

THE INFLUENCE OF ANTIQUE AND BYZANTINE MUSIC
ON THE FOLK MUSIC OF CYPRUS

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In this case Byzantine music should be confined to that of the Greek Orthodox Church, as it has been practised on the mainland of Greece and in the Greek islands, not that of the expanded dominions of the Byzantine Empire. The influence of Byzantine music on the folk music of Greece and specially that of Cyprus may not be such an obscure problem to clarify, as is the influence of the Greek antique music on that of the Byzantines.

Although the folkloric tradition of Cyprus is a branch of the Panhellenic tradition, it presents certain peculiarities and archaic forms due to the seclusion of the island. Archaic elements and heavier pronunciation are also audible in the primitive form of the Cypriot Greek dialect. I suspect that the prolongation of certain vowels, characteristic in the pronunciation of the inhabitants of some remote villages may still include traditional traces of prosodic remnants. This is a very interesting proposition and may well become an important question for linguistic research. Language, above all, with its musical elements of rhythm and variations of pitch constitutes the earliest musical development and primary practical music application.

Cyprus, situated at the crossroads between the East and the West is endowed not only with the language, religion and traditions of its early settlers but has also been influenced by the culture of its Near East neighbours as well as that of the conquerors who ruled the island for a long time.

Melodic formulae, motives and characteristic ornamentation had been passed on by oral tradition for centuries, long before they were written down. The probability of the survival of some archaic elements might in some cases be ascertained.

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The monodic or the unison unharmonised singing or doubling at the octave "μαγαδίτζετν" is a very old practice still going on.

The structure of melodies is not to be thought of as based on the major or minor forms of scales, as they were developed by Bach, but on smaller modal units within the compass of a tetrachord or of a pentachord with the addition of a quasi "Proslambanomenos" note of the classical Greek Greater or Lesser Perfect System.

Although the antique Enharmonic Genus with its characteristic microtonic "Pyknon" is no longer used as such in the melodic structure, in the way the Diatonic and the Chromatic are still in use, it has however survived the time by its present persistent use in ornamentation. This renders the exact writing of Folk music on the stave tentative in pitch, and lacking in its true interpretative character and Ethos. The use of microtonic embellishments provides strong evidence of the blending of Hellenistic with Oriental elements. A combination of genera is sometimes met as is audible in the "Karpasitiki Phone" (1)

In referring to the Alexandrian conquests I should stress the probability of mutual cultural influences between the conqueror's civilisation and the native culture of his Dominions.

The Homeric rhapsodic tradition of the poet-musician passed on to the Byzantines as that of the hymnographer-melodist survived in the compositions of the "Ποιητάρηδες" of Cyprus, who still sing their decapentasyllabic distichs at the fair, the market place or the village square, in accordance with the old practice. There has been much controversy among contemporary grammarians regarding the origin of the decapentasyllabic verse;

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(1) A model melody of an area kept in mind for the improvisation of melic distichs

some believe it derives from the Homeric dactylic hexametre, while others are in favour of the paeonic metre. There may be other views as well. The fact however about it, is that we meet here traces of the ancient Greek poetic metric system, adapted to the later developed Byzantine rhythmotonic system.

The time-signature of $\frac{7}{8}$ comes from the classical Greek poetic metre "Epitritos", which consists of a spondee — — and an iambus \cup — or a trochee — \cup . Each long syllable is equal to two short ones. The characteristic rhapsodic metre of Cyprus is $\frac{5}{8}$, U U U — or — U U U, which is probably paeonic. In many cases the "Ποιητάρηδες" sing their verses in $\frac{9}{8}$, a compound metre consisting of a paeon and a spondee i.e. $\frac{5}{8} + \frac{2}{4}$, U U U U U : U U —
U U U U U : — U (U)

in the second bar the last short falls out in place of breathing. It is not improbable that the Cyprus dances in the time - signature of $\frac{9}{8}$, performed as $\frac{3}{8} + \frac{3}{4}$ or vice versa, originate from the same source.

The tradition of the Homeric rhapsodic poetry has been bequeathed in the form of the melic distichs, which are usually composed on traditionally set melodic formulae. A similarity occurs in the Byzantine composition of the "prosomoia" after the melody of the "Heirmus", "Idiomelon" of "Automelon".⁽²⁾ In Cyprus the term "Phonê" such as Paphitiki, Mesaritiki, Akathiotiki, Karpasitiki etc., are specific melodic formulae, each one of them characteristic of a certain area. They may traditionally come from the ancient Greek authentic modes, the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian etc. and their hypo-authentic ones.

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(2) The three terms mean the originally composed prototype melody. The same melody is used for other stanzas or hymns.

These modes were later renamed by the Christian Byzantines authentic and plagal "Echoi" i.e. modes, so as not to remind them of any pagan nomenclature. Research has proved beyond doubt that the Greek antique musical knowledge borrowed ideas from other eastern cultures; these were of course developed according to the Hellenic temperament and philosophy. The musical laws or nomos, tones or modes are creations characteristic of the racial temperament. There exist ragas in India, magamat in Arabia, Echoi in Byzantium, Phones in Cyprus etc., with certain specific rhythms and genera endowed with special psychological and ethical qualities reflecting and affecting the national character. It is said that Pythagoras had knowledge of the music of Mesopotamia, which he applied in his ratios on the monochord, and similarly St. John the Damascene had thorough knowledge of the existing music of the Syrian Church in planning the "Octoechos" and in using the lineal neumatic notation.

When Beethoven was deep in musical thought he would resort to archaic practice by limiting his melodic motives within a tetrachord or a pentachord. Such archaic tetrachordal or pentachordal melodies of folk songs abound here furnishing adequate evidence for the archaic musical tradition of Cyprus.

The ancient Greek tetrachordal system either disjunct or conjunct with the middle note "Mesē" of the vocal compass led to the fundamental or the tonic note of our modern system of scales. The relation between the authentic and hypo-authentic classical Greek modes led to the formation of the Byzantine Wheel of modes,⁽³⁾ "Βυζαντινός Τροχός" a system of authentic ecclesiastical Byzantine Echoi and their plagal. This, later transferred to Europe established the circle of major and minor scales on the sharp and flat side based on the intervals of the perfect fourth or its inversion.

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(3) Please, see photocopy on page 16

The improvisation of melic distichs by Cypriot Greek village women for beloved dead persons describing the combination of beauty with wisdom, bravery with magnanimity, according to the age and the past life of the deceased, is an ancient tradition having probably its origin from the semitic Near East mythical times of Linos. Linos son of Apollo and nymph Psamanthi was considered to be together with Orpheus the inventor of music and song. After his death he personified dirges and lamentations.

The "Pythic Nome" and the Dionysian thymelic competitions in music and song have not completely died out in Cyprus. The competitive spirit is still carried on during various celebrations such as the Christ's Baptism Day, Whit-Monday, marriage banquets, fairs on panegyric days and on other occasions. The competitive music festivals "Τοτατρίσματα" include solo or group dances to the music of violin with lute accompaniment, antiphonal solo improvisation of melic distichs, group singing of refrains and solo improvisation on "Αύλός" a locally made reed pipe. The improvisation of melic distichs, as an indivisible entity of poetry and music, has been practised by the Greek poet-musicians since the seventh century B.C., especially during the most flourishing period of the Greek civilisation.

The papyrus with the "Hymn of Praise to the Trinity", third century A.D. found in the Egyptian town Oxyrhynchos and published in 1922, is a document of the oldest Christian church music. It is with a Greek text in the Greek vocal notation. It was formerly thought to have the influence of Greek music but later research indicated it to be rather of Eastern origin.⁽⁴⁾ Its rhythm is prosodic based on the length of syllables. P.H.Lang in his book "Music in Western Civilization" suggests a displacement of the Hebrew melodies as soon as the early Christians came in contact with the Greek civilisation.

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(4) The New Grove Dictionary of Music, Vol. 7, p.670. Wellesz in his theories on Byzantine Music is not in full agreement with some other scholars

It is probable that the early Christian Greeks were singing their hymns after their own musical tradition.

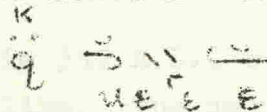
With the development of the Greek language the Byzantines adopted a rhythmatonic poetical metre based on the number and on the dynamic accent of the syllables and not on their duration as short and long.

During the long years of the Turkish occupation of Cyprus, 1570 to 1878, the Greek Cypriots gradually sank into ignorance and illiteracy. As the Turkish government did not provide facilities for Greek education, secret night schools were established in churches. Vespers, matins and morning masses provided opportunities for language and musical education. As from the seventeenth up to the beginning of the twentieth century the former reciprocal influence of folksongs and hymn-tunes ceased, and folk music came directly under the influence of the Byzantine ecclesiastical music.

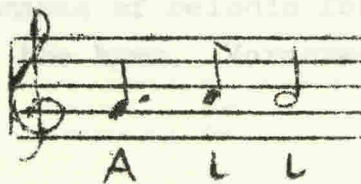
Some of the influences are the following:

- (a) The melodic formulae of the "Octoechos" have been used in genuine or varied forms for the structure of folksong melodies as well as intonation formulae and medial or final cadences.

After the reformation of the Byzantine Church music, by bishop Chrysanthos of Madytos and the other two masters Gregory Levites and the Chartophylax Chourmouziou Yiamalis in 1814, the intonation formula of Echos A' has been thus:



We meet its imitation in many cases such as the beginning of the "Paphitiki Phone" and others

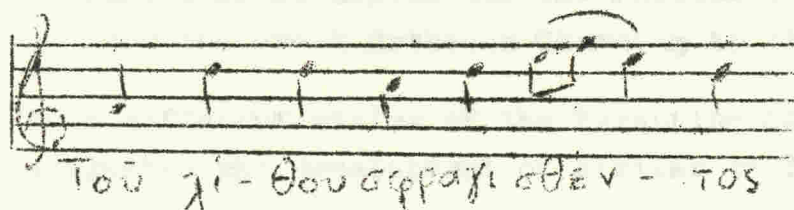


(1) "q" is the space in the staff
 (2) A Byzantine note, quarter of the modern treble
 the Byzantine notes

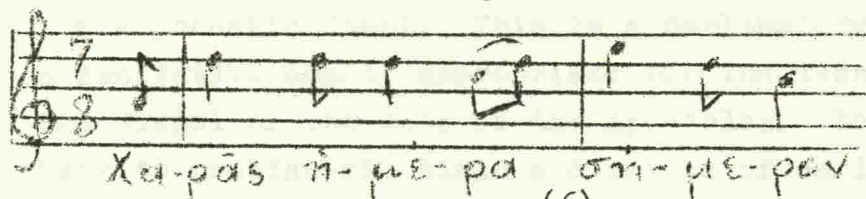
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Another good example is also the Greek Kleftic song "Σαράντα Παλικάρια", Forty Brave Men.

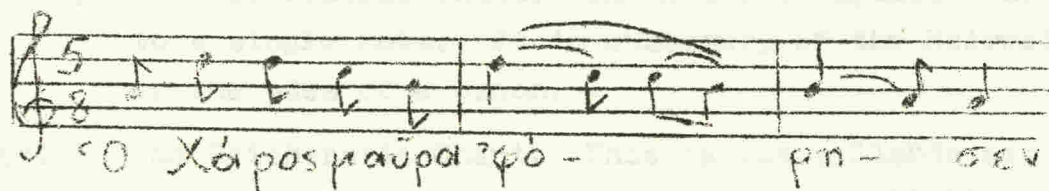
Note "a"⁽⁵⁾ is the pedal note, "Ἰσοκράτημα" in Echos A'. The melody usually begins with the characteristic interval of the perfect fourth as in the "apolytikion", the dismissal hymn:



We have in the "Resurrection Song" a strong imitation:



or in the akritic song of Dighenes⁽⁶⁾



The cadential endings are also very familiar:



The cadential pause is characteristic of the prolonged phrase endings in some of the folksongs.

(b) The Laodicean Council in Syria 342 A.D., commanded by decree what the "Cheironomia" should be like. The magister standing a few steps forward with the chorus behind him would suggest with movements of his hands the performance of melodic formulae of the mode adaptable to the text of the hymn. Moreover the decree

While the Sacrament of Eucharist is being fulfilled
and the clergy avail themselves of Christ's .../..
in the Holy of Holies.

(5) "a" in the space in the clef

(6) A Byzantine hero, guardian of the eastern frontier of the Byzantine Empire

favoured homophonic music for the choruses and monophonic for the magister or the procenter. This synod was against all thymelic music. The Schism of the Eastern and Western Churches in 1054 A.D. is the fundamental cause for the later development of two different musical styles and the exclusion of polyphony and harmony from the Greek Orthodox Church up to the present day.

(c) The four different styles of the Byzantine Church music chanting suggested the development of similar styles in folk music.

- (i) The Ekphonic Chant. This is a declamatory style, a recitativo chant, appropriate for the lessons from the Gospel or the Acts of the Apostles. This goes back to prehistoric times and may be of semitic origin.
- (ii) The Heirmologic Chant. In this each syllable corresponds to a single note. It is customary of the Heirmoi and of the odes of a canon.
- (iii) The Sticheraric Chant. This is not syllabic and occasionally allows two notes for one syllable.
- (iv) The Melismatic Chant. This is called "Παπαδικόν" in Greek. It allows more than two notes for a syllable. It adopts a highly embellished, a coloratura melos, and is probably influenced by Oriental music. Sometimes superficial figuration obscures the original melodic structure and renders the content of the text incomprehensible. It is mainly used in mass where there is a reason for delay, such as in the "Cherubic Hymn", to give the chance to the officiating priest to read in "sotto voce" at the Holy Altar the Communion prayers. It is also used in the "Koinonikon" to allow time for the congregation to pay homage to the Holy Ikons, while the Sacrament of Eucharist is being fulfilled and the clergy avail themselves of Christ's flesh and blood in the Holy of Holies.

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The Paphitiki Phone was created in imitation of the melismatic chant.

(d) A church chanter can perform a hymn text in any authentic or plagal echos. This reminds me of the chanting test demanded in old times for the appointment of a church chanter. If the candidate was not familiar with the neumatic notation he had to chant by rote the phrase "Λουκάνιον, λουκάνιον τζαί φέρτε τό λουκάνιον" "Sausage, sausage and bring out the sausage" in the eight modes of the "Octoechus" in sequence with no pause for easy modulation. The individual freedom in the combination of melodic formulae according to the demands of the text, led post-musicians to a parallel acquisition of a tremendous improvisatory ability, both vocal or instrumental. Once Yehudi Menuhin listening to the improvisations of a folk fiddler in Tehran was asked if he could do the same. He tried but failed; yet he made a frank remark: "I can play the Bach's partitas well but I can't do this. He is a master of his own art".

(e) The fundamental or pedal note sustained, sometimes in islamic nasal quality of tone, by a group of children or grown up apprentices of the art of chanting is imitated by the lute, which monotonizes the tonic chord simultaneously keeping the rhythm of the dance music performed by the violin, sometimes joining in the cadence. The Byzantines did not encourage the growth of instrumental music.

(f) The free rhythmotonic nature of the hymn text, which is often not subordinate to any poetic metre, rendered the Byzantine church music free and "senza misura". An effort to bar such music will result in the frequent change of time-signature according to the accentuation. This, followed in some cases by folk music, led some composers as Bartok and others to follow it in their twentieth century compositions.

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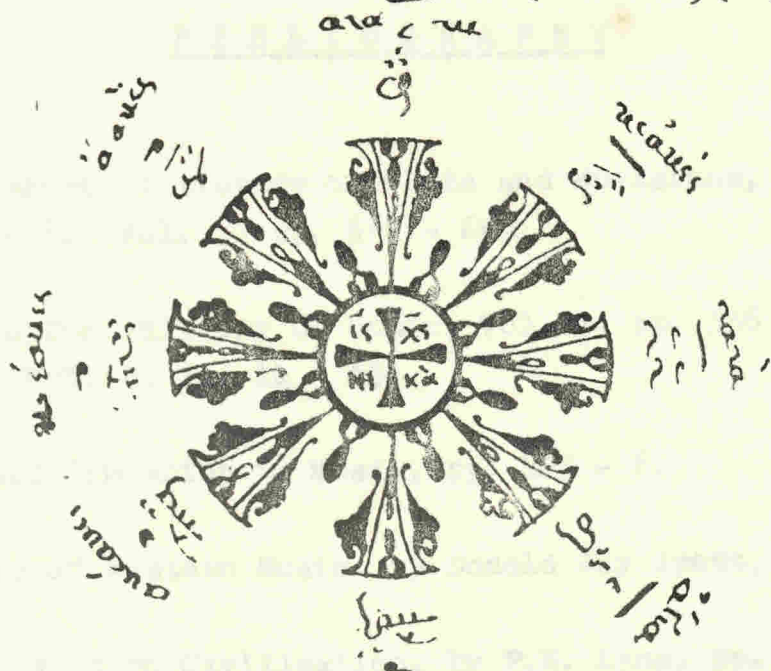
(g) The Byzantine Emperors' acclamations, the polychronia and the Patriarch's and Bishops' euphemiae, created similar hymns in honour of the people undergoing the expenses of a church celebration and wishing them long life. Similarly other hymns were created for the married couple and the baptized child. These form a separate category of hymns, "Θύραθεν Ὑμνοὺς" out door hymns, not included in the "Typikon"⁽⁷⁾ of the church services. The melos of some hymns is even chanted to words of love or funny parodies.

In conclusion, the influence of instrumental music upon the vocal and vice versa, is evident in many cases. Smooth dance melodies were fitted with words and vocal parts have been introduced into the dances.

(7) The Ritual of the Eastern Church

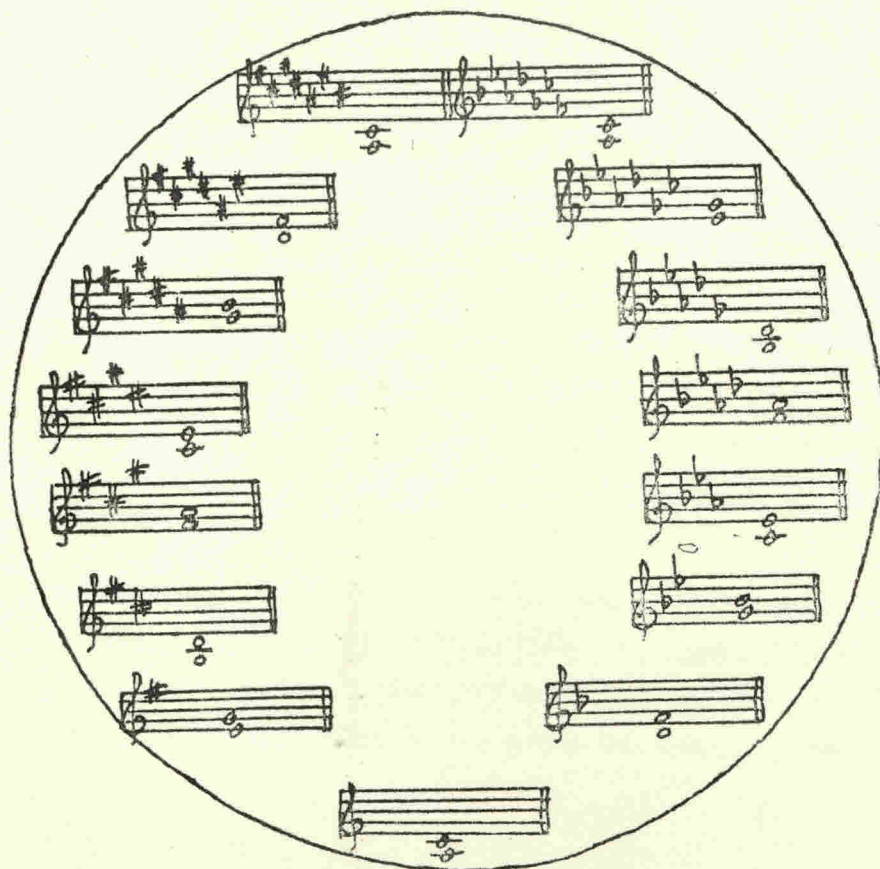


ἰδὲ καὶ τὸ κατωῖον τῶν ὀκτῶ ἡχοῦ.



καὶ ἡμαυτῶν ἀρχιῶν καὶ ἡμαυτῶν
φυγῆν κράτως πρὸς πόρτα θεοῦ

1. Ἡ φωτοτυπία ἐλήφθη ἐκ χειρογράφων τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Κύπρου.



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