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BYZANTINE MUSICAL TRADITION IN ROMANIA

AS REVEALED IN ROMANIAN ANASTASIMATARIA
(19TH- 20TH CENTURIES)

The beginning of the 19th century constituted a turning point in the evolution of the music of Byzantine tradition through the completion and application of a process which began a long time ago, namely the Chrysanthine notational reform. Many specialists were for or against that process which otherwise “assured the continuity of a centuries-old art, propagating it widely and with a profound Christian sense”¹. This brought about the transition to a new stage, the so-called “Neo-Byzantine music”.

In the Romanian Principalities with a very strong tradition of the old Byzantine music,² the Chrysanthine reform had been applied since the beginning in 1816. Then the school ruled by Petros Manouil Efesios was established at Bucharest. This moment is most important for the church music practiced in Romania, since it overlapped with the completion of the process of the translation into Romanian of the sung liturgical texts. This process began in 1713 with the *Psaltikia Rumânească* of Filothei sin Agăi Jipei and continued during the 18th century³. It was completed by Romanian authors at the beginning of the first half of the 19th century.

¹ “S-a asigurat continuitatea unei arte seculare, de mare răspândire și profundă trăire creștină.” Vasile Vasile, *Istoria muzicii bizantine și evoluția ei în spiritualitatea românească*, (*The History of Byzantine Music and its Evolution in Romanian Spirituality*), II, p. 90.

² Nicu Moldoveanu, *Izvoare ale cântării psaltice în Biserica Ortodoxă Română* (*Sources of liturgical chant in the Romanian Orthodox Church*), București 1974; Sebastian Barbu Bucur, *Cultura muzicală de tradiție bizantină pe teritoriul României* (*Musical Culture of Byzantine Tradition in Romania*), București 1989.

³ A few representatives are: Mihalache Moldovlahul, Șerban Protopsaltul, Ioan Duma Brașoveanul, Constantin Protopsaltul, Visarion and Iosif of Neamț.

The most important authors are Macarie Ieromonahul, Anton Pann and Dimitrie Suceveanu. In their work of adapting the chants to the Romanian language they took advantage of the change in semiography and the passing from the manuscript stage to printed books.⁴

The Romanian authors fulfilled an ancient purpose by translating and printing the chants in Romanian language. This objective was to sing in church in the Romanian language, so that all the people might understand.⁵ At the same time, the translators remained within the Byzantine tradition, which had become established in Romania.

Macarie Ieromonahul said: "The Greek music sung at Great and Holy Church was, from the beginning, the most suitable for use in church, full of spiritual piety and there is no doubt that it is unique; its authors were Holy Parents, guided by the Holy Spirit and their descendents have guarded it till today."⁶

This was reinforced by their musical education. Macarie Ieromonahul (1770-1836) knew the old system well, having being the apprentice of Constantin the Protopsaltes of Ungrovlahia Mitropolia. He also learnt the new system at Petros Efesios's school (1816-1818) and then he became the

⁴ Vasile Vasile, *Istoria Muzicii... (The History...)* p. 91; Anton Pann, *Bazul teoretic și practic al muzicii bisericești sau Gramatica melodică (The Theory and the Practice of Church Music)*: "Acum neapărată trebuință cere tălmăcirea cântărilor bisericești... cum și tipărirea lor, pentru scurtarea vremii ce să cheltuiește cu prescrierea lecțiilor de mână în ceasul predării, în care ar putea atât profesorii cât și școlarii a-și înainta învățăturile mai repede..." ("Now we have to translate the church chants and to print them, too, in order that they may be more quickly written and taught in school.") pp. III-IV.

⁵ Anton Pann, in *Prefață la Heruvico-Chinonicar (Introduction to the Cheroubico-Kenonicarion)* said: "Cântă măi frate române pe graiul și limba ta/Și lasă cele streine ei de a-și-le cânta/Cântă să-nțelegi și însuți și câți la tine ascult./Cinstește ca fieș care limba și neamuți mai mult." ("Sing, Romanian brethren, in your own language, and do not sing in foreign tongues. Sing in order that you and those who listen to you may understand...!")

⁶ "Musichia grecească care se cântă în Sfânta biserică cea mare... încă din începutul ei a stătut ca cea mai bisericească... plină de toată duhovniceasca evlavie... și nici o îndoială nu este la nimenea; ca una ce alcătuitoarei ei au fost Sfinții părinți, de Duhul Sfânt fiind mișcați și după aceea următorii lor au păzit și păzesc drumul așezării lor până în ziua de astăzi." Titus Moisescu, *Prolegomene bizantine (Byzantine Prolegomenae)*, p. 124.

director of the church music school established in 1819. Anton Pann (1798-1854) was Dionysios Photeinos' apprentice. Dionisios "belongs to the last generation of Byzantine scholars that, following flow of the Balkan emigration, had their roots in our country"⁷ and directed a chanting school in Bucharest between 1805-1816. Anton Pann learnt the new system at Petros Efesios's school, being a colleague of Macarie Ieromonahul. Dimitrie Suceveanu was an apprentice of Grigorios Vizantios (former protopsaltes of the Great Church of Constantinople, then protopsaltes of the Metropolia of Moldavia), who directed a chant school following the new musical system at Iași from 1816. Suceveanu also studied with Gheorghios Paraschiadis, Greek by origin, who was Grigorios Vizantios's successor as the leader of the church music school.

All these introductory elements are necessary for a better understanding of the activity of the main representatives of the Romanian school of Byzantine music from the beginning of the 19th century, as well as their successors. Now I shall try to present some landmarks of the activity of Romanian authors, mentioning specifically the *Anastasimataria* published in Romanian language. As its title indicates, the *Anastasimatarion* represents a collection of chants dedicated to the commemoration of the Resurrection, chants sung during the services of Saturday Vespers and Sunday Matins. This occupies an important role in the endeavour of composers of church music because it has a didactic role besides its liturgical usage; it contains more accessible chants, which are taught in schools immediately after teaching the theoretical elements. (it was frequently associated with the *Propaedia*).

The first *Anastasimatarion* in the Romanian language, which is, in fact, the first work in the Romanian language

⁷ "...aparține ultimei generații de cărturari bizantini pe care fluxul emigrației balcanice îi împământenise în mediul nostru." Victor Papacostea, *Viețile sultanilor. Scriere inedită a lui Dionisie Fotino, în volumul Civilizație românească și civilizație bizantină (Sultans' Lives. Unpublished Work of Dionysios Photeinos in Romanian Civilization and Byzantine Civilization)*, p. 433.