

# MUSICOLOGICAL NOTES ON A NEW RECORDING OF THE DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM-MODE I

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There are a number extant recordings of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom available in North America, and quite a few more in Greece and Slavic countries where Byzantine chant or Russian choral music is the dominant form of liturgical music. What most share, whether they are good quality performances and recordings, or not, is a presentation of the “common” or “local” liturgical music form which has grown up and come to be accepted as the normative expression in the local metropolia, country or culture. That is to say, there is little, if any, historical or musicological lineage under-girding the liturgical music that is typically heard and sung in the local parish. Most recordings, therefore, are expressions of this same understanding.

Some notable exceptions to this norm do exist. Among them are the recordings of the Divine Liturgy from medieval manuscripts by Anatoly Grindenko and The Russian Patriarchate choir including *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* [OPS 30-120] and *Divine Liturgy: Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul* [OPS 30-161]; selected medieval hymns of Ioannes Koukouzelis on the recording *Byzantine Liturgy* by the Greek Byzantine Choir directed by L. Angelopoulos [OPS 30-78]; and selected medieval hymns by Manuel Chrysaphes, Ioannes Plousiadenos, Xenos Korones, and Ioannes Koukouzeles on *When Augustus Reigned* [GR 502], *Music of Byzantium* [14-01334-6] and *The Fall of Constantinople* [CR402-CD] performed by Cappella Romana directed by A. Lingas. These are all efforts to explore and retain the historical and musicological heritage that has come down to us from the rich tradition of Eastern Orthodox liturgical music.

Does it matter? From the point of view of the worshipping faithful, probably not. That is to say, from the spiritual perspective it may be a neutral point. However, given that Byzantine chant (in its various developmental stages) has a history of over 1,500 years, it is at least worthy of note and of some level of exegesis. The Solemn renewal of Gregorian Chant in the 1840’s clearly illustrates within the Western tradition how far afield “local norms” can go from the original, and that a significant professional effort is required to recalibrate the music form.

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The Orthodox Christian Liturgical calendar is divided into an eight-week cycle, each week of the year being assigned a mode, which is the dominant melodic form of the week. These eight modes have taken their names from the ancient Greek modes nomenclature; they are Mode I, II, III, IV as have their correspondent plagal modes, namely Plagal I, Plagal II, Barys (or Plagal III) and Plagal IV. Each mode has a distinctive formulaic structure and musical scale so that it delivers a different feeling or expression, and thus gives a different listening experience to the audience. Further, each mode has a separate poetic text completely different from the others. From a Chanting standpoint, the Divine Liturgy is comprised of the following components:

1. Either Three Psalmic Antiphons or the *Typika* and Beatitudes
2. *Trisagion* before the First Lesson
3. *Alleluia* after the First Lesson

4. Glory to Thee after Second Lesson (Gospel)
5. Cherubic hymn
6. Liturgical responses (*Liturgika*) & *Axion estin*
7. Communion Hymn

Chant music was transmitted with a neumatic notation, *parasemantiki*, from the late Byzantine period (12th century) till today. *Parasemantiki* underwent different developmental changes as far as musical neumes and interpretation from the late Byzantine and post-Byzantine era until early 19th century. In 1814, a three member committee appointed from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (Ottoman Empire) systematized *parasemantiki* into a new music notation, *New Analytical Method* (a.k.a. chrysanthine notation); this notational system is still in use today by cantors and composers in Greek Orthodox churches. Chourmouziou (†1840) the archivist, a prominent member of the committee, transcribed a vast repertory of Byzantine and post-Byzantine composers using the New Analytical Method. Byzantine chant is performed antiphonally by two choirs that seat in the right and left side of the solea. The right choir soloist is called *Protopsaltes* and the left one *Lampadarios*.

The *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom—Mode I* represents the complete service in Greek performed by a deacon, a priest and right and left cantors; including all seven chanting elements using compositions from masters of the late Byzantine, Post-Byzantine and the modern Greek period.

### ***Typika and Beatitudes***

Being Jews who became followers of Jesus Christ, the early Christians inherited the custom of seven daily cycles of prayer. Initially, the Liturgy was celebrated on Sunday, the Day of the Lord. Although it seems so obvious to us in the 21st century, there was a question then in Eastern Christendom regarding where to place the Liturgy in the daily cycle of the seven services. In the monastic setting, it became customary to make the Liturgy itself the criterion indicating that food should be eaten in the middle of the day (main meal). Practically speaking, the decision depended on the kind of day as there was no question of having such a meal on fasting days, or days on which the Liturgy was not celebrated. Thus, the *Typika* service, which was originally a service of Thanksgiving for receiving food from God, became adjustable to the requirements of the day. On fasting days and during the Great Lent the *Typika* was incorporated into the Ninth Hour (*None*) after which, if within the Lenten period, a Pre-Sanctified monastic communion followed. On festive days (Saturdays, Sundays, great Feasts and feasts of Saints), the *Typika* service was incorporated into the Liturgy. On all other occasions the *Typika* service was attached to the Sixth Hour (*Sext*). Whatever the case, the *Typika* service was meant to connect the reception of food (heavenly or earthly) with the worship of the day. The *Typika* service was primarily comprised of Psalms 102 (known as Stanza A) and 145 (known as Stanza B) - according to the Septuagint numbering of Psalms - along with the Beatitudes. When the *Typika* service fuses with the Liturgy, Psalms 102 and 145 and the Beatitudes replace the three psalmic Antiphons before the Little Entrance.

The *Typika* service is chanted only when it is fused into the Liturgy; on other occasions *Typika* are read by the reader. Further, the Beatitudes have a special setting: Byzantine troparia, unique to each mode, are intercalated between the last eight Beatitudes verses. The music of Stanzas A

and B was transmitted orally as well as through Post-Byzantine musical sources as a traditional melody in the Plagal IV and II modes respectively, whereas the Beatitudes are chanted according the melodic formulae of each appointed mode. Several 19th century composers wrote different music for those Stanzas, either in the same modes or created new melodies. Basilios Nikolaides of Zangliveri (Greek Macedonia) melodized the Stanzas in Mode I, the only known melody in this mode and published them into his book entitled: *Kallikelados Aidon* (Salonica 1882). Nikolaides composed on an Ottoman *makam* (modal) structure, namely *makam tahir*, which fuses the scales of the Byzantine Mode I and Barys. He was exquisitely successful in intoning the meaning of each psalmic verse through his melodic formulas that span into a wide range of notes in the upper register. This composition requires the cantor to have a unique vocal expertise and training so as to perform *lege artis*.

### ***Trisagion - Dynamis before the First Lesson***

The Trisagion Hymn (*Aghios o Theos* or Holy God) was chanted, as Byzantine manuscripts indicate, in Mode II with the *Dynamis* session to follow and cover the time needed for the clergy clergy to take their seats at the Synthronon behind the Altar (blessing of *Ano kathedra*). In particular the composition of Xenos of Koroni, *Protopsaltis* of Hagia Sophia near the time of the Fall of Constantinople (1453), comprised a monumental virtuoso melody in mode II that stands as a measure of artistic competence even today for the cantors in audition. Since this recording is based on the liturgical hymnology for Mode I, we decided to present a "non-traditional" composition by Petros Ephesios (19th century) in Mode I. Petros elaborates his composition with formulaic patterns of Mode I developed in the late eighteen century; on the verse *Aghios Athanatos*, normally performed by the *Protopsaltis*, the melody extends from B flat to F (above middle C), a usual musical exclamation given on this verse from the Byzantine era until our days.

### ***Alleluia after the First Lesson***

*Alleluia* is the response after the reading of St. Paul's Epistle or the Acts. The manuscripts have given us melodies in all eight modes by different late-Byzantine composers. It is usually chanted three times antiphonally with the *Protopsaltis* (soloist of the right choir) starting first. The second and third times the *Alleluia* is preceded by specific Psalmic verses appointed for the Sunday in each mode. The *Alleluia* performed on this recording is that in Mode I by Manuel Chrysaphes, *Lampadarios* of Hagia Sophia before the Fall of Constantinople as it was transcribed by Chourmouzios the Archivist (†1840). It is interesting to note that Chourmouzios transcribed Chrysaphes' melody according to the melismatic standards of 16-17th centuries without intoning at all the two Psalmic verses. The fluctuation of the time expansion of the composition depends on the length of time needed by the clergy at this moment. While the right and left choir antiphonally sings *Alleluia*, the deacon censures the church and then walks out of the Altar proceeding to the Ambo in order to recite the Second Lesson (Gospel).

### ***Glory to Thee after the Second Lesson***

Glory to Thee is chanted after the reading of the Gospel by the *Protopsaltis*; it is a soloistic piece in the Liturgy serving the purpose to allow enough time for the deacon to descend the Ambo and bring the *Evangelion* (Gospel) book to the Royal doors where the priest is going to receive it and bless the people. The composition is usually transmitted through musical sources in mode IV or III. In this recording, the *Protopsaltis* used as a core the traditional melody composed by

Theodore of Fokaea (19th century) and improvised at the last *Glory* using a modal IV formulaic phrase by the composer Balasios (17th century). Whenever a Bishop presides over the Liturgy, *Glory to Thee* is intoned by the *Lampadarios* and the *Protopsaltes* chants *Eis polla eti Despota* (Many Years, O Bishop).

### **Cherubic/Communion hymns**

The Cherubic hymn is the hymn chanted for the Great Entrance by the *Protopsaltes* during which the Holy Gifts are carried from the Prothesis to the Altar through the Royal Doors. The Communion Hymn is a specific Psalmic verse appointed for each day and feast that the liturgy is celebrated, and is chanted by the *Lampadarios*. The length of these compositions varies according to the needs of the clergy; they are called *papadic* melodies in the chanting terminology, because the melodic expansion of the hymn varies according to the time needed by the clergy to complete their respective duties. In the case of the Cherubic hymn, the clergy prepare the *Proskomide*, a practice that holds on to this day whenever a Bishop is presiding over the Liturgy. Further, the Emperor used to give a dithyrambic tone in the procession of the Holy Gifts (Great Entrance) when the Cherubic Hymn reached the point: "let us receive the King of all". In that specific instance, all Byzantine composers elaborate the melody by repeating these words and/or adding non-sense syllables (*kratema*). The communion hymn will cover the time needed for the clergy to prepare and receive communion themselves as well as give communion to the people. The Byzantine sources preserved Cherubic and Communion Hymn melodies in all eight modes. The exquisite melody of the Cherubic and Communion hymns in Mode I by Ioannes Kladas, *Lampadarios* of the Royal Clergy living at the times of the Patriarch Matthew I (1397-1410) are performed on this recording for the first time. Kladas is considered the third monumental Byzantine composer after Ioannes Damascenos and Ioannes Koukouzeles. His compositions remain unpublished to this day except the Pre-Sanctified communion hymn *O Taste and See* which was abridged by Konstantinos Protopsaltes (†1832) and published in chanting books of the 19th century. The Cherubic Hymn as well as the Communion hymn for the Sunday (*Praise the Lord from the Heavens*) in Mode I were transcribed by Chourmouzius the Archivist (archive MPT 704/705, National Library of Greece).

### ***Liturgika and Axion estin***

Liturgical responses (a.k.a. *liturgika*) in the chanting books, are the musical responses of the Anaphora part of the Liturgy. Byzantine musical manuscripts did not transmit any written melodies. The Patriarchal oral tradition preserved a unique setting in mode IV with the right and left choirs intoning (*recitativo*) the responses. Ioannes Arvanitis of Athens, a transcriber/scholar equal in fame to Chourmouzius, composed for this Liturgy a set of *Liturgika* and *Axion Estin* in Mode I preserving the Byzantine melodic formulae.

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The importance, then, of this recording of the *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom-Mode I* and the work of others based on manuscript research, compositional transcription and performance, is not only to allow us to hear "what was heard then," but more importantly to better enable us to employ liturgical music which is consistent with the glorious musical heritage which Eastern and Western Christianity enjoy.