

**MECHANISMS OF ADAPTATION INTO ROMANIAN
OF THE CHANTS OF THE DOXASTARION OF
IAKOVOS PROTOPSALTIS (APPROX. 1740-1800)
IN THE VERSION OF VISARION FROM NEAMȚ
(1794-1844)**

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with a part of the activity of translation of the musical repertoire of Byzantine influence performed by Visarion from Neamț. It is structured in two sections: the former deals with the life, activity and context in which Visarion carried out his activity, while the latter consists of a morphological and syntactic comparative analysis of the *Doxastarion* of Iakovos Protopsaltis as proposed by Visarion from Neamț.

The paper begins with a description of the historical and musical context preceding Visarion's time, as a period marked by transformations that illustrated a new vision in the field of ecclesiastical music. We have also tried to highlight the contribution of the monastic community from Neamț to the promotion of the Byzantine musical art by disseminating its repertoire. The first part of the article ends with the presentation of Visarion's biographical data and a description of his complex personality and musical skills.

The second part focuses on certain mechanisms of adaptation of the chants of the *Doxastarion* by Iakovos Protopsaltis in the version of Visarion from Neamț. The first step was to identify the linguistic differences that underlie the differences in the musical treatment. We then continued by identifying certain mechanisms of translation of these chants into Romanian, which are presented along with relevant musical examples, for a better understanding.

Keywords: *Doxastarion, notation, Romanianization, analysis.*

Introduction

The current repertoire of Orthodox church music constitutes an essential part of the Romanian tradition, culture and liturgical spirituality, preserved and transmitted until the present time through the contribution of well-known personalities such as Macarie the Hieromonk (approx. 1770-1836), Anton Pann (1796-1854), Ghelasie the Bessarabian (approx. 1800-1855), Dimitrie Suceveanu (1813-1898), Visarion Protopsaltis (1794-1844), Nektarios Vlachos (1804-1899) etc. The present study investigates the translation and adaptation into Romanian of the repertoire of the *Doxastarion* of Iakovos Protopsaltis, a “Romanianization” performed by one of the “classics” of the church music of Byzantine tradition from Moldova – Visarion Protopsaltis from the Neamț Monastery.

Liturgical and cultural-historical context

The post-Byzantine eighteenth century was a productive period in the field of psaltic compositions, with radical changes in the style of this music. It was the time when attempts were made to abridge the “old style” repertoire according to the liturgical and aesthetic requirements of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with both styles – *old and new* – coexisting in the practice of the Church of that time¹. Thus, we can speak of a period during which new technical means were sought to correspond to the new method of “abridgement” and analytical notation of Byzantine music².

In the Romanian Principalities, this period was marked by a development of the arts, in general, thanks to the vision of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), during whose reign a true reform was carried out regarding the introduction of the Romanian language in churches³, a reform with obvious and

¹ G. T. Stathis: “The Abridgements” of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Compositions”, in: *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Age grec et latin*, No. 44 (1983), p. 18.

² Anton Pann, *Bazul Teoretic și Practic al Muzicii Bisericești sau Gramatica Melodică. Tipărit întru a sa tipografie de muzică bisericească* [The Theoretical and Practical Basis of Church Music or the Melodic Grammar. Printed in His Printing Press of Church Music], Bucharest, 1845, pp. XVIII-XL.

³ Mention should also be made of the activity carried out by Anthim the Iberian, who was asked to settle in Wallachia by Brâncoveanu and who was the rightful author of this action. See: Pr. Conf. Dr. Ion Stoica, Drd. Ștefan Nuică, *Învățătura ortodoxă (dogmatică) și morala autentic creștină, oglindite în viața și opera marelui ierarh cărturar, Sfânt și Martir Ortodox, Antim Ivireanul* [The Orthodox (Dogmatic) Teaching and the Authentically Christian Ethics, Illustrated in the Life and Work of the Great Hierarch and Scholar, Orthodox Saint and Martyr, Anthim the Iberian] in *Sf. Ierarh Antim Ivireanul – misionar și om de cultură în slujba Bisericii și a neamului românesc* [The Holy Hierarch Anthim the Iberian – Missionary and Man of Culture in the Service of the Romanian Church and Nation], Editura Arhiepiscopia Târgoviștei, 2016, p. 47; G. Ștrempel, *Introducere* [Introduction] in *Antim Ivireanul, Opere* [Works], Editura Minerva, Bucharest, 1972, pp. XXXV-LIX; Ion Georgescu, “Antim Ivireanul și locul lui în cultura poporului

real consequences for the Romanian psaltic culture. The reforming momentum was also felt in Moldova during the second half of the century, through the establishment of the Music School from Neamț, which, under the influence of Paisianism¹, underwent a revival that was also reflected in the psaltic art². For the Romanian cultural and monastic space, the Neamț Monastery was an important centre for preserving and transmitting the liturgical values and, in particular, of the church chant, through its prominent representatives Iosif Protopsaltis (Iosif the Blind), Macarie Protopsaltis, Calinic and Dorothei Iordachiu, Visarion Protopsaltis.

Of the musicians listed above, Visarion Protopsaltis was the most important representative of the Music School from Neamț and a disciple of Iosif Protopsaltis, whose works he transcribed into the new notation³. His biographical data can be found in a book printed in 1817: he was born in 1794 and at the age of 15 he entered monasticism, becoming a priest in 1824; he died at the age of 50, in 1844⁴.

In the present research study we investigate Visarion's adaptation into Romanian of the *Doxastarion*⁵ of Iakovos Protopsaltis⁶, preserved at the Library of the Neamț Monastery, under No. 12. The existence of this collection, though little

român" [Anthem the Iberian and His Place in the Culture of the Romanian People], in *B.O.R.*, Year LXXXIV, No. 9-10, 1966, p. 968; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii Românești și a vieții religioase a românilor* [The History of the Romanian Church and of the Religious Life of the Romanian People], vol. II, Tipografia Neamul Românesc, Vălenii de Munte, 1909, p. 10.

¹ A trend of spiritual revival that received its name from its initiator, Hieromonk Paisius Velichkovsky (1722-1794).

² Gheorghe Ciobanu, "Cultura psaltică românească în secolele al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea" [The Romanian Psaltic Culture in the 17th and 18th Centuries], in *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie* [Ethnomusicology and Byzantinology Studies], 1st volume, Editura Muzicală a Uniunii compozitorilor, Bucharest, 1974, p. 303.

³ *Dicționar de muzică bisericească românească* [Dictionary of Romanian Church Music], Basilica, Bucharest, 2013, pp. 854-855.

⁴ Vasile Vasile, *Mănăstirea Neamț – străveche vatră de cultură muzicală* [The Neamț Monastery – An old Hearth of Musical Culture], *Doxologia*, Iași, 2015, p. 392.

⁵ The *Doxastarion* is a collection of chants for the divine worship service, including the Vespers, Lity, Aposticha and Matins. Etymologically, the term derives from the Greek δόξα (*Slavic*) and refers to those chants that follow after the stichera and which, from a hymnographic perspective, synthesize the main elements regarding the holiday or saint to whom they are dedicated. In the specialized dictionaries, the *Doxastarion* is defined as a volume of religious music that gathers the songs called δοξαστικά, sung on Sundays, on holidays and on the occasion of the commemorations of the saints of a church year. For details, see *Dicționar de termeni muzicali* [Dictionary of Musical Terms], Editura Științifică și Pedagogică, Bucharest, 1984, p. 149; Π. ΑΝΑΡΕΑΚ ΜΙΧΑΛΙΔΑΗΣ, ΛΕΞΙΚΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ, ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ «Ματς», 2001, p. 38. ΛΕΞΙΚΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ, ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ ΚΟΥΛΤΟΥΡΑ, 2005, p. 62.

⁶ Eighteenth-century performer and composer, serving as protopsaltis in Constantinople from 1798 until his death; see Christos Patrinelis, "Protopsaltae, Lampadarii and Domestikoi of the Great Church during the post-Byzantine Period (1453-1821)", in *Studies in Eastern Chant*, vol. III (1973), pp. 155-156.

circulated in the local liturgical practice, is, nevertheless, the proof of its possible religious utility within the monastery or even in the teaching practice.

Mechanisms of translation and adaptation of the liturgical texts of the *Doxastarion*

Most of the chants in the repertoire of the *Doxastarion* of Iakovos Protosaltis are composed in Plagal Second Mode, a chromatic mode based on D/Pa, characterised by the use of two augmented seconds: Eb/Vu ρ - F#/Ga σ and Bb/Zo ρ - C#/Ni σ ¹. The rather high number of chants in Plagal Second Mode is not the composer's option, but rather his observance of the notes in the church books from which the liturgical texts are taken². Thus, in this paper, the analytical approach, applied only to the chants composed in this mode, is focused on the following aspects:

- ✓ comparison of the texts of the Greek chants with their correspondents from the Greek church books;
- ✓ comparison of the texts of the Romanian chants with the Greek liturgical texts;
- ✓ musical analysis of the Romanian chants with the Greek originals, where we have aimed to identify certain "Romanianization" mechanisms and techniques.

Linguistic analysis

The first step in examining the repertoire was studying the liturgical texts and identifying certain discrepancies that produced the melodic differences. Comparing the texts of the Greek repertoire with their correspondents in the Greek liturgical books, we have noticed that in many chants some of the words or expressions are omitted or replaced, these being the only differences encountered. For example, in the chant *Τερεῦς ἐννομώτατος*, the word *αυτον* is replaced in the score by *Θεόν*, while the pronominal adjective *σου* and the expression *καὶ πόθω* occur only in the liturgical text.

¹ Speaking of modal musical structures, it should be noted that in the Byzantine melody the modes can be transposed to any scale degree. Even though the Plagal Second Mode is built on D/Pa, it can still be transposed to any other scale degree, with the observance of the diastematic notation. This rule applies to all the psaltic modes.

² The texts are taken from the liturgical books called Menaion, Triodion and Pentecostarion. The first one is used throughout most of the year, while the Triodion and the Pentecostarion are used before and, respectively, after the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ.

The translation made use of the technique of inversion, which has effects on word order and stylistics. An eloquent example can be found in the song *Σήμερον ὁ τοῖς νοεροῖς* (*Astăzi, Cel ce se odihnește*) [Today, God Who Rests], where the word Θεός – *Dumnezeu* [God] is placed in different musical contexts in each of the two variants, i.e. Romanian and Greek. Similar techniques are also used in the song *Τὰς μυστικάς*, where Visarion begins the text with a complement, in this case *Pe trâmbițele* [On the trumpets], as opposed to the original text starting with an attribute, *tainicele* [the mystical] (*Τὰς μυστικάς*).

Another aspect highlighted by this analysis relates to the succession of accents and syllables. The author from Neamț complies with the linguistic norms and places the accents on the corresponding syllables, even if he changes the melodic line. An eloquent example occurs in the song dedicated to Saint Sava, where the words *Cuvioase părinte* [Righteous Father] (*Cu-vi-**oa**-se pă-**rin**-tel* *Ο-σι-ε Πά-τερ*)¹ are slightly ornamented melodically to ensure the transfer of the melodic accents to the tonic accents.

The differences between the two variants of the repertoire are also noticeable in terms of form. Thus, the author repositions the melodic formulas according to the requirements imposed by the text, adding musical passages that connect the formulas and thus ensuring the fluency of the melodic phrases.

From the above, we notice the composers' tendency to modify certain expressions, to replace certain words or eliminate them, to modify the word order depending on the number of syllables needed in a melodic formula, on the position of the accents or even on the length of the words, with all these changes having effects on the architecture of the pieces.

Techniques and mechanisms of adaptation of chants into Romanian

Earlier we have presented the differences between the texts found in the religious books and those used by Visarion as a supporting text for the transposition of the melodic material. It is obvious that such an action implies certain competences on the part of the author, and Visarion demonstrates that he possesses the entire arsenal of techniques and mechanisms needed to successfully accomplish it. He looks for and finds the solutions so that the melodic transformations are logical and natural in the melodic context, in spite of the different word order, the typically Romanian configuration of accents, or the changed number of syllables. Thus, due to the need to comply with these characteristics, the musical phrase is changed through various mechanisms such as

¹ In Greek, syllables are counted from the end of the word, so that the initial syllable of a word is not necessarily the first one. In the word *Οσιε*, the initial syllable is actually the third one.

the suppression or addition of musical passages, the augmentation or simplification of certain formulas etc. (see the examples below).

Melodic augmentation

Following the translation, the Romanian text often presents an extra number of syllables, a situation that the author from Neamț solves by adding new elements to the musical line. Even if he develops the melodic formulas, he still retains the original sound parameters, thus creating a graceful, elegant melodic construction that gives no impression of being modified. In the example below, we notice that the Greek text has fewer syllables (7) than the Romanian one (10) (περιεβάλου Σωτήρ / *te-ai îmbrăcat Mântuitorule*), but also that the succession of accents is different, which forces Visarion to augment the fragment by introducing certain melodic passages.

a) *πε - ρι - ε - βα - λου - Σω - τη - ηρ*

b) *te - ai - îm - bră - cat Mî - ntu - i - to - rî - le - e*

- a) Gr. Ms. Iviron 2007, f. 98r
- b) Rom. Ms. BN 12, f. 86v

Exigisis/analytical transcription of short melodic passages

One of the characteristics of the technique of adapting the chants to the Romanian language is the analytical transcription of certain melodic formulas, as opposed to the Greek variants where we find a more synthetic musical language. This more concise type of writing, as opposed to the expanded one, offers the singer multiple possibilities for interpreting the song. Upon analysing this method of “Romanianization”, we notice that the author prefers to divide the temporal structures into smaller sections, thus increasing the number of neumes. The increase in the number of neumes inevitably leads to the multiplication of the half-beat durations and thus the musical discourse becomes more generously ornamented.

a) *βρυ - σιν - τω - ον*

b) *iz - vo - or al - iz - vo - or al*

- a) Gr. Ms. Iviron 2007, f. 31r

b) Rom. Ms. BN 12, f. 39v

Repeating the pitches of previous notes

This technique is often encountered in the church chants “Romanianized” by Visarion from Neamț, where, following the translation, the number of syllables in the Romanian text is higher than in the Greek one. In trying to modify the original melodic architecture as little as possible, Visarion adds more beats corresponding to the non-accented durations by repeating the pitch of the previous note and places them before the melodic formula that he intends to use.

The image displays two musical staves, labeled 'a)' and 'b)', illustrating the technique of repeating pitches. Staff 'a)' shows a Greek version of a chant with the text 'τα - ον σου ο - σι -'. Staff 'b)' shows a Romanian version with the text 'ta - - le cu - vi - oa - se'. A red box highlights the 'cu - vi - oa - se' part in the Romanian version, showing how the pitch of the previous note is repeated to accommodate the extra syllables.

a) Gr. Ms. Iviron 2007, f. 33r

b) Rom. Ms. BN 12, f. 40v

Inserting higher and lower embellishments

From a musical viewpoint, an embellishment is defined as a “note of ornamentation”¹ and is used to decorate the musical line, without changing its overall contour². Such techniques are frequently encountered in Byzantine music, especially in practice, being the performers’ prerogative and less explicitly notated in scores. While they are often executed, composers notate them in church chants only when they want to propose a certain manner of interpretation. In comparison with the Greek original, one can notice that the author from Neamț introduces such techniques following the “translation”, to give colour to the melodic line and, why not, his own interpretive version. Both upper and lower embellishments are designed in two- or three-beat units and are executed by means of overtone leaps (in the case of higher embellishments) or in descending motion (in the case of the lower ones).

¹ Academia Română, Institutul de Istoria Artei – “G. Oprescu”, *Dicționar de termeni muzicali* [Dictionary of Musical Terms], 3rd edition, revised and expanded, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2010, p. 84.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 409-410.

Higher embellishment:

- a) Ms. gr. Iviron 2007, f. 136v
- b) Ms. rom. BN 12, f. 112r



Lower embellishment:

- a) Ms. gr. Iviron 2007, f. 136v
- b) Ms. rom. BN 12, f. 112r



Conclusions

The two versions of the *Doxastarion*, i.e. the Greek original of Iakovos Protopsaltis and the “Romanianized” translation of Visarion Protopsaltis, are sound testimonies recorded over time of the musical and liturgical practices in use in the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century in the Romanian Principalities and Constantinople. This analysis has tried to highlight the mechanisms of translation, adaptation and “Romanianization” of this category of post-Byzantine chants, and, at the same time, to reveal the local and even individual manners of interpretation practised at the school from Neamț and, in particular, Visarion Protopsaltis’ manner of transcription, which is of extreme importance in understanding the semiographic, stylistic and liturgical transformations that took place at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries in the urban and monastic areas of the Orthodox world north of the Danube.

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