Analogies in Melodies of Early Christian Liturgical Chant Originating From Different Cultural Domains

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Abstract: The paper is oriented to a description of analogies existing in melodies of early liturgical chants originated in different geographical and language arrays, namely in Latin, Greek, Armenian and Old Church Slavonic. Under the term early liturgical chant, homophonic chant in free rhythm is considered, i.e. chant originated in the first millennium.

Key-Words: Gregorian chant, Byzantine, Armenian, Slavonic chant, Early Christian liturgical melodies

1 Introduction
Czech country exists in a special historical situation. Its capital Prague was the capital of the First Czechoslovak republic (existing during 1918-1939) that covered Czech country (Bohemia), Moravia, Southern Silesia, Slovakia and Ruthenia. 1100 years ago, at the beginning of the historic epoch of this region, the division line between West (Latin) Europe and East (Byzantine) Europe led there and left there a cultural legacy that has existed until nowadays. Despite of the movement of that division line during the following centuries, it remained in the mentioned region and during the existence of the First Czechoslovak Republic it even was almost identical with the division line that separated Ruthenia from the other countries of this Republic. Thus one could speak on “Latin part” and “Byzantine part” of this Republic. Especially during the existence of this Republic, migration and many cultural and religious contacts of both the parts took place. That mirrored in many aspects, which outlasted even nowadays, when the division line and Ruthenia are far away to the east. One of the aspects is a certain comprehension for the true culture that rooted in the Byzantine World, comprehension that takes that culture much higher as the mere folklore, contrary to that the comprehension exists at the domain that traditionally belongs to the Latin Europe. It concerns the comprehen-ision for music, especially for music that – in the far history – rooted in the common sources for both the “Europes”, i.e. in the Greek-Roman civilization and in Christian world viewing.

One of the fruits of that comprehension is discovering similar movements of melodies in compositions arisen in different geographic regions and consequently based on texts in different languages. One can discover some of them when studying music sheets and manuscripts with musical signs. That was well illustrated by the grand old-man in the research of Byzantine chant, E. Wellesz, in his book “Eastern Elements in Western Chant” [1]. Nevertheless, when one really sings music of this sort, other aspects crop forth (and among them analogies in melody) but the most efficient is leading a choir that performs such music and possibly singing with it. Since 1963, the author of the present paper has been a director of a small choir oriented especially for the chant to that the paper is oriented. The choir begun with Latin compositions (namely Gregorian chant), in 1967 added Byzantine chant, in 1981 Armenian chant and a bit Chaldaean (Nestorian) compositions, and in 1988 chants of palaeo-Russian kondakaria. As the choir existed in Prague, it was natural that it was familiar with early Czech and Polish chants (note that their number was rather small because the real Slavic musical culture begun not earlier than in the X. century).

Note that all the mentioned form of the chant are homophonic and in free rhythm. Free rhythm is not an absence of rhythm but a certain “ordering in time”. The system of that rhythm (and a skeleton for the next development of its further studies) was presented by the so called School of Solesmes in [2] and in a rather popular way in [3]-[5]. This system is very similar to the system of forming phrases in English or mathematical formulas and/or statements of programming languages and can be exactly described with use of context-free grammars [6], [7]. It was based on hierarchical and recursive forming of components of phrases, beginning from “atoms” called primary times (tempora prima in Latin, protoi chro-noi in Greek), i.e. tones that are indivisible and all take the same duration value, excepting some of them that should be take about 50 percent of primary time more.

The School of Solesmes method was essentially enriched in the second half of the XX. century by a so called semiology attempt [8]. Especially in rhythm, the idea of the equality of the primary times was abandoned, sup-
posing that the real duration if any primary time is determined by complex rules following special graphical properties of the corresponding early neumes. While the attempts of the Solesmes School and of the semiology were discovered for Latin chant, almost contemporarily similar attempts were applied to the Byzantine chant (a certain analogy to the Solesmes School can be seen e.g. in [9], that to the semiology was expressed in [10])

Both the Latin chant and the Byzantine one allowed only small deviations from the standard (i.e. mean) duration of the primary time. Early Armenian and Chaldaean (Nestorian, East-Syrian) chants offer tones of great differences in their duration, existing ones beside the other (e.g. a half note followed or preceded by a semiquaver, e.g. [11]). If one tried to understand the half note as a ligature of 8 semiquavers considered as primary times, the flow of the given melody always ran illogically, constrainedly and embarrassedly. But in case one considered the half note as a primary time with great ritardando, the produced melody got a good form and flow.

2 Results from Abroad

In some books, one can notice information on some analogies between chants on Latin and Greek-Byzantine texts. Paradoxically, only one concrete example is presented in [1], contrary to the title of the book, the contents of which is oriented mainly to the Eastern chant influence to the Western chant (the book is oriented mainly to the general formal aspects than to the particular examples). The mentioned example is the analogy between the beginning parts of the Byzantine 40th Idiomelion of rite and the Gregorian Antiphon to Magnificat, both for the Christmas Day ([12], page 413):

The second composition is also of Byzantine origine and also used at imperial court; it is a part of an acclamation in honor of emperor Manuel II. The acclamation begins with word Πολυχρόνιον (Polychronion) after that the following part follows:

The next illustration was presented in [13] and [14] and shows similar melodies of the identical Greek texts used in Byzantine liturgy almost every day while in Roman liturgy only on Good Friday:

Note that the Byzantine melody presented here was not used generally; its record comes only from XIV. century, while the melody common in the Middle Ages, presented in [14], is quite different from that Roman.

3 Other Latin-Greek Analogies

Similarly as the preceding section, the present one is dedicated to melodic analogies between Latin and Greek medieval chant. The last term must be put more precisely, namely in the sense that it covers medieval Greek-Byzantine chant and so called Syro-Byzantine chant, i.e. the chant arisen in Islamic Syria in Christian minorities using Byzantine liturgy, Greek language and Byzantine musical aesthetics. Note that after the collapse of iconoclasm the authors of the Syro-Byzantine chant (John of Damascus, Cosmas of Mayuma and Cosmas of Magna Graecia) were accepted as big names of Greek-Byzantine theology and culture. The present section is not oriented to Melchite chant (that of the Byzantine rite in Syriac and partially in Arabic) and to the chant of Byzantine-Slavic liturgy (on it, see section 4). The term Latin chant can be red as Gregorian chant (small exceptions are in 2.2), because no particular analogies existing in Ambrosian rite or Mozarabic one have been found.
3.1 Greek Acclamations in Latin Wholes

Examples presented in section 2 show that the greatest anticipation of melodic analogies Latin/Greek is in Greek texts accepted into Latin liturgy. It is legitimate, because their air used by Greeks offered to be transferred together with the words. So one can notice other analogies in Gregorian versions of Kyrie eleison. The most striking ones concern two of them, namely Cunctipotens Genitor Deus ([12], page 25) and Summe Deus ([12], page 80). Both of them are in the authentic Dorian mode, i.e. mode with tonic (final tone) re and with dominant (“tenor”) la and satisfy a lot of custom practices existing at the other chant in that mode, excepting one of the most important: their end tone is la and not re!

The answer why such an irregularity exists (among hundreds of Dorian authentic Gregorian chants that end correctly, i.e. by re) consists in the fact that there is a lot of Byzantine compositions (namely) so called canons in Dorian authentic mode, which end also by la. As an example the so called Golden Kanon [9] written by St. John of Damascus can serve, seven parts (odes) of eight ones of which ends so, while only one ends by re. See the end motifs of the first, second and last odes:

Ký-ri-e e-lé-i-son

Kyrie eleison

Ký-ri-e e-lé-i-son

Kyrie eleison

The similarity with the conclusion phrase of Kyrie Cunctipotens Genitor Deus is striking.

In the treasure of Gregorian chant, there is another melody of Kyrie, namely Clemens Rector ([12], page 79), which is also in the authentic Dorian mode and which ends “legally” by re. Interesting is that the melody of the word eleison of five of its nine invocations Kyrie eleison and Christe eleison is

The motif is that used in the Byzantine Canons but transposed to the “ordinary” level of the authentic Dorian mode, i.e. ending by re. Note that the same rhythms of both the versions were recorded in quite different notation systems: the Latin one is analog while the Byzantine one is digital.

Another example concerned Kyrie XVI of Kyriale Romanum ([12], page 59). This chant is in the authentic Phrygian mode and its form is a rather simple recitation around the dominant st: three times Kyrie eleison, three times Christe eleison and twice Kyrie eleison sung at the same air as the beginning one:


As a rule, the whole composition should end by further part sung on text Kyrie eleison, the melody of which would be equal or similar to the forgoing ones. Contrary to that expectation, air of word eleison of the last part is very different and surprisingly descends to the tonic re:

Ký-ri-e e-lé-i-son.

A very clear understanding of such a reverse give many Byzantine chants in Phrygian mode; their end motif is

For example, the book [15] contains 60 chants in Phrygian mode and 20 of them are concluded just by the mentioned motif.

There is another Gregorian melody of chant Kyrie for the Roman liturgy having a significant analogy to a Byzantine composition. That composition is one of the Eothenia (Morning hymns) composed by Emperor Leo the Wise (+917). Its concluding phrase is

δι’ ἡ-λε-ποσθημαζε

while the Gregorian composition denominated Kyrie Rex splendens ([12], page 34) begins as follows:

3.2 Latin Words with Byzantine Melody

Beside Greek words like Agios o Theos (section 2) or Kyrie eleison (section 2 and 3.1), there are purely Latin texts that carry a Byzantine melody in Gregorian chat. Beside Hodie (see section 2), one can notice important
analogy in the musicalization of laments, or – more realistically – of sobs. In Gregorian chant as well as in Byzantine chant, the sobs are modeled by ascending half-tone. A typical example offers the Latin communion sung on the memory of Bethlehem boys killed by Herod, at word *ululatus*, i.e. lamentation: at the same chant there are other instances of that model (see [12], page 439), but let us present other Latin chants with it. A lot of those motifs occur in Gregorian Communion for the Tuesday after the Palm Sunday ([12], page 614), the first phrase of which is as follows (the syllables carrying the characteristic half-tones are underlined):

\[\text{Advérsum me ex - er - ce - bán-tur, qui se -}\]
\[\text{-dé-bant in por - ta: et in me psal-lé - bant}\]

\[\text{qui bi-bé-bant vi - num...}\]

For to complete an impression, let us present English translation of the presented text: *Those who sat in the city portal connived against me, and those who drank wine sang on me.* Another example of Gregorian chant treasure is the Offertory ([12], page 602) composed for the Palm Sunday. Its second phrase is as follows:

\[\text{et su-sti - - nu - - l qui si - - mul}\]
\[\text{con - tri - sta-re - - tur...}\]

In English the words would be *And I looked for someone who would mourn with me.*

The same ascending half-tone motif of sobbing occurs in Byzantine chant. For example, St. Mary Magdalene’s Elegy [9] is a chant for the Wednesday after the Palm Sunday and its words express Magdalene’s remorse just after her conversion. The whole chant contains 36 instances of the mentioned motif. An illustration of it:

\[\text{δέξαι μου τὰς πηγὰς τῶν δακρύων.}\]
\[\text{ό νε - φέ - λαις στήμω νιζόν τῆς ἡλιόστης}\]

The text is a part of a phrase that sounds in English: *Accept from me flows of tears, you, who divide the clouds by sea water!*

Some other analogies between Byzantine chant and Latin one are presented in the next sections, because through Byzantine chant they end in Slavic chant and/or in Armenian one.

### 4 Analogies in Slavic Chants

It is evident that the early chant used in Byzantine rite with the old-Slavic language was almost identical with its pattern in Greek. Beside some rather general essays like [16] and [17], there are certain particular transcriptions, among which there is a comprehensive edition of hypakoes from Palaeo-Russian kondakars [18]. One of the hypakoes there published is not only very similar to its Greek analogy but both of them begin with a certain motif initiating psalmodic verses joined to Gregorian Introits in the authentic mixolydian mode ([12] contains 18 Introits in that mode, [19] even 21, but only 19 of them are of early medieval origin, and according [20], page 297, the traditional Roman Graduel contains 27 Introits in that mode). In the next picture, one can see the beginning of the Palaeo-Russian version, then the corresponding part of its Greek-Byzantine pattern and the beginning of a psalmody to the introit for the third Christmas mass ([12], page 408):

\[\text{Tά τήσ σήσ πα - ρά - δο - ξου}\]
\[\text{Τυο - ye - - mu pre - sla - vye - no - mu}\]
\[\text{Can - tá - te Dó - mi - no cánticum no - vum}\]

Beside the Slavic nations and regions that developed under Byzantine tradition, there are those existed and developed under Latin one (though at the beginning of their history, Byzantine influence can be watched there). For seeing the melodic analogies, let us turn attention to the ascending quart that exists in the beginning of many Latin and Byzantine chants (it was a suitable expression of lifting the mind up). Thus the 4th ode of the Golden Canon (see section 3.1) begins as follows:

\[\text{Ε-πι τής χλι - ας φυ - λα - κίς}\]

The conspicuous quart process is marked by underlining its text. And an example of Gregorian chant, namely Agnus XII ([12], page 53):

\[\text{Ag - nus De-i}\]
The second oldest Czech musical monument, hymn to St. Wenceslas, begins as follows:

The Czech text should be read Svahtee Vahtslavea. Note that the hymn contains 5 strophes and excepting the first one, in each of it this motif is repeated, sung always at two different texts.

The oldest Polish musical monument, Bogurodzitsa (Mother of the God, read Bogoorogeetsah) begins also by the mentioned quart:

For a better intelligibility the Latin example and the Polish one are presented so that they are transposed on a quint up. Each of the mentioned four chants is in Dorian mode.

For to understand the analogies between the oldest Czech musical monument known at the present time, let us turn to so called ekphonetic chant; it is an ornamented recitative applied in Byzantine rite namely for presentation of sacred texts. It subjected to special system of musical signs. The following example is the announcing of gospel presentation:

With such formulas, the presentation of the gospel goes on. The extension and influence of recitative using the just presented formulas led even the author St. John of Damascus to use it in his most famous composition Golden Kanon (see 3.1) and in the authentic Dorian mode for that the characteristic tones are dominant la and tonic re, the central phrase of the first ode follows the mentioned ekphonetic chant and – in the academic sense of words – illogically oscillates around upper do. In the beginning part of the first strophe of that ode, the text of the ekphonetic passage is underlined:

The analogy with ekphonetic chant is evident.

5 Analogies in Early Armenian Chant

In the early Armenian liturgical chant there are interesting analogies with melodies practiced at Latin and/or Byzantine texts (note that some of those Armenian chants – namely Taghs – were originally not composed for liturgical purposes and only some time after were accepted for the Armenian liturgy). One example gives tagh composed by St. Gregory of Narek (Narekaci, +1003); it begins as follows:

The similarity with the first illustration presented in subsection 3.1 (Kyrie Cunctipotens Genitor Deus) and with the second Byzantine illustration of the same section (Φωτίζου, φωτίζου) is evident.

But there are striking melodic analogies that cover the early Armenian chant together with the Latin, Byzantine and even Slavic melodic patterns. One of them is another Tagh composed by Aristakes Kharpertsi (of Kharpert):
It evokes all three components presented as the first example in section 4. And a bit similar recognition can be caused by the formula frequently used in the Armenian rite, among other in the Creed presentation during the Patarag (Armenian Eucharist liturgy). Here it is applied as it is sung during the Morning office:

The melody has analogies in the Byzantine ekphonic chant, in the Latin chant Exsultet and in the first Czech musical monument (see section 4).

6 Appendix – Analogies in Pre-Christian Music

The analogies existing among melodies of Christian rites of different linguistic and geographic bases may originate in common patterns occurring in pre-Christian music. Concerning the Jewish roots, book [22] is often quoted and recommended as a rich source of information on the Semitic kernels of Christian liturgical chant, but though it contains much information on some aspects relating to what is commonly understood as musical forms, no essential melodic analogies between the Jewish and Christian ritual chants are presented.

The other branch that could be considered as stimulus for development of early Christian chant is that of pre-Christian culture of Greeks and Romans. Unfortunately very small number of compositions of that culture was preserved in so good state that they can testify on their melodies. Nevertheless, it is interesting that each of six hymns (idiomela) for Christmas, composed by famous composer Romanos Melodos who lived in the VI. century (born in Lebanon, during his most productive phase of life he dwelt in Constantinople):

Note that there are other Byzantine compositions with a similar ending, among other Σήμερον presented as the first Byzantine example in section 2; among the tones of its termination, the last but two one (fa) is missing.

The same pagan composer Mesomedes composed another hymn, that on Nemesis. It consists of 20 verses of the same rhythmical structure as those of the Hymn on Helios, which are grouped into three sections. The last section begins as follows:

Already the author of [20] brings forward (page 419) that the Gregorian Kyrie Rex Genitor ([12], page 31) begins with the melody that originated from the just referred one by ornamenting the recitatives at do:

There is another composition written by Mesomedes, namely a hymn to Calliope and Apollo. Its final passage resembles many motifs used in Gregorian chant. The most famous, reminded also by some composers of the baroque epoch and later, is the Hallelujah, vocalized by the celebrant trice (in ascending steps) at the Easter midnight as the announcement of Christ’s resurrection:

The same motif, but in a rather simplified context, occurs at the beginning of another Gregorian chant related to the Easter feast, too (a morning office antiphon):
Moreover, the same motif is applied to conclude some of certain internal phrase in many Gradualia, which are chants differing one from the others according to the calendar in texts and in melody. Some examples of phrases concluding with a disyllabic word:

\[
\text{Al-le-lú -ia, al - le-lú -ia, al - le-lú-i -a.}
\]

The following two analogies are known almost for a century (see e.g. [23]). There are two hymns composed in honor of Apollo and sculptured with musical sign at the treasury of Athenians in Delphi around 130 B.C. Both of them contain the same motif as the common one repeated many times in the sung “Prefaces” occurring in very Eucharist liturgy of Roman rite. Let us look at a typical beginning of such a Preface and of the analogous motif of the second Delphic hymn:

\[
\text{Vere dignum ... aequum et sa - lu - tá - re}
\]

\[
\text{ίτ' επί τιθέσκοπον τάμανδε παρ(νασιάν)}
\]

The other analogy exists between the beginning of a Greek song sculpted at the tombstone of a certain Seikilos in Asia Minor (near Ephesus) and a Gregorian antiphon Hosánna Fílio David. The pair is striking not only because of the melodic flow but also by pronounced syllables Hoson – Hosâanna:

\[
\text{‘Ο-σον ζησα φαι’ - vou}
\]

\[
\text{Ho-sán-na Fi -li-o Da-vid}
\]

4 Conclusion

The treasure of the liturgical chant of the first millennium A. D. is much larger than to be explored by one generation. Thus it is evident that the list of the analogies presented in this paper is far from being complete and that it is fair to suppose that many other analogies will be discovered – either occasionally or in a systematic research – in future. The importance of the results should overpass the domain of musicology, as it could help to better experience and understanding among the nations, regions and countries, which is a priori not limited for economic relations.

References:
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