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**THE ROMANIAN POLYELEOS IN XIX
CENTURY**

(Summary)

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Scarcely anything has been written so far about the Romanian polyeleos, especially about the nineteenth century one, as stated by Florin Bucescu: “... there is a gap in Romanian musicology, where scarcely anything was written about this musical-liturgical category and about its existence in the nineteenth century”.¹

Several attempts to present the polyeleos, were made by Reverend Florin Bucescu while presenting musical manuscripts in Moldavia. Gheorghe Ciobanu also speaks very briefly about polyeleos, inserting some examples within the context of a study on Monk Filothei's megalynarions, (Cozia monastery). Reverend Ene Braniște comes down to a few liturgical details about the position of polyeleos in the cult, the forms it takes and the psalms that make up these songs. Tangentially, the subject is also touched by Badea Cireșeanu and Reverend S. Popescu but without important details. Perhaps the most important work in this field belongs to Greek Achileas Chaldaiakis and represents his PhD thesis. It focuses on the history of polyeleos, on Greek polyeleos compositions and on the main manuscript sources where these may be found. He also says, like all the rest, that historical information about the presence of polyeleos in divine worship is very little.

As the title of this study states, the subject is the Romanian polyeleos in XIX century, in all its aspects: typological, historical and musical. The project aims to rediscover, arrange, promote and analyze this class of songs, thus capitalizing the cultural and musical heritage of the nineteenth century.

In the present study we tried to present the value of this class of songs, bringing as argument the inherited tradition of manuscripts, insufficiently explored so far, heritage which is extremely important for Romanian musical culture of Byzantine origin and for the musical-historical activity of people interested in this topic.

¹ BUCESCU, Florin, *Cântarea psaltică în manuscrisele moldovenești din secolul al XIX-lea (Ghidul manuscriselor) (Psalt Chanting in Moldavian Manuscripts of XIX Century (Manuscript Guide)*, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2008, p. 98;

The first chapter, entitled “Early Church Polyeleos: Historical, Liturgical, Theoretical and Practical Aspects until the Nineteenth Century”, aims at polyeleos’ reviving its historical origins to the present.

The early Christian cult, based on Jewish liturgical elements, had Old Testament texts in the foreground. The most common form of prayer during early Christianity is, undoubtedly, the reading or singing of psalms. Testimonies on reading or chanting psalms in the early Church are countless. Until centuries IV-V, their reading was general practice, there was even a canon of reading them, both in private and public worship.

From the beginning, when it came to psalmody in the church, people had a very important role. Musicological studies conducted in the early Church show that the contribution of people chanting was done in several ways, the most important musical contribution being that when Christians sang together with the Church singer. There were several types of chant: symphony, antiphony, the Refrain mode and the Response chant.

The first very clear testimony about singing polyeleos (135 psalm with this name) is from the first half of century IV, when the Patriarch of Alexandria, Athanasius, sitting on his throne in the Church, ordered the deacon to read Psalm (probably 135 psalm) for the people to listen and then respond with the refrain that „*His mercy endureth forever.*”

About the inclusion of polyeleos psalms in the liturgical tradition of Matins we heard, as early as VI century, about the two psalms (CXXXIV and CXXXV) being referred to during the year 556. We may also include, without problems, in a logical psalmody sequence psalm CXXXVI representing another type of polyeleos. The form of the Polyeleos dedicated to the Theotokos is a later creation, made of the verses of Psalm 44 and fragments of hymns, concluded with the refrain "Rejoice". Henceforth, the polyeleos is always present in liturgical forms over time until today, in the manuscripts of the Typikon in centuries XIV and XV, the Matins arrangement being nearly identical to that of today.

The term *polyeleos* comes from Greek, where "πολυς" and "ελεος" mean "great mercy" or "much merciful" and is linked to the liturgical tradition of candle (lamp) ignition in the church. This (the word) comes from the chanted repeating after every verse of Psalm 135, called the "Great Alleluia", of the refrain "that His love endureth forever" (οτι εις την αιωνα ελεος αυτου), by which man invokes God's power upon him, more mercy or the benefits of divine Providence. The Polyeleos or the singing of Psalm 135 has its origin in the Old Testament

showing supplication to God in all circumstances, and it is taken over by the New Testament and sent up today. In this sense, the polyeleos psalm is unequivocally one of the oldest hymns of worship in the Orthodox church.

As position in divine worship, the polyeleos is sung at Matins after Sedeln 2 and on Sunday, before the Resurrection Blessings.

Under the name of polyeleos, we have today three distinct forms that are sung at three different times:

1. Polyeleos, generically called "Slaves of God" in two states, often separate, consisting of Ps 134 and 135, and performed at the Lord's and Theotokos' Feasts and during Saint's Feast Days with polyeleos;
2. Polyeleos, "Good Word", consists of verses selected from Psalm 44 and combined with fragments of hymns and sung during the feasts of the Theotokos;
3. Polyeleos "By the waters of Babylon", composed of Psalm 136 verses and read during the first three Sundays of Triodion (Prodigal Son Sunday, Meetfare Sunday, and Cheesefare Sunday);

The Polyeleos "Slaves of the Lord" is composed of the verses of Psalms 134 and 135 and is divided into two states or stances, one for each psalm. Stance or state I (Ps 134) has 21 verses, but the classical melody variant turns it into 40. It is part of Kathisma 19 and in the melodic variant, the acclamation "Alleluia" occurs after each verse. We must note that this psalm was sung entirely, starting with the early period until XIX century, when it begins to be sung "only in selected verses" (four in number). Regarding the polyeleos dedicated to Jesus Christ and to saints with indication, there should be said that, besides singing the Psalm integrally, after it, there did not occur at once the state (stance, form) II (Psalm 135), but at first there was the song "Glory ... and now" with two troparia.

The second state is the one that actually gives its name, polyeleos, and has origins, in terms of literary aspect, in David's Psalm 135. Psalm 135 is composed of 26 verses, all melodic and unfragmented, the way it happens in stance I, the refrain "that his mercy endureth forever" being part of the body of each verse. It was sung, like Psalm 134, entirely, according to the chrysantine reform there appearing a shorter version, in only 4 verses. There is also an organic, poetic, stylistic continuity at all levels between Psalms 134 and 135 in divine worship, and if there are differences nowadays, they are due, mainly, to natural historical development.

Besides the two already mentioned Psalms, 134 and 135, still under the generic name "polyeleos", one may meet the singing of Psalm 136. The three psalms form together state I of Kathisma XIX² and appear to be a common corpus, both as poetic background and structure. It is chanted only during the first three Sundays of Triodion (Prodigal Son Sunday, Meatfare Sunday and Cheesefare Sunday) and expresses the weeping and nostalgia of Hebrew people for the Holy Land, when he was in Babylonian captivity, symbolizing now the Christians' weeping for the paradise lost, that original and happy homeland of man, from which he was expelled and banished because of sin. Given the poetic background that this Polyeleos comes from, the theme it approaches, as well as the typology common to the other two types of polyeleos, we could notice a beginning of its use in the church, even in the early period.

Psalm 136 is composed of 9 verses divided into 12 sticharia, verses 3, 6 and 7 being divided into two parts. Each verse ends with the refrain "Alleluia", like Psalms 134 and 135, making polyeleos real "chorus singing".

The Polyeleos "Good Word" is a song dedicated to the Theotokos and is composed of verses of Psalm 44 with snatches of hymns and prayers. Psalm 44 is part of Kathisma 6 and contains 21 verses chanted with a melody in 18 sticharia. It should be noted that, unlike other forms of polyeleos, where verses were divided to create more sticharia, in this case, the psalm is not rendered completely, but skipped (verses 1-6, 9, 11, 12, 20). One hypothesis is that it came into use in the church during XIX century through the monks of Mount Athos.

The second chapter, entitled "Musical Tradition in Romanian Polyeleos" includes important issues, discovered during research, on the musical tradition of polyeleos in XIX century, with arguments from quoted sources, and for the most part, it includes the systematic presentation of discovered polyeleos incipits as well as manuscript sources and prints for the purposes of easier future research.

In Romanian manuscripts and prints of the nineteenth century, the polyeleos occupies a first rank position, not only because of its large proportions, but also due to composers who have illustrated it. In terms of proportion, the polyeleos was the most striking composition of Matins service in the nineteenth century.

² PSALTIREA Proorocului și Împăratului David (King and Prophet David's PSALM BOOK), Andreiana Publishing House, Sibiu, 2010, pp. 214-217;

In the Romanian polyeleos development of the nineteenth century we may notice two totally distinct phases: one in the first half of the century, when compositions are, many of them, translations from Greek, and, second, in the other half of the century, when we meet only original compositions. The first printed book in Romanian language in the nineteenth century containing polyeleos is the second Tome of the Anthology, edited by Monk Makarios in 1827 in Buzău. From this, we may draw the conclusion that, similar to previous centuries, for quarter of a century, polyeleos circulated all the way through manuscripts. In this second Tome, over 75% of polyeleos compositions come from Greek, and the following authors are presented: Gregorius Protosaltis, Daniil Protosaltis, John Protosaltis, Jacob Protosaltis, Petros Lampadarios, Sinesie of Iviron, Hurmuz Hartofilax and others.

In addition to those listed above, the first half of the nineteenth century asks for attention during the musical times of another lot of Greek authors, among which, representative are: Petros Bereketis, Petros Ephesios, Dionisius Fotino, Meletios of Sinai, Anastasios Rapsaniotis, George the Cretan, Theodore Fokaefs. Translations and adjustability from Greek were also made, beside Monk Makarios, by other major Romanian Protosaltis: Anton Pann, Nectarie Vlahul, Dimitrie Suceveanul, Visarion Nemțeanul, Nectarie Frimu, Iosif Naniescu etc. All these, translations and adjustability from Greek, were part of chant romanization for use in divine worship.

The early nineteenth century Romanian Polyeleos, be it in translations or daring attempts of personal composition, is impressive in size. The 40 sticharia, for example, of Psalm 134, clothed in the sounds of all tones, are presented in papadic octoechos and often in sticheraric mode followed by "Glory ... and now ...", even including "Terirems".

In the first part of the nineteenth century, the polyeleos "Confess to the Lord" used to keep, roughly, the same stylistic expressions as "its elder brother" (Servants of the Lord). Its difficulty in choir interpretation derived from the fact that Psalm 134 ended with "Glory ... and now ..." and important authors were limited in general to compose only the first psalm.

During the century mentioned above, we frequently encounter psalm 134 translated and adjusted from Greek and Psalm 135 in the "original", hence the difference in composition, style or interpretation. Tones and modes were kept in general, for an elegant continuity of the two psalms.

The most used tones to create the music of polyeleos "Confess to the Lord" in the nineteenth century were 5 and 8, with a total of 29 tracks from the 57 presented in this study, and

the most common form found in manuscripts and prints of the time is that of Petros Lampadarios, in tone 5, translated and made suitable by Hieromonk Makarios and which is present in no more than 47 sources.

Romanian composers who translated or composed the polyeleos dedicated to the Theotokos in the nineteenth century, chose its sound vesting in only three tones, of which the most preferred one was tone 4. The most used composition of the nineteenth century and which remained in use until today belongs to Dimitrie Suceveanu and is translated and made suitable according to an older composition of Hurmuz Hartofilax and is found in 15 manuscripts and printed sources.

As modal unit different from the other forms, the polyeleos of Psalm 136 (By the waters of Babylon), is clothed in the sounds of tone 3 or in those of tone 8. The most used stylistic form in the nineteenth century pew belongs to Monk Makarios, composition present in 26 manuscripts and printed sources.

After half of the nineteenth century there is a musical revolution, almost all polyeleos compositions becoming original. If during the first half composers were remarkable personalities of Byzantine music (teachers, monks, bishops), the second half of the century offers a very diverse range of composers, made of copyists, ordinary monks or priests, barely known teachers or even students. Among the composers who draw our attention during this period, we specify Dimitrie Suceveanul, Emanuel and Ioan Zmeu, father and son, George Ucenescu, Irinarh Vântu, Dimitrie Cunțanu, Amfilohie Iordănescu, and others.

Although during the first part of the century there are some details about chanting Psalms 134 and 135 only in the chosen sticharia, however, this work of reducing the polyeleos is perfected during the second half. There are no more compositions of polyeleos in 40 sticharia after mid-nineteenth century and especially after 1860. In fact, the two psalms are generally placed one after the other in source manuscripts and prints, with a stylistic continuity.

One of the most important aspects noticed during the second half of the century is the style of compositions, which becomes much simpler, mostly in the irmologic style or Sticheraric one, very poor in vocal melisma. Melodic monosyllabic constructions are preferred, with little accents and rather poor dynamics. Rhythm is also simple, brevity and sympathy to highlighting text representing the main arguments.

Sources come up with a variety of manuscript holders also flirting with composition, among which we mention: George Ciuhandru, Pană Brăneanu, Nicolae Tărăbuță, Amfilohie Dimitriu, Chiril Monahul, Neofit Ivanovici, Dorotei Iordache, Dimitrie Alexandrescu and many others.

Also, in this section, one may find the systematic presentation of polyeleos incipits discovered in the studied period. The polyeleos presentation was made according to authors, in chronological order. We considered the period in which they lived, and where there were two authors with the same date of birth, we considered the date of their transition to the Lord.

In researching the two stances of polyeleos "Servants of the Lord" (also called the two states), we encountered great difficulties in ranking since we met many cases in which the composition either contained only one of the two stances, or the first one was a translation and adjustment from Greek and the second was the original composition. Therefore, we decided that the two-stance presentation to be done separately as two independent polyeleos, in order to ease the analytical progress and easily identify their belonging to one composer or another.

The third chapter, entitled "The Comparative Musical Analysis of Polyeleos *Servants of the Lord*, Petros Lampadarios' Plagal 1 Mode, Translated and Made Suitable by Several Authors" proposes the musical comparative analysis of polyeleos "Servants of God" in plagal mode 1, composed by Petros Lampadarios, translated and made suitable for Romanian language by Monk Makarios, Visarion Nemțeanul, Anton Pann and Iosif Naniescu as part of chant romanization process (especially of polyeleos) during the mentioned age. From the musical analysis performed we conclude that translating and adjustment of the text in agreement with the music was not possible to be overwhelmingly similar to the original. Therefore, all authors retain the basic idea of composition, such as its specificity: many imperfect cadences in Vu, transient, of course, to be solved in Pa; multiple katabasis lines that polarize around Ga; chromatic modulations where they are present in the original, but they translated and fit the melody in their own style. Makarios stays close to the original in about 60-70%, while Confessor Visarion some more. We would place him somewhere at 70-75%. When it comes to Anton Pann and Iosif Naniescu, things change, they marching more on a personal style. They preserve the original up to 50-60%, that, given the fact that Byzantine music has quite a few musical phrases that are specific to certain tones and are repeated regularly.

In this paper, out of the 400 manuscripts we studied, we presented 196 polyeleos compositions, all in chrysantine notation, in all eight tones, and some even in Guidon notation. The fact that some of them are still current in Romanian church pew demonstrates the uninterrupted tradition of Byzantine music in our country, and therefore, they have had incomparable value by their interpretation for two centuries.

The most preferred tone was tone 8 in which 47 compositions were chanted, followed by tones 5 and 4 with 36, and 32 compositions. At the opposite pole one may discover the chromatic tone 2 only with only 2 compositions. Thus, we notice the composers' inclination to diatonic modes, while the chromatic and enharmonic modes are represented by much less compositions.

Out of the total of 196 compositions, 51 are translations from Greek, while from the remaining 145 compositions, 19 are scores that could not be attributed to any composer.

The most prolific polyeleos composer within this study is the chant master Anton Pann, who is present in this research study with 22 compositions in all tones except tone 3.

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