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NEW RESULTS ON THE TRANSMISSION OF FILOTHEJ'S PRIPJALA

After years of extensive research undertaken by Rumanian and foreign scholars – theologians, linguists, musicians –¹ it is now held as a historical fact that Monk Filothej of Cozia Monastery is the author of the earliest-known² literary and musical work in the Rumanian lands, dated and documented as such in an impressive series of manuscripts and documents of the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries scattered today around the world. Before being tonsured as a monk at Cozia Monastery, Filothej had been a logothete to Mircea cel Bătrîn (Mircea the Old), king of Wallachia³ from 1386 – 1418. MS rubrics as a rule reproduce this particular fact of Filothej's life which also serves to identify him unmistakably.

Tit Simedrea (see his ground-breaking article *Les „Pripëla“ du moine Philothée. Étude – texte – traduction* in *Acta Musicae Byzantinae* vol. IX, p. 53) gives the following definition for Filothej's pripjala: “small troparia sung at the polyeleos with selected verses from the psalms written by Nikephoros Blemmides for the occasion of the great ecclesiastical feasts: those of Christ, the Holy Mother, and of the most outstanding of the blessed saints and martyrs.”⁴

1 Two outstanding contributions will be mentioned: Tit Simedrea, *Les „Pripëla“ du Moine Philothée. Étude – texte – traduction*, dans *Romanoslavica* No. XVII, Bucarest, 1970, pp. 183-225 and in *Acta Musicae Byzantinae*, vol. IX, editura C.S.B.I., Iași 2007, pp. 53-77; Gheorghe T. Ionescu, *Filotei, monahul de la Cozia (sec. XIV-XV) – pripelile după polieleu*, in the volume Gheorghe Ionescu, *Studii de muzicologie și bizantinologie*, București 1987, pp. 9-41.

2 Without irrefutable documentary evidence as to his ethnic background, Nicetas, Daco-Roman bishop of Remesiana (flourished in the 4th century, ca. 336–441), author of the hymn *Te Deum laudamus*, is generally considered by Rumanian scholars to be the earliest attested creator of a literary/hymnographic work in the Rumanian lands.

3 Wallachia is the name given to the country by modern historical scholarship. In the administrative terminology of Greek-language documents issued by the Byzantine chancelleries it was called Ungrovlachia (probably meaning the Vlachia neighbouring on territories subject to the Hungarian crown, with a possible hint at Transylvania, inhabited by Rumanians, which, although ruled by Hungarian aristocracy, was itself a principality independent of the Hungarian Kingdom).

4 “Au sujet du chant des „Psaumes choisis“ dans l'Église, on dispose du témoignage de S. Siméon de Thessalonique (†1430), mais au moment où il donnait ce témoignage les „Psaumes choisis“ avaient pénétré déjà, grâce aux moines du Mont Athos, dans l'usage de toute l'Église de langue slavonne. Nicéphore Blemmidès avait composé les „Psaumes choisis“ dans un but liturgique. Il avait sûrement remarqué un défaut dans la façon dont on chantait le Polyéléos de son temps. En effet, les psaumes classiques 134 et 135 étaient

Filothej wrote short hymns⁵ specifically mentioning the person to whom the corresponding feast was dedicated, so that a complete part of the liturgical service resulted, comprising originally Blemmides' 20 selected psalms, to which Filothej added an equal number of pripjala. With the passage of time, other hymnographers added new selected psalms and corresponding pripjala to accommodate other or local saints, such as exemplified in the Supraśl musical anthology (known under the name of heirmologion) of 1598.⁶

Towards the end of the 15th century new pripjala made their appearance with the Northern Slavs, rubricated also as pripjala in the manuscripts of the time, popularly going by the name of *veličanija*⁷, and generally considered to be the creation of Russian monk Macarie.⁸

In the 19th century these *veličanija*, already translated into Rumanian and assimilated in the earlier ecclesiastical practice of the Rumanians under the name *mărimuri*, would be sung as alternatives to the older pripjala using the new texts set to the traditional music of the pripjala. As such, the main difference between the pripjala and the *mărimuri* is textual only: whereas the Filothejan pripjala begin for the most part with the words „veniți” (from the original *Прїидѣте*) and always contain the word *leghe* (from the original Greek *λέγε*), the *mărimuri* begin with words „Mărimu-te” (from the original *Величаем тя*).⁹

Although Filothej's original manuscripts remain unknown, his contribution has been transmitted down to the present time in many manuscripts written in Old Church Slavonic (OCS). Tit Simedrea, the most meticulous and knowledgeable researcher of Filothej's contribution, mentioned in his paper (see above) in addition to the 13 manuscripts, all written in OCS, held by the Library of the Rumanian Academy at Bucharest (B.A.R. – Biblioteca Academiei Române), and dated to the 15th through 17th centuries, 12 other manuscripts

chantés indistinctement à toutes les fêtes honorées du Polyéléos dans le Typicon. Sans doute pour remédier à ce défaut, a-t-il composé ses „Psaumes choisis”, en se limitant à certaines fêtes seulement, mais en recherchant avant tout l'harmonie du psaume avec le sujet de la fête.”, Tit Simedrea, *Les “Pripěla”*, op. cit., p. 55. The “classical” or “Allilouiarian” psalms were the psalms 134 (“Servants of the Lord”) and 135 (“Confess to the Lord for his mercy endureth for ever”), whose verses were sung alternatively by the two choirs and were completed by the pripjala *Allilouia*, after which followed the small doxology and a thrice-repeated *Allilouia* (in Gh. C. Ionescu, op. cit., p. 10).

5 Filothej's *tvorenije* bore from the very beginning the name of pripjala, which it kept until the present time. Before Filothej the name pripjala described troparia accompanying the 9th ode of the Canon or the *Allilouia* refrain sung in association with the classical verses of the polyeleos since the 6th century until today. (Tit Simedrea, *Les “Pripěla”*, op. cit., p. 55).

6 Tit Simedrea, *Les „Pripěla”*, op. cit., p. 60.

7 Tit Simedrea, *“Les Pripěla”*, op. cit., p. 54.

8 Tit Simedrea, *“Les Pripěla”*, op. cit., p. 54. There later followed other monks bearing the name of Macarie, who left their mark on the history of Christian Orthodox chant.

9 See in the *Antologhion*, Tomul I, Buzău 1857 by the 19th century Rumanian hieromonk Macarie the chapter entitled *Mărimurile care să cîntă preste tot anul după Polieleu, la praznicele împărătești și la sfinții cei mari*; within this chapter the chants are mentioned as *Pripeală* or *Altă pripeală*.