whom he considered a first rate expert to sing. This man now performed a *tasni* ["improvisation"?], and Kyr Gerasimus and the cantor George wrote down the intervals. When they had finished, he ordered that they themselves should sing the same *tasni* in front of the imperial throne, while also the Persian was present. And in fact they sung even better than he who had sung before which pleased the Sultan who admirably acknowledged the skill of the Greeks. He remunerated them, ordering that they should be given whatever they might demand. The Persian singer, however, saluted them with prostration, stricken with awe at this wonder."

My final example shows precisely how difficult it may sometimes be to draw an exact border-line between what is relevant and what is not in the collecting of 'testimonia' of Byzantine musical practice and its impact on the listeners. In Silvester Syropulus' "Mémoires" of the Council of Florence (1438-1439) (Laurent, 458, 13-23)¹⁵ we find the following remarkable passage:

Silvestros Syropoulos (Laurent, 458, 13-23)

Ἀρξαμένου δὲ τοῦ βασιλέως ταύτην λέγειν τὴν γνώμην ἤρξατο καὶ ὁ κύων εὐθὺς τραγοῦδει καὶ ὑποκλαυθμυρίζειν ... , καὶ ἐδόκει τὴν ἰσότητα τῆς φωνῆς ὑπανέχειν τῷ λέγοντι καὶ διὰ κυνείας μουσικῆς τὸν ῥυθμὸν αὐτοῦ συνιστᾶν· καὶ ὥσπερ οἱ τῶν ἀοιδῶν μαθηταὶ διὰ παιδοφωνιῶν καὶ ἐμμελῶν ἀπηχημάτων ταῖς τῶν διδασκάλων αὐτῶν καλλιφωνίας λαμπρύνουσι καὶ ἐμμελεστέρας καὶ καλλιφωνεστέρας ἀποτελοῦσιν, οὕτω καὶ ὁ κύων ἀμυδρῶς ἦδε καὶ λιγυρῶς ὑλάκει, καὶ κυνικῶς ἐτραγοῦδει καὶ ἐμελούργει τῷ λέγοντι.

"As the Emperor [Joannes VIII Palaiologos] had begun uttering this opinion, his dog also started 'singing' and whimpering , and he seemed to *support* the vocal pitch of the speaker and with his canine music *confirm* his rhythm. And even as the choir boys with their childrens' voices and melodic sounds convey more brilliance to the kalophonic chant of their masters and renders it yet more melodic and more beautiful, so ... even the dog was 'singing' dogwise and accompanying the speaker with his 'music'."

It would indeed be difficult not to accept a passage like this as evidence of a kind of boys' *ison* or rather a kalophonic *organum* (*diplophonia*)!

3. Method and perspectives

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, I originally set out excerpting from *historiographic* texts in the broadest sense, because I thought that this might prove a more promising field of research than one had perhaps realized so far, and because my general impression was that the theological texts (including hagiography) might already have been examined widely by scholars, even from the point of liturgy and music. And no doubt something has been done. To mention just one example: *Neil K. Moran* in his *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting (Leiden 1986)* makes extensive use of quotations from and references to Byzantine authors, both theological and others.

Still, we are only at the beginning of the process of collecting and evaluating 'testimonia' of Byzantine musical practice from nonmusical sources.

My own plans for the continuation of my contribution to this process will consist chiefly in completing the excerpting (and classifying and evaluating of the excerpts) from at least all of the major historical texts plus a representative selection of major hagiographic texts and to present my findings; preferably in some kind of monographic publication.

In the classification of the excerpts I see now that at least 3 main groups will have to be distinguished:

1] Statements concerned with the liturgical impact on the worshippers / spectators (e.g. Ioannes Cameniates, 10, 4 & 6-7, see CIMAGL 57, 161-62).

2] Statements concerned with the musical/liturgical performance in the more technical sense (e. g. Ioannes Cameniates, 11, 2 and of course the passage quoted from the "Ekthesis chronike" (Sathas), 589, even if the latter is not primarily concerned with ecclesiastical (gr. ἑσώτερική), but rather with secular (gr. ἑξώτερική) music).

3] statements that can, for various reasons, not be classified under 1) or 2).

As a tentative chronological frame I have settled on c. 600-1600, or roughly speaking one millennium, from the age of Justinian down to the last couple of generations before the 17th century 'Renaissance' in Byzantine, or rather post Byzantine, ecclesiastical music. Stray checks have shown that even Modern Greek literature may offer a highly promising field of study for those interested in literary descriptions of or hints at Greek (Byzantine) ecclesiastical musical practice and its effects on the worshippers.

Nowadays, when most scholars would rather employ a search programme on the electronic *corpus* available, it may seem oldfashioned to insist on reading through the texts in their entirety. Let me in this connection only point to the fact that many of the relevant Byzantine and early post Byzantine texts are not yet easily (if at all) available in the electronic *corpora*, and further there is a risk of missing valuable *context*, because in

order to make proper use of a search programme, you will evidently have to make pretty sure at the very outset what you want to search for by establishing a search *lemma*. My reading will never be confined to lemmatic search, because evidently at the beginning of every reading I only have a highly vague notion of what I am looking for: something like "Everything about liturgy and ecclesiastical music". Lastly, there is also the simple question of the pleasure of really reading a text rather than just knowing it fragmentarily. I therefore intend to use electronic searching only as supplementary and clarifying aids.

I shall of course be most grateful for any suggestions, hints and direct references to passages of interest for my project from all kinds of Byzantine and early post Byzantine texts, other than the so called *theoretical* texts which form a separate field of research, taken already good care of by a number of scholars.¹⁶⁾

NOTES:

1) "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!", Jørgen Raasted, *Byzantine Liturgical Music and its Meaning for the Byzantine Worshipper in Church and people in Byzantium*, Society for the promotion of Byzantine Studies, Twentieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Manchester 1986 (ed. Rosemary Morris). Birmingham 1990, 49-57 (the quotation will be found 53-54).

2) See note at bottom of title page.

3) C. du Fresne du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis*, Lugduni 1688.

4) *Euchologion* sive *Rituale Græcorum*, ed. Jacobus Goar (Ordinis Prædicatorum), Venetiis 1730.

5) Γεώργιος Ι. Παπαδόπουλος, *Συμβολαὶ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς παρ' ἡμῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῆς μουσικῆς*, Athens 1890.

6) To my knowledge, Schlötterer's study has never been published in any other form than the original primitive 'mimeograph', typical of the early post war epoch - a fact much to be regretted.

7) PG 148, col. 565. The edition Nicephori Gregorae *Historia Byzantina* ed. L. Schopen (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*), Bonnæ 1829-35 has not been accesible to me.

8) Cf. the German translation: Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhomäische Geschichte Historia rhomaïke*. Übersetzt und erläutert von Jan Louis van Dieten. Zweiter Teil (Kapitel VIII-

XI) I. Halbband, Stuttgart 1979, 75-76.

9) *Scriptores byzantini V Georgios Sphrantzes Memorii 1401-1477 în anexă Pseudo-Phrantzes: Macarie Melissenos Cronica 1258-1481. Ediție critică de Vasile Grecu. București 1966. Cf. also the older edition by I. B. Papadopoulos, Georgios Phrantzes: Chronicon, vol. I, Leipzig 1935. The most recent edition: Georgii Sphrantzae Chronicon. Ed. Riccardo Maisano. Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 29, Series Italica. Scrittori bizantini; 2. Roma 1990 offers only the text of the Chronicon minus.*

Cf. the German translation of the passage in *Die letzten Tage von Konstantinopel. ... übersetzt, eingeleitet und erklärt von Endre von Ivánka (= Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber Band I), Graz - Wien - Köln 1954 (1961²), 86.*

10) See "Sticherarium Ambrosianum" (MMB XI), 100^r incipit Σήμερον ἡ κτίσις φωτίζεται (sticheron idiomelon, ascribed to Andreas (Andrew) of Crete). Cf. Menaion Romanum III, 143 and Follieri, *Initia Hymnorum Ecclesiae Graecae*, Città del Vaticano (1960-62), IV, 487.

11) Cf. "Sticherarium Ambrosianum" (MMB XI), 295^v-296^r (sticheron dogmaticon).

12) The verses from Neilos Bertos, Στιχοπλοκία εἰς τουτονὶ τὸν ἑβδομον αἰῶνα are quoted from a microfilm in my possession of the MS ("Codex unicus") ÖNB, Hist. gr. 91, f. 114^v. The dissertation/edition by Hannelore Aposkiti-Stammler, Nathanael-Neilos Bertos, *Vindobonensis hist. gr. 91, Nr. 59. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophischen Fakultät der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität zu München, vorgelegt von H. A.-S., München 1974* has not been accessible to me for the preparation of the present paper.

13) The English rendering of this line is dubious, depending, among other things, on the choice of punctuation. The gist however ought to be clear enough.

14) Martinus Crusius (Kraus), *Turcograecia*, Basel 1584, 28-29. *Ekthesis chronike* ed. N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη / Bibliotheca graeca medii aevii*, Vol. VII (RP Georg Olms Verlag. Hildesheim - New York 1972), 589. The 1910 edition of the *Ekthesis chronike/ Σύνοψις ιστοριῶν* by Sp. P. Lambros has been inaccessible to me.

15) V. Laurent, *Les "Mémoires" du Grand Écclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438-1439). Concilium Florentinum. Documenta et Scriptores. Series B. Vol. IX, Roma 1971.*

16) Suffice it to refer to the series *Corpus Scriptorum de Re Musica* edited by the *Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae* (Wien 1985 -).