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III. In the Byzantine Empire

1. Sacred music.

In the year 330 CE Emperor Constantine I moved the capital of the Roman Empire to the ancient Greek city of Byzantium, which he christened ‘Constantinople, New Rome’. At that time the borders of the Roman Empire encompassed most speakers of the Greek language, whose major cultural centres were spread across a geographic area from southern Italy in the west to the great cities of Alexandria and Antioch in the east. Musical practices and repertoires that since the later 19th century have been described as ‘Byzantine’ emerged from the fourth century CE onwards. Greek-speaking Christians from late Antiquity to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, however, described themselves primarily as ‘Romans’ (*Romaioi* or, colloquially, *Romaioi*), a usage that remained common under Arab and Ottoman rule. During the same period use of the term ‘Hellene’ as a marker of identity was problematic due to its association with paganism, but this did not prevent scholars and scribes of the medieval Christian East from retaining ancient music theory within a curriculum of Greek higher education that changed only superficially during the Middle Ages. Indeed, Greek harmonic science was preserved and eventually passed on to the Italian Renaissance by the scholars of Byzantium, who not only copied ancient texts, but also made editorial interventions, offered commentaries, and produced their own syntheses, the most extensive of which is the treatise on *Harmonics* by Manuel Bryennios.

Ancient Greek vocal and instrumental notation were available to the intellectual elite of Byzantium, but there were no systematic efforts to deploy them for practical use. While new notational systems of varying musical specificity were developed to facilitate the transmission of ecclesiastical chant, medieval Greek secular song and instrumental music appear to have

been entrusted entirely to oral traditions. Yet sources without musical notation – depictions of music-making in visual art, manuals of court ceremony, canonical legislation, homilies, the lives of saints, and secular poetry – reveal that music remained ubiquitous in Greek private and public life throughout the Byzantine period (for a fuller discussion, see § 2 below).

Distinguishing between musical continuity and change in these sources is made difficult by their many archaisms, but careful study has revealed an evolving instrumentarium both at the imperial court in Constantinople, where organs appear to have been displaced by wind bands after the Crusades, and in secular entertainments, where the names of the ancient aulos and kithara became generic terms signifying, respectively, wind and string instruments. Some scholars have discerned echoes of medieval Greek secular music in later traditions of Greek folk song and Ottoman court music.

Christian chant from the liturgical traditions of Jerusalem and Constantinople is by far the best documented form of Greek music from the Byzantine Empire, with many thousands of items recoverable for modern study and performance thanks to their regular transmission from the late 10th century onwards with neumatic notations. Only traces remain of other Greek traditions of Christian chant that flourished in the regions of Antioch, Alexandria, Southern Italy, and mainland Greece prior to the politically turbulent 7th century. These include not only the small and mostly fragmentary corpus of Greek chant texts preserved on papyrus (some with what appear to be rudimentary forms of musical notation), but also the retention of chants in the Greek language by the Coptic Church of Egypt and, to a lesser degree, the Latin rites of Italy. Indicative of the scope of what has been lost is the fact that not a single liturgical text has survived from mainland Greece prior to 732, when the papal vicariate in Thessalonica was abolished and jurisdiction over Illyricum and southern Italy passed from the Roman Papacy to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Urban and monastic Christians worshipping in Greek during the 4th and 5th centuries CE took a leading role in forming musical practices and repertoires that circulated both inside and outside the Roman Empire among speakers of such other languages as Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, and Georgian. Having adopted the biblical Book of Psalms and selected canticles of the Old and New Testament as the primary sources for liturgical song, they often rendered them in public services using patterns of call-and-response that facilitated the hierarchically ordered participation of congregations, choirs, and soloists. In responsorial psalmody one or more soloists delivered verses punctuated with a choral or congregational refrain, while antiphonal psalmody employed more complex schemes of alternation between multiple groups of singers.

State patronage of churches and their singers amplified the complexity and scale of psalmody in Constantinople, leading to the creation of a system of worship for Justinian's Great Church of Hagia Sophia and its dependent churches. Originally called the *Ekklesiastēs*, the cathedral rite of the Great Church featured three Eucharistic liturgies – the Divine Liturgies of St Basil, St John Chrysostom, and the Presanctified Gifts – and a divine office known during the 2nd millennium CE as the 'Sung Office' (*Asmatikē Akolouthia*). Constantinopolitan cathedral worship integrated the prayers and petitions of higher clergy and congregational responses and refrains with the responsorial and antiphonal chanting of multiple soloists and choirs, including boys from the imperial orphanage and a choir of deaconesses attached to Hagia Sophia. The only substantial corpus of extra-scriptural hymnody native to the *Ekklesiastēs* is the *kontakion*, a strophic genre modelled on Syriac prototypes that emulated urban psalmody with its use of a congregational refrain. The *kontakion* was brought to maturity in 6th-century Constantinople by Romanos the Melodist, a deacon who performed his hymns during the breaks between services at popular vigils held on the eves of major feasts. The cathedral rite was celebrated regularly in Constantinople until

the Fourth Crusade sacked the city 1204, after which it was displaced by the Roman rite in Hagia Sophia until the Byzantine recovery of the capital in 1261. The solo and choral chants of the old Constantinopolitan rite are represented now in a small number of sources mainly from Southern Italy and Thessalonica, some of them copied as late as the 15th century.

It is mainly from Armenian and Georgian translations of lost Greek originals that scholars are reconstructing the development of the *Hagiopolitēs*, the stationary liturgy of the Holy City of Jerusalem. These sources reveal a system of urban worship adapted to its sacred topography in which the selective use of biblical texts increasingly gave way to the composition of hymns for integration among the fixed psalms and canticles of the Palestinian Divine Office. By the 6th century Hagiopolite psalmody and hymnody was sung and ordered liturgically according to the *Oktōēchos*, a system of eight modes that later became a key musical feature of the hybrid Byzantine rite. Production of hymns for the rite of Jerusalem reached its apogee under Muslim rule following the Arab conquest of Byzantium's African and Middle Eastern provinces with the works of such poet-composers as Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem and John of Damascus, by which time the creation of Greek hymns in Palestinian genres had been taken up elsewhere by Andrew of Crete and Germanos of Constantinople.

Greek liturgical traditions fusing the Divine Offices of the Palestinian Book of the Hours with the sacraments, readings, and elaborate solo and choral chants of the rite of Hagia Sophia spread widely after the beginning of the 9th century. Forged at leading Constantinopolitan institutions including the chapels of the Great Palace and the monastery of Stoudios, these syntheses were adopted across a wide geographic area from Southern Italy to Kievan Rus' and fostered the composition of vast numbers of new hymns. Dissemination of hymnody and florid psalmody was aided from the 10th century onwards by the development of increasingly specific forms of neumatic notation. Cantors and scribes gradually enriched Palaeo-Byzantine

families of neumes to produce Middle Byzantine Notation, a fully diastematic system employed without substantial graphical change from the late 12th century to the early 19th.

The defeat of the Byzantine army at Manzikert in 1071 brought about the loss of much of Asia Minor to the Seljuk Turks, while Constantinopolitan rule in Italy ended the same year with the withdrawal of the last imperial garrison from Bari. Despite these political setbacks, Byzantine chant flourished alongside Greek monasticism for another two centuries in Southern Italy, nor did they hinder the wider process of continuing to fill out the calendrical cycles of Byzantine worship with new music. Far more disruptive were Crusader invasions that climaxed in 1204 with the sack of Constantinople. Under Latin occupation regular celebration of the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite ceased permanently in both the Great Church of Hagia Sophia and the Parthenon, which for centuries had served as the cathedral of Athens.

The restoration of the imperial government to Constantinople in 1261 ushered in a period of intellectual, spiritual, and artistic renewal that continued, despite accelerating political decline, until the Ottoman conquest of 1453. Court singers beginning with Ioannes Glykes, Xenos Korones, and Ioannes Koukouzeles pursued musical renewal through the consolidation of existing repertoires and the creation of kalophonic ('beautiful sounding') chants of unprecedented sophistication, length, and abstraction. During the 15th century leading Constantinopolitan cantors Manuel Gazes, Ioannes Laskaris, and Manuel Chrysaphes transplanted these traditions to Crete, where they subsequently flourished under Venetian rule. Eyewitness accounts of Orthodox services by Western Europeans and the adoption of simple polyphonic performance practices by some Byzantine cantors indicate that Greek and Latin chanting remained aurally compatible through the middle of the 15th century.

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