Some Remarks on the Art of Exegesis in the Kalophonic Style

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Abstract: The present article focuses on the technique and art of the so-called exegesis, the traditional interpretation of the kalophonic piece Απόλαυε τῶν δακμάτων τὰς ιάτες — Ἐνυγ, seeing the miraculous healings, in honor of St Demetrios, by St John Koukouzeles, in the first authentic mode. It is based on the manuscripts Zakynthos 7, Metochion Panagio Taphou 728, and three Anthologia from the Music School of the Putna Monastery, and highlights several exegetical procedures through microsyntactical and generative analyses of chosen passages of the piece. The profile of the kalophonic melody revealed through the slow exegesis is mainly characterized by stepwise up-and-down movements of the voice around and between the structural notations, with few skips only, and in a perfect balance with the poetical text, which emerges for the singer and the listener syllable by syllable, carried on a continuous melodic flow, a sort of Byzantine ‘unendliche Melodie’.

Keywords: Byzantine chant, kalophonic style, St John Koukouzeles, Mathematarion, exegesis.

1. Introduction

Byzantine kalophonia has been acknowledged to be the peak in the evolution of Psaltic Art so far. A musical expression of hesychasm during the Palaeologan period, it left a strong legacy to the generations of chanters of the post-Byzantine era and comes to be rediscovered with the support of Byzantine musicology since the last decades of the 20th century onwards.1

A crucial point in the study of kalophonia is the issue of exegesis, of traditional rendition of this repertoire which displays wide vocal range through all the registers of the human voice, refined melodic formulas in highly skilful combinations, and subtle modulations: a truly good and beautiful art both on the level of composition and the musical interpretation it calls for.

The quality of the composition is expressed firstly in the late Middle Byzantine notation. By approaching the piece in a preliminary stage through singing the basic metrophonic and rhythmic structure, one cannot but be amazed about the fine equilibrium of the melodic phrases and the harmonic succession of theseis clothing the poetical text with plethora of music rhetorical formulas. The hymnographic text itself is expanded with many repetitions of syllables and words (anagrammatismoi), and lofted into the realm of the ineffable with the insertion of kratemata at different points of the piece.

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Tracing then the history of the transmission of kalophonic mathemata, one comes across the slow exegesis written down by Chourmouzios the Archivist in the first half of the 19th century, which however reflects a much older performance practice of this repertoire.

The aim of this article is to briefly point at some basic techniques which can be observed in the Chourmouzian exegesis of the kalophonic piece Απόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων in honor of St Demetrios, by St John Koukouzeles, in the first authentic mode.¹ The basic sources of investigation are the Mathematariarion Zakynthos 7, an autograph by Gregorios Mpounes Alyates, which can be dated around the middle of the 15th century (1440ies), and Metochion Panagiou Taphou 728, containing Chourmouzios’ handwriting with the exegesis of the piece (around 1830).² Along with the Zakynthian Mathematariarion, which was the Vorlage for Chourmouzios’ slow exegesis, also three Anthologia of the famous Music School of the Putna Monastery have been consulted, belonging the timespan 1400-1545.³

After briefly presenting the text of the aforementioned piece, some paradigms will be shown, which point at basic features of the exegetical craft and art, and lead to a sketch of some conclusions concerning the slow exegesis for the kalophonic mathema and the melodic profile of this repertory.

2. The kalophonic mathema Απόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων: some examples

The kalophonic piece with the incipit Απόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων - Rejoice, seeing the miraculous healings is a so-called anagrammatismos derived from the old style sticheron Ἐυφραίνων ἐν Κυρίῳ πόλις Θεσσαλονίκης – Exult in the Lord, o city of Thessalonica, by Georgios Sikeliotes (SAV 164).⁴

It is one of the seven kalophonic pieces in honor of St Demetrios the Great Martyr and Myroblite, the protector of the aforementioned city,⁵ which in the Zakynthian Mathematariarion is connected to the name of St John Koukouzeles (ca. 1270 - † before 1340).⁶

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¹ This article is part of a research begun in 2020 with the occasion of the 24th edition of the Putna Colloquia and a larger study on the theme is in preparation for a future edition.
⁴ Cf. also plate 23.
More precisely, the chosen kalophonic piece is introduced in Zak. 7, p. 98, by the following rubric:  

The explanations in brackets with the id est are given according to Zak. 7, p. 95. See also the corresponding rubrics in MPT 728, rendered in Στάθης Α.Κ., Αναγραμματισμοί, p. 79.  


Table 1 shows the text of the piece, along with an English translation. This is followed by plate 1 with the beginning of the piece from the Zakynthos Mathematarion, with the insertion of alphabetic transnotation. Plate 2 displays the first four kola of the piece, along with a transcription on staff, which contains the basic interval and rhythmical structure. What is shown in the latter plate is an approach to trace one of the different aspects covered by the old practice of the so-called metrophonia (measuring of the ‘voices’ i.e. of the intervals written in the late Middle Byzantine notation, as measured with the unit of the step [that is the tone, which can be of various sizes, according to its position in the reference mode]).

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**Table 1.a.** The text of the Koukouzelian anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, according to the Mathematarion Zakynthos 7, p. 98-99.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anagrammatismos by St John Koukouzelis, according to Zak. 7, pp. 98-99</th>
<th>Translation of the main verses (without the anagrammatismoi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rejoice in the Lord, city of Thessaloniki, jubilate and dance, illuminated by faith, placard of 1st</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 The explanations in brackets with the id est are given according to Zak. 7, p. 95. See also the corresponding rubrics in MPT 728, rendered in Στάθης Α.Κ., Αναγραμματισμοί, p. 170.  
8 Αναγραμματισμοί is a kalophonic piece based on the text of a troparion from the Old Sticherarion, however with a new order of the verses and many repetitions of words and syllables, highlighting some aspects of the old text, according to the kalophonic composer’s choice. Cf. Στάθης Α.Κ., Αναγραμματισμοί, p. 79.  
Table 1.b. Continuation of the macroform the Koukouzelion anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, according to the Mathematarioν Zakythos 7, p. 98-99.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anagrammatismos by St John Koukouzelos, according to Mathematarioν Zakythos 7, pp. 98-99</th>
<th>Translation of the main verses (without the anagrammatismos)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. Δημήτριον</td>
<td>first authentic having the most glorious Demetrios in your bosom as a treasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. τον πανενδόξον,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. ἐν καλλίστοις</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. κατέχουσα</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. ὡς ἡμεραμούν.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. ἀπόλαυε</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. εὐφραίνου CLIMAX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. εὐφραίνου ZONE, ZENITH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. ἐν Κύπρῳ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. ἂγαλλία</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. τίρπουν</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. ὀρενε</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Και βάλετε</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. καταγραφοῦντα</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. τῶν βασιλείων WORD-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. τα βασιλείαν PAINTING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-52. τιμητί...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. τῶν παρθένων</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. τα δημητρία</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th auth. Enjoy, rejoice in the Lord, jubilate, be delighted, dance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legetos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl. of 1st</td>
<td>And see him dashing down the rashness of the barbars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nenano-pl. of 2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ 1st, barys, 1st</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the rashness of the barbars.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plate 1. The anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, in the first authentic mode, along with an alphabetical transnotation, in blue ink. It starts on D and not on a, as one would do in a first approach (because of the exo signature).12

12 This choice is based on the contextualized study of the anagrammatismos, which includes also some manuscripts of the Putna-School and the slow exegesis by Chourmouzios, which starts on Pa-D. There is also a precious transnotation into staff notation of this piece by Marin Ionescu, published in Gheorghe Ciobanu, Marin Ionescu, and Titus Moiseescu, Școala Muzicală de la Putna. Ms. Nr. 56/544/76 i – P.8 – Stihirar, Transcrieri în notație liniară, Izvoare ale Muzicii Românești 111 8, Transcripta (București: Editura Muzicală, 1984), transcription nr. 12, p. 57-61. The transcriber notes that in a manuscript he consulted (Studion 154, A.D. 1430), the signature contained both the first authentic and the third plagal mode (ibid., p. 61, note 1). See also plate 3. This phenomenon needs further comparative investigation on a larger scale, with sources on Middle Byzantine notation and their exegeses.
In order to explore the phenomenon of the slow exegesis for the kalophonic texture, the entire anagrammatismos Apolaue ton thamaton has been collated according to the following sources: \(^{13}\)

- PII: fragment of an Anthologion (contains mainly kalophonic stichera, and therefore this ms has been usually referred to as Sticheron). A.D. 1400-1450, Library of the Holy Monastery Putna (Romania), n° 56/544/576 I, fols. 95r-96r. \(^{14}\)
- Lm: Anthologion, autograph by the deacon Macarie from the Holy Monastery Dobrovăț, A.D. 1527, today in the library of the Holy Monastery Leimonos, Lesbos (Greece), n° 258, fols. 269r-271r. \(^{15}\)
- I: Anthologion, autograph by the Hieromonk Antonie the Precentor, A.D. 1545, kept in Iași, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară “Mihai Eminescu”, n° î-26, fols. 137r-139v. \(^{16}\)
- Zak. 7 (see details in the introduction), p. 98-99.
- MPT 728 (see details in the introduction), fols. 139v-143v.

Above the neumes from PII and Zak. 7, a microsyntactical analysis is added in violet color, identifying the different kalophonic theses used in the musical texture of the piece. There is a strong consistence among all the manuscripts with late Middle Byzantine notation. Few variations can be observed, however, among the Putna manuscripts which are almost identical to each other in this piece, and the older, Zakynthian copy, as to the occurrence of some great signs, such as lygisma, tromikon a.o. Above the microsyntactical analysis, the use of musical rhetorical devices is shown in green color (polillogia, i.e. sequence, mimesis pros ta nooumena, i.e. word painting a.z.). \(^{17}\)

Zak. 7 is also accompanied by a staff transnotation, whereas below the neumes of the slow exegesis from MPT 728 a schematic transcription is given. \(^{18}\) It shows the melody with its basic rhythm, without containing further ornaments and attractions. These belong to the oral tradition and would display small variations each time the piece is performed by a traditional chanter. Below the transcription, a generative analysis for the exegesis is added in blue color, referring to the following elements:

a. the number of beats per syllable,

b. the melodic contour and the structural notes as revealed in the exegesis (white rhombs show the structural notes, dark ones the edges of the melodic evolvement, oblique lines the stepwise movement of the melody, and the dotted legati show the presence of structural notes at several points of the melodic phrase)

c. the ambitus of the syllable and of the phrase, measured in ‘voices’ (intervals of second, i.e. 0 stands for a prime, 1 for a second, 2 for a third etc.): see plate 3.

The kolon-numbering is shown at the beginning of each line of the slow exegesis. The first number refers to the kola from Zak 7, whereas the second one in smaller case shows the phrases derivated from each kolon through the slow exegesis.

\(^{13}\) For the description of the first three manuscripts which belong to the Putna Music School, cf. Traian Oceaneanu, “The School of Medieval Chant at the Monastery of Putna. Current State of Romanian Research,” Ţcoala de la Putna, Acta Musicae Byzantinae VIII (Iaşi: Centrul de Studii Bizantine, 2005), p. 116-129: 121-125. See also the books mentioned in the following two footnotes.


\(^{18}\) For the alteration signs used in the transcription, cf. ibid., p. 866.
The full collation of the piece led to several observations presented below:

- **Periodicity in the exegesis**: 2 or 4 beats in the exegesis for each sign of the Middlebyzantine notation (p. 11 → plate 4, p. 42), or mainly 8 beats per thesis (p. 80 → plate 22).

- **Ambitus in the exegesis**:
  - per syllable: many times a **fourth**, but also a prime, second, **third**, **fifth** or sixth, depending on the duration of the syllable
  - per phrase: **fourth**, **fifth**, sixth, seventh or octave, again depending on the length of the phrase (p. 74 → plate 21, p. 82-83).

- **Exegeses of different formulas (theses)**:
  - **isotes** (p. 10 → plate 5)
  - **anabasis** (p. 12-13 → plates 7-8, p. 15)
  - **tromikon-strepton** (p. 30 → plate 13, p. 42)

- **Exegeses of descending sequences**:
  - usually different for each melodic cell (p. 23-25 → plates 10-12, p. 32, 38-39)
  - sometimes the same for each melodic cell (p. 80 → plate 22).

- **Almost infinite melodic and rhythmic variations around the structural notes** (p. 36-37 → plates 14-15).

- **The craft of exegesis**: the climax zone with different exegeses for the same chain of neumes in the Middlebyzantine notation (p. 50-54 → plates 16-20).

- **Musical rhetorical devices**:
  - many sequences (always descending), with formulas such as: strangismata, bareia+petaste with lygisma, parakletike
  - wordpainting: zenith on the word εὐφραίνου (rejoice) (p. 50-54 → plates 16-20), and zone of the nadir with chromatic phrases on the text τῶν θαρσών τὰ θράση (rashness of the barbars). This is followed by a kratema which emerges on the syllables tiriri from the last word of the previous text, thrasi (cf. the text of kola 34-37 on table 1).
Plate 6. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 11.

Plate 7. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 12.


Plate 9. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 22.
Plate 14. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 36.

Plate 15. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 37.

Plate 16. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 50.

Plate 17. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 51.
Plate 18. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 52.


Plate 20. Collation of the anagrammatismos Ἀπόλαυε τῶν θαυμάτων, p. 54.

Conclusion

Below one can find some observations towards a rough description of Byzantine melodics, a sort of sketch of its profile in the kalophonic style, as revealed in the exegesis of the kalophonic style by Chourmouzios Chartophylax. Again we include some examples from the anagrammatismos *Apolauve ton iamaton* in honor of St Demetrios, in the first mode (with traits of protobarys):

- The piece can be divided in quaternary meters throughout, with few exceptions only, mainly in the cadential zone, but sometimes also elsewhere in the phrase (see p. 2 of the collation ➔ *plate 4* of this article, and also p. 63, 78-79 of the collation).
- The piece presents an average stepwise movement (ca. 90% of the entire piece).
- As to the skips, most of them are ascendent, especially the bigger ones (fourth, fifth a.o.), and are followed by stepwise compensatory descendent movement.
- Usually there is one skip per kolon (e.g. p. 11 ➔ *plate 6*), but sometimes skips are missing completely (e.g. p. 52 ➔ *plate 18*). More seldom one encounters two skips in a phrase (e.g. p. 1 ➔ *plate 3*).

A hierarchy of notes can be established: 1. structural (melodic pillars), 2. other important notes, 3. melodic passages, broderies, anticipations and delays. The intertwining among them is very subtle and sometimes boundaries are blurred (cf. the generative analysis on the last staff of *plates 3*-22).²⁰
- The persistence of the structural notes is impressive, and sometimes a sort of ‘planing’ around them in a smaller or wider melodic ambitus can be observed (p. 50-53 ➔ *plates 16*-19).
- The kratema displays a different musical texture, with shorter phrases, many repetitions and sequences. The exegesis in the kratema passages is short (p. 74 and 80 ➔ *plates 21 and 22*).²¹

Hopefully further research on the *mathemata* will continue to reveal hitherto hidden aspects and details about the musical texture and modality of the fascinating Byzantine kalophonic repertory and about the oeuvre of great composers such as the ‘master of masters’ St John Koukouzeles and others, which lifted psaltic art to realms of highest musicianship and prayer.

²¹ Cf. also Avartaalou, *Κρατήματα*, p. 460-498.
Plate 23. Icon of St Demetrios the Great Martyr and Myrobolite, adorned with flowers before the procession through the city of Thessalonica on 25th October (around 2015).²² For a history and recent miracles with the myrrh of St Demetrios, cf. Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Γεώργιος Θεοδωρής, Τὸ μύρο τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου (ἱστορία καὶ σύγχρονα θαύματα), 4th enlarged ed. Νίκος Καθαρόπουλος (Θεσσαλονίκη, 2019).
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