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

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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*.\(^9\) 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 Cange*\(^3\) (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:

*Nicephorus Gregoras, VIII,6 (PG 148, col. 565)*

ζ. Τῇ δ' οὖν ὑστεραία πανημέρους ἀνύψαστες πορεύσαν ἐξ τις γνώμεθα πολίχνιον, ὡς εἰπεῖν ὑπερνέφελον, Στρούμμιτζεν οὖτω πας ἑγχωρίας καλούμενον, ὑπηλίφ τῷ ὅρει

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\(^1\) 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.
"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 πρωτόπαπάς τοῦ παλατίου ἔποιεί «Εὐλογητόν», εἶτα καὶ μικρῶν ἐκτενῶς καὶ ὁ μέγας δομέστικος ἔγγαλε τὸ «ὅπου γὰρ βασιλέως παρουσία» καὶ τὰ ἐξής, εἶτα τὸ «Δόξα» ὁ λαμπαδάριος ἐκ τοῦ ἔτερου χοροῦ καὶ νῦν τὸ «ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν υἱῶν» καὶ τὰ ἐξής. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ τέλος τοῦ τροπαρίου, ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀνιστάμενος, ... Εἶτα οἱ χοροὶ ἑσσάλλον τὸ «Εἰς πολλὰ ἐτη δέσποτα» ἐκ τρίτου καὶ ἀπόλυσιν.

"... and the Archpriest of the Palace would sing the "Evlogetos [(ho Theo (h)emon, pantote nun kai aei ...)" followed by the small ekteile. And the Megas domestikos [the supreme commander of the army] chanted the "(h)opou gar basileos parousia" etc; then followed the "Doxa ..." and the "Kai nun" from the lampadarios of the other choir and then the "(h)os basileus ton ouranon" 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.¹⁰

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

Ἅκουσον πᾶς τάς ψάλλομεν τάς εὐρτάς, πιστε μου.

ἄρχεται γὰρ ὁ εἷς χορός καὶ ψάλλει τὴν δοξήν τοῦ.

ὁ ἔτερος ἀρχιλογεῖ, γελά καὶ χοροφίζει.

πίνει καὶ ὁ λυγούτζικον κρασίν διὰ τὸ φλέγον.

καθὼς ὁποκουράζεται καὶ ὄνεισιν ἐπαίρει,

καὶ κρίνει καὶ τὸν ἔτερον - ἐκείνον ὅπου ψάλλει.

«κακὰ τὸ ἐσχημάτισεν, δὲν ἤπερε πᾶς τὸ λέγει.»

κρυφολογοῦν τὸν ἐκ κρυφά, παίζουν τὸν σῶν καπέλλα.

όν ἦτον καὶ διδάσκαλος, ὅν ἦτον προκομμένος,

ἄμ έντεν ἄτυχος πολλά, τὸ ἵσον δὲν ἤξεύρει,

κ ἐκείνος ὁ ἀνασθήτος ἐμπάλαιε ἐς τὸ μέσον.

λοιπὸν, οὖδὲν εντρέπεται, διάκριναν οὐκ ἔχει.

ἀμ ἀρχίζει καὶ αὐτὸς χορίς νὰ τοῦ ἱπόθειν.

φανάζει, ταραχίζεται, σὰν βούδιν μουκαλίται.

Ἅκουσε θαρεῖς τοὺς λαϊκοὺς καὶ πίνουν καὶ μεθύονται.
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 phrazed, 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,¹⁰
and those miserable 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 ιστοριῶν* (usually ascribed to Konstantinos Laskaris (1434-1501)), where we read as follows:

*Ekthesis chronike* (Sathas, Bibliotheca graeca medi aeovii, VII, 589)

Τέμαθε δὲ καὶ ὅπως οἱ Ρωμαίοι οἱ ψάλται γράφουσι τάς τῶν μελῳδούντων φωνάς,
ἀριστερὰ γαν ἕνα τραγοδήσῃ τις Πέρσης ὄντες εἰς εὐθείας ἐκλειτών ἐπιστήμωνα.
ἐποιήθη δὲ οὖν ἐκείνος τὸ τεσσάρεας, ὁ δὲ καὶ Γερώσσως καὶ Γεώργιος ὁ πρώτης
ἐγραφὼν τάς φωνάς. τελειώσαντες δὲ καὶ σχηματίσαντες αὐτό, ἀριστερὰ ὅπως
ψάλλωσι καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐμπροσθεῖν τοῦ σκέψιν τῷ αὐτῷ τεσσάρεας, ὄντος καὶ τοῦ
Πέρσου ἐκα. ἐγαλλόν γὰρ καὶ ἀυτοὶ καὶ ὑπὲρ τὸν τραγοφθῆσαντα προφήν, ἤρεσε τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ ἔπειτε καὶ ἔθικτα τὰς τῶν Ρωμαίων λεπτότητας. ἔδωκε δὲ αὐτοῖς διώροις καὶ ἵππους δ, τι ἄν ἀντίστοιχα δοῦναι αὐτοῖς. ὡ δὲ Πέρσης πεσὼν προσκύνησεν αὐτοῖς ἐκπλαγείς 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 admiringly 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) we find the following remarkable passage:

Silvestros Syropoulos (Laurent, 458, 13-23)

'Ἀρξαμένου δὲ τοῦ βασιλέας ταυτίνα λέγειν τὴν γνώμην ἦρξατο καὶ ὁ κύων εὐθὺς τραγοφθῆναι καὶ ὑποκλοποθυρῖζεν ... , καὶ ἐδόκει τὴν ἱσότητα τῆς φωνῆς ὑπανέχειν τῷ λέγοντι καὶ διὰ κυνείας μονοικίας τῶν ῥυθμῶν ἀυτοῦ συνιστάναι· καὶ ἀστερὸς οἱ τῶν ἀκούσαν μαθηταὶ διὸ παραδοκονικὰν καὶ ἐμμελών ἀπεκτῆσιν τὰς τῶν διδασκαλῶν αὐτῶν καλλοφνικῶν λοιμαρύνουσαι καὶ ἐμμελεστηρῶς καὶ καλλοφνεστῆρος ὑπετελοῦσιν, ὁτικοὶ δὲ καὶ δοκον ὀμνυδράς ἤδει καὶ λυγρὰς ὑλόκειται, καὶ κυνικῶς ἐπροφείτε καὶ ἐμμελεύει 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 children's 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. Joannes 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. Joannes 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. ἔσωτερική), but rather with secular (gr. ἔξωτερική) 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 litterature 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.


5) Γεώργιος Ι. Παπαδόπουλος, Συμβολαί εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς παρ᾽ ἡμῖν 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 accessible to me.

8) Cf. the German translation: Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte Historia rhomafke. 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-
București 1966. Cf. also the older edition by I. B. Papadopoulos, Georgios Phrantzes:
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 incipit Σήμερον ἢ κτίσις
φοιτήτε (sticheron idiomenon, ascribed to Andreas (Andrew) of Crete). Cf. Menaion
Romanum III, 143 and Folleri, Initia Hymnorum Ecclesiae Graecae, Città del Vaticano
(1960-62), IV, 487.


12) The verses from Neilos Bertos, Στυχοπλοκία εἰς τούτον τὸν ἔβδομον αἰώνα are
quoted from a microfilm in my possession of the MS ("Codex unicus") ÖNB, Hist. gr.
91, f. 114'. The dissertation/edition by Hannelore Aposkiti-Stammler, Nathanael-Neilos
Bertos, Vindobonensis hist. gr. 91, Nr. 59. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung des
Doktortrages der Philosophischen Fakultät der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität zu
München, vorgelegt von H. A.-S., München 1974 has not been accesible 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.

N. Sathas, Μεσοαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη /Bibliotheca graeca medii aevii, Vol. VII (RP
Ekthesis chronike/Σύνοψις ἱστοριῶν by Sp. P. Lambros has been inaccessible to me.

15) V. Laurent, Les "Mémoires" du Grand Éclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople
Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438-1439). Concilium Florentinum.

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