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Journal of Modern Greek Studies, Volume 32, Number 1, May 2014, pp. 133-163
(Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mgs.2014.0001>



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The “Musical Question” and the Educated Elite of Greek Orthodox Society in Late Nineteenth-Century Constantinople

Merih Erol

Abstract

In the course of the nineteenth century, music became a significant site of social and cultural identification for the educated Greek Orthodox elite in Constantinople. Through a debate on music, the meaning, limits, and historical roots of the nation and Greekness were defined and contested. This article explores the musical discourse produced by Constantinopolitan Greek Orthodox literate groups within the context of a range of broader issues such as class formation, social and national identity, the “ecumenist” politics of the Orthodox Patriarchate, and the ongoing processes of Westernization and modernization, which affected not only the Greek Orthodox but the wider Ottoman society. This was a period of rapid change in the empire especially in the spheres of the economy, administration, and law, as a result of which the administration and organization of the Rum millet were established on new principles. Based on newspapers, journals, the statutes of the voluntary musical associations, articles and treatises of musicological interest, and the printed collections of secular songs, this article demonstrates the variety and complexity of the positions and discourses of cultural identity which existed in the Greek Orthodox community of Constantinople in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Introduction

Ευτέρπη τερπνή μούσα πόσον με τέρπεις,
όταν τα γλυκύπνοα μέλη σου μέλλεις.

Ποτέ μεν μ'απλούς απαλούς διατόνους,
εμβλασμώνεις των παθών μου τους πόνους.

Πάλιν με φθορών το βροντωδές σου έθος,
εξηλεκτρίζεις του νοός μου το νέφος.

Pleasurable muse Euterpe, how you please me
when you sing sweet-breathed tunes.

Sometimes with your simple, soft major tones
you sweeten the grief of my passions.

In turn with your roaring habit of modulation,
you electrify my cloudy mind.¹

Panagiotis Harisis

Music is one of the best locations to search for social and cultural meaning in a given society (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000:37). Musical taste contributes significantly to the identity of class-groups. Thus music-listening or music-making practices are at the heart of social differentiation. Moreover, music establishes a group's relationship to its past(s), and in fact plays a major role in the processes of selection that construct the past(s) by opening up a discursive field. The poem quoted above on the affective powers of music adorns the first page of *Ευτέρπη*, a collection of Greek and Ottoman music by Th. Phocaeus and S. Vyzantios printed in 1830 in Galata, Constantinople. We do not have any information on Panagiotis Harisis, the author of the poem, except that he was one of the subscribers of the collection. The poem conveys a perception of music and musical heritage that was influential throughout the nineteenth century among the educated Greek Orthodox subjects who lived in the urban centers of the Ottoman Empire. The reference to the ancient Greek muse Euterpe in the title of the book and the introductory poem, on the one hand, and the reference to φθοραί, or the modulation signs in Byzantine music, in the poem's body, on the other, anticipate the complex mix in the collection, which included under its Greek heading songs with Arabic-Persian-Turkish lyrics and oriental modes, attesting to the complexity of what constituted Greek identity in nineteenth-century Constantinople.

To date, historians have not devoted much attention to the fervent debates on musical heritage in the Greek Orthodox community in the Ottoman capital. Yet historical records show the debate was quite significant. Beginning in the 1860s, the Greek Orthodox intelligentsia and the *psaltes* (cantors) of the city began to shape a new musical discourse. Since ecclesiastical music was often in the center of those debates, the Patriarchate and the high-ranking clergy became influential agents in the search for a solution of the so-called μουσικό ζήτημα (musical question).² Music came to be perceived as an important marker of identity to such an extent that the challenges regarding the identity and unity of the ethnic-religious community and the issues of social hierarchy and formation of social classes were often addressed with reference to music.

The Ottoman Greeks in the Tanzimat era

During the period of reforms in the Ottoman Empire (1839–1876) collectively known as the Tanzimat, the administration of the Rum millet (Greek Orthodox community) was based on new principles. New regulations instituted the participation of lay (non-clerical) people in administrative matters, such as the election of the Patriarch and the financial management and control over the community churches and schools (Anagnostopoulou 1997; Exertzoglou 1999; Kechriotis 2005; Ozil 2001; Stamatopoulos 2003).³ Significant changes in the fields of law, taxation, and provincial government followed after the two imperial edicts the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu* (The *Gülhane* Edict) and the *Islahat Fermanı* (The Reform Edict) declared in 1839 and 1856. The Tanzimat attempted to create equal citizens before the law regardless of their ethnicity and religion, and so established novel principles of government over the Ottoman subjects. Those principles foresaw the modernization and secularization of Ottoman society. Within this framework, the ethnic-religious communities, the *millet*s, were redefined as modern political entities, and besides their traditional religious identities, they gained a new function as mediators between individuals and the state (Anagnostopoulou 2003; İnalçık 1973; Ortaylı 1983:64–71).

Sia Anagnostopoulou maintains that throughout the Tanzimat era, the Constantinopolitan “μεγάλη αστική ρωμέικη τάξη” (“*haut* Rum bourgeoisie”) (1997:302) adopted a political discourse/ideology—which she designates as “Helleno-Ottomanism”—that combined the political doctrine of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire with the cultural, moral, and economic improvement of the *millet* through its Hellenization (1997:303–304).⁴ However, this particular blend of Ottomanism was far from saving the Orthodox millet from disintegrating in the face of new challenges, particularly the national awakening of Orthodox Bulgarians and the emerging Bulgarian question: the agitation for a Bulgarian Church independent of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. From the 1820s on, the Bulgarian clergy were making occasional demands that Bulgarians, not Greeks, should be appointed to the Bulgarian bishoprics. A Bulgarian cultural awakening and nationalist movement was underway by the mid-nineteenth century. Following the Paris Peace Conference—which terminated the Crimean War (1853–1856)—and the ensuing proclamation of the Reform Edict in 1856, the representatives of Bulgarian towns demanded an independent Church from the Ottoman Grand Vizier Âli Pasha. Subsequently, in 1858 the Orthodox Patriarchate responded to those challenges by appeasements such as appointing Bishop Ilarion Makariopolski—the choice of the rebels from the communities in Bulgarian provinces—as the bishop of the Bulgarian Church in Constantinople, as well as allowing the Bulgarian communities to use Slavic as the Church language in some regions (Roudometof

2001:137–138). Some years later, in 1867, Patriarch Grigorios VI offered to recognize an autonomous Bulgarian Church in the lands between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains. The Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, Nikolai Pavlovic Ignatiev, tried to persuade the Bulgarian leaders to accept this offer, but to no avail. Finally, the Bulgarian Exarchate was established by an imperial *firman* on 11 March 1870 (Dakin 1972:122). As Dimitrios Stamatopoulos notes, the majority of Constantinople's Greek Orthodox educated upper and middle classes took an uncompromising stance (in opposition to the mild approach of the pro-Russian groups within the high clergy), which can be designated as an “ethnocentric” outlook, on the issue of the Bulgarian national movement and the establishment of the Exarchate (2003:310–316; 325–327).⁵ One can safely argue that the Greek voluntary cultural associations (literary, musical, theatrical) founded by educated Constantinopolitan Greeks in those decades were seen, especially by the anxious British authorities, as an antidote to the rise of the pan-Slavic movement in Russia and the Balkans and were supported by them as such.

History writing on the Greek-speaking urban and educated populations in the Ottoman Empire has generally focused on issues of communal administration, education, charity, and health. These were considered the main loci of the competition between different social groups for control over the mechanisms shaping and transforming the members of the millet (Exertzoglou 1995; Ozil 2001; Kanner 2004). These studies have cogently illuminated the relationships between communal hierarchy and the formation and dissemination of national ideology. My purpose in this article is to draw attention to a heretofore unexamined domain, the role of musical discourse in the nation and identity building among the Greek Orthodox in Constantinople in the second part of the nineteenth century. My primary goal is to show that the debates and discourses on music in the Greek Orthodox community can be interpreted in light of issues such as class formation, national and social identity, the “ecumenist” politics of the Orthodox Patriarchate, and processes of Westernization and modernization.⁶ In particular, I examine the actors involved in the reform debates concerning ecclesiastical music, and interpret their arguments and standpoints in view of factors such as social status, politics, and national ideology.⁷ Ultimately, I argue that the learned Greek Orthodox society of nineteenth-century Constantinople projected its ecclesiastical (and folk) music as “remnants” of an ancient past to distinguish its identity as a distinct cultural group within the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional populations of the Ottoman Empire.

The Greek Orthodox, educated “middle class” in nineteenth-century Constantinople

Besides ending with the promulgation of a new reform edict which consolidated the liberal spirit of the Tanzimat, the Crimean War had far-reaching consequences for the finances of the empire. Loans from abroad began to flow into the Empire in 1854, mainly to cover the expenditures of war. The famous bankers of Galata were influential in borrowing part of the money lent to the state from abroad (Zürcher 1993:64). These bankers, collectively known as the Galata bankers, were Jews, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, and Levantines (Kazgan 1991). From the Greek Orthodox community of Constantinople, the Baltazzi brothers should be mentioned. At the same time, the war became a turning point for the start of an intensive period of technological and cultural borrowings from the West. In particular, the long residence of British and French military staff in the imperial capital contributed to the introduction of modern ideas of city planning and new transportation systems. In 1857, an experimental area for urban reform was formed and designated as the Sixth District comprising Pera, Galata, and Tophane (Çelik 1993:45). The beneficiaries of the new, modern, and increasingly Western infrastructure were mostly the new financial and business elite, composed mainly of the notable non-Muslims of the district, the largest group being the Greek Orthodox.

Beginning in the 1840s, wealthy Greek Orthodox families had begun to concentrate in the district of Pera/Beyoğlu, which was close to the business and financial center, Galata. To give an example, mentioning his grandfather Georgios Zarifis’s move from the traditionally Greek neighborhood of Phanar to Pera in 1848, the grandson Georgios L. Zarifis noted the general trend that Greek merchant and banker families followed in those years (Zarifis 2002:115). Pera, as opposed to the older and traditional area of the Greek settlement of Phanar, evolved as a new center within the context of the capitalist and modernist integration of the Ottoman capital into the European world (Çelik 1993; Ozil 2001:49).

In the 1840s, too, venues for European music, such as the Théâtre Naum, began to appear in and around Pera. The district’s Greek Orthodox elite began attending operas and concerts at theaters and clubs, and they generally came to own and play instruments such as the piano or the violin. The growing consumption of Western goods such as the piano among the upper classes, which differentiated them from the less educated and lower social groups, soon became the target of nationalist discourses within the community. According to an article published in the Greek Literary Society’s journal in 1863, Greek Orthodox families in Constantinople spent much more money on piano and vocal music instruction for their children than on their children’s education in the Greek language. The author of the article noted in his criticism of Greek

parents that language formed the basis of an education with national character while musical instruction merely “gave importance to simple ostentation and ornamentation of the individual.”⁸ Similarly, the Orthodox religious hierarchy reprimanded the new-fangled fashion of organizing or attending balls and evenings of dance among the middle and upper social layers of the Greek Orthodox community. Both religious authorities and lay moralists often associated these Westernized habits of the Greek Orthodox urban middle-class with the conspicuous consumption they castigated. Hence, with the rise of the Greek Orthodox middle-class in the nineteenth century in Ottoman cities such as Constantinople, Smyrna, and Salonika, normative discourses of religious origins emerged in the Greek Orthodox communities which saw conspicuous consumption as a threat to traditional Orthodox Christian morality, as Haris Exertzoglou has observed (2003:77–101).

The new patterns of consumption did not just affect the mundane aspects of upper- and middle-class Greeks’ lives, such as their socialization habits and their musical tastes; they also had an impact on their relationship with religion and the public expressions of piety. Recent secondary literature suggests that in the 1860s, the residents of Pera had some degree of autonomy regarding their parish churches. Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont mentions a new Greek Orthodox church constructed in Pera in the aftermath of the Reform Edict (1856), which promised a more liberal attitude towards the non-Muslim subjects of the empire. The Church of Hagios Konstantinos opened its doors on 9 April 1861, more than fifty years after the building of the first church of the Pera/Stavrodromio community, the Church of Panagia in 1804 (2005:195). Greek Orthodox churches in Constantinople were built and renovated by parishioners. At least during the nineteenth century, the Patriarchate of Constantinople did not contribute financially to the construction of a new church. Hence, Anastassiadou-Dumont notes that the absence of financial aid by the Great Church for the construction of the Church of Hagios Konstantinos guaranteed a certain independence to the new core which formed around the church (2005:199).

For Anastassiadou-Dumont, there is a significant contrast between the modest architecture and exterior of the Church of Panagia and the modern, extravagant building of the Church of Hagios Konstantinos, whose façade was decorated with a clock, symbolizing, according to her, “a call for order [. . .], with an aesthetic concern at the heart of the urban planning reforms” (2005:195). It is worth mentioning that the construction of the Church of Hagios Konstantinos was financed with money that was initially earmarked for the construction of a house for the poor in Beyoğlu. Probably this indicates the extreme zeal of the well-off Greek Orthodox subjects living in Pera to construct a new, impressive place of worship through which they could assert both their ethnic-religious identity and their growing social status and economic power.

A satirical criticism of the churches and the present performance of liturgical music

Ioannis M. Raptarhis’s tract *Πικρά η αλήθεια* (*The Truth Is Bitter*) (1860), which the author dedicated to Patriarch Germanos IV (1788 or 1790–1853), is among the most interesting and humorous writings criticizing the Orthodox Church and the performance of liturgical music in the nineteenth century. Raptarhis was a journalist and publisher and lived in Phanar.⁹ In this particular tract, he criticized church board members, singers, and the low-ranking clergy. I will examine Raptarhis’s text in view of two main issues of the day. The first was the problem of the maintenance of the Orthodox community’s integrity and unity in the face of Bulgarian agitation.¹⁰ The second issue derives from what Raptarhis saw as a lack of order in the Church and the mistakes made in services, therefore the responsibilities of the community’s notables who sat on the boards and of the priests and *psaltes* who were directly involved in performing the liturgy.

Raptarhis suggested that a uniform liturgy would keep the community of Orthodox Christians together. He argued that the current lack of order arose from the fact that the liturgy was performed in a mixture of languages (namely Greek and Slavonic) and sung in unharmonious music. He pleaded that the divine melody should rule in “one voice and one language” (1860:20). Referring directly to the Bulgarian question, he also expressed concern that the demands of the Bulgarian churches were detrimental to “the robustness of the holy [Orthodox] churches,” and said that they threatened to endanger the “ecclesiastical stability and unity” and to dismember the integrity of “[our] people . . .” (Raptarhis 1860:52). One of the main underlying themes of his tract was thus the call for the centralization of the church administration, which closely resonated with issues such as the jurisdiction of the Patriarch and the role of the Patriarchal office with respect to other bodies including the Holy Synod and the Mixed Council (Stamatopoulos 2003:159).¹¹

On another level, Raptarhis’s tract provides insight into the educated and literate Greek Orthodox groups’ sentiments and attitudes towards Greek Orthodox locals of lower economic and social status. At the same time, it also reveals the contemporary criticisms of the wealthy upper class expressed through a religious/moralist discourse reprimanding both the weakening of religious sentiments and growing interest in material gain. At the beginning of his essay, Raptarhis poignantly hinted at a decline in the enthusiasm involved in religious observance among his contemporaries, in phrases such as «κατά την εποχήν της ολοσχερούς Εκκλησιαστικής παρακμής και νάρκης» (“during the period of entire ecclesiastical decline and lethargy”) and «εκ της νωθρότητος και αναληθσίας και της ασυγγνώστου ολιγωρίας του κατά θείαν παραχώρησιν» (“due to sluggishness, torpidity and unpardonable negligence regarding the submission to God”) (Raptarhis 1860:5).

There is scant information in the autobiographies and memoirs of individuals who belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire regarding their observance of religious obligations, including the frequency of church visits or fasting. “She was a good Christian,” writes Georgios L. Zarifis about his grandmother Eleni Zarifis (the wife of the banker Georgios Zarifis), “but she did not manifest an exceptional zeal in expressing her religious belief.” He continues:

She went to church only on Sundays and on major feast days, never to the vespers, prayers, or to the Friday prayer to Virgin Mary before Easter. She did not fast more than four or five days a year. Also, I never saw her tending to her icons herself as the other housewives of the time did. Her faith was probably internal; however, her relation to the church and to the symbols of the ritual was purely formal. (Zarifis 2002:82)

One of the central criticisms in Raptarhis’s tract was the extravagant decoration of Orthodox churches. He lamented that «Ημέρα τη ημέρα, του εξωτερικού πολιτισμού αυξάνοντος, εκλείπει δυστυχώς η πρωτοτυπία, ούτως ειπείν, του θρησκευάματος, και πάντες σήμερον περιοριζόμεθα εις τα τυπικά, παρεννοουμένων πολλών αληθειών και υγειών αρχών» (“while the external decoration of churches is embellished, unfortunately the practice of worship within them is losing the originality of the faith, so to speak, and the experience of everyone in church is limited to formality, due to the misunderstanding of many truths and healthy principles”) (Raptarhis 1860:11). Curiously, some years later, Panagiotis Kiltzanidis, a prominent *psaltis*, echoed almost the same despair in the prologue of his book of chanting, *Νέον Αναστασιματάριον* (New Resurrectional Hymnal):

Αλλάρά γε τα χαρμόσυνα της Αναστάσεως άσματα ψαλλόμενα σήμερον εν ταις Εκκλησίαις καθ’εκάστην Κυριακήν, συγκινοῦσι και ευφραίνουσιν ημάς, καθώς συνεκινούντο και ηυφραίνοντο εξ αυτών οι Πατέρες ημών, οι ποιήσαντες και μελωδήσαντες αυτά; Λυπηρόν ότι λιθώδης αναισθησία ως προς τα άσματα της μεγίστης χαράς και ευφροσύνης κατέλαβεν ημάς, και της Ακολουθίας ο χρόνος βάρος ημίν γέγονεν και φορτίον το οποίον φέρομεν εκ τίνος ανάγκης, και δι’ ο πολλοί πολλάκις γογγύζουσι. (Kiltzanidis 1866:γ’-δ’)¹²

But do the joyful Resurrection hymns sung in the churches every Sunday move us and give us the joy they gave our Fathers who wrote and composed them? It is sad that a stony insensitivity toward the chants of greatest joy and happiness has taken hold of us and participation in the service has become burdensome, like a load we carry out of obligation, and on account of that many people are often grumbling about it.

Raptarhis emphasized that after constructing beautiful churches, the parishioners were not attentive enough to the divine service taking place in those churches. Analogous to the beauty of the buildings, he wrote, attention should

be given to ecclesiastical order during the services, and appropriate choir leaders should be employed towards the achievement of a harmonious and correct ecclesiastical chanting (1860:15). According to him, ecclesiastical chanting should comply with the following norms: «πρό πάντων εν τη ιερά υπηρεσία και εν τη ώρα της θείας ιερουργίας, ψάλλοντες ευκρινώς και καθαρώς και μετά της απαιτουμένης προσοχής και ευλαβείας. Πανταχού τέλος βασιλευέτω το ενιαίον και ομοιόμορφον και αρχαϊκόν, ούχι δέ τό καινοτόμον και διαφορότροπον» (“Above all, during the holy service and at the hour of the Divine Liturgy, chanting should be sung distinctly and clearly, with due attention and reverence. Ultimately, unified, homogeneous, old-style singing should prevail everywhere—instead of what is novel and different”) (1860:33). Here, with his emphasis on the “old style,” Raptarhis reveals his stance on the contemporary Westernizing attempts in ecclesiastical music. Like many of his contemporaries, he also pleads for the improvement of church choirs. Without pointing to a specific church or a parish, Raptarhis attacks the abuse and corruption of the church boards, accusing them, among other things, of not choosing appropriate priests or *psaltes* (1860:16, 21).

Music and the discipline of the lower classes

For members of the Greek Orthodox community of Constantinople to join the αστική τάξη (middle class), they had to accept a web of values and adopt practices that symbolically separated them from the “lower” social groups, as Haris Exertzoglou has observed (1996:49). The formation of the middle class largely depended on the enhancement of certain values and the articulation of a reproachful discourse regarding the practices (and the spaces) associated with the poor and uneducated strata of society. For instance, the spaces of popular entertainment such as taverns were depicted as heterogeneous and open places that lacked discipline and moral behavior.¹³

This specific discourse in the Greek Orthodox community criticized not only the lack of order and discipline but also the lack of good taste on the part of the poor and uneducated members of society. Theodore Zeldin writes that popular taste has the appearance of being instinctive or irrational, and it can therefore be looked on as an instance of the resistance of the “primitive” to what is imposed from above (1977:350). Musical taste has been a significant element in the formation and expression of the social identity of the middle class. To explain this phenomenon, Simon Frith asserts that music is a key to identity mainly “because it offers, so intensely, the sense of both self and others, the subjective and the collective” (1996:110). He thus situates aesthetic judgment in the center of the experience of collective identities. By stressing the constructionist aspect of cultural activities, Frith also makes the point that social groups do not simply agree on values, which are then expressed in their cultural activities;

rather they only get to know themselves as groups through cultural activity, through aesthetic judgment (110–111). In his work on the social judgment of taste, Pierre Bourdieu heeds the particularity of musical culture. Unlike other arts, music is closely associated with spirituality and profoundness. Bourdieu writes that to be “insensible to music” represented an especially shameful materialist crudeness (1979:17) for the bourgeois subject, who conceptualized his or her relationship to the people in the mode of the relationship between the soul and the body. The following excerpt from Raptarhis’s tract is an outstanding formulation of the negative judgment of the musical taste of the lower ranks of society. It sees them as fundamentally unable to engage in the spiritual dimension of the music because of the coarseness of the bodily labor by which they earn their keep:

Εἰς πλείστους τῶν σημερινῶν ναῶν βλέπει τις κατέχοντας τὰς θέσεις χοροστατῶν ἢ ψαλτῶν ἀνθρώπους ἀγραμμάτους, βαναύσου ἐπαγγέλματος ἀλιεῖς ἢ παντοπῶλας, μηδεμίαν σχεδὸν γνῶσιν καὶ ἰδέαν ἔχοντας τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς μουσικῆς, ἥτις ἐνῶ προώρισται νὰ ἀνυψῶσιν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, διεγείρουσα ἐν αὐτῇ τὸ θείον ἐκείνο καὶ ἱερὸν μεγαλεῖον καὶ πληροῦσα αὐτὴν ἀφάτου συγκινήσεως, ἀποβαίνει πολλὰκις ὡς ἐκ τῶν ἀμούσων καὶ ἀκανονίστων φωνῶν αὐτῶν ἀνοῦσιον τι καὶ ἀχαρι Μουσῶν μέλος. (Raptarhis 1860:18)

In most of today’s churches, one sees that the choir leaders or the cantors are illiterate men, belonging to the coarser occupations of fishermen or grocerers; they do not have the slightest knowledge or any idea about ecclesiastical music, which is supposed to elevate the soul from the earth to the sky and to stimulate within it that divine and holy grandeur and fill it with ineffable emotion; instead, what often is produced out of their unmusical, tuneless voices is a tasteless, ungraceful melody.

The growing desire among educated Greeks to improve church choirs may not merely have reflected a need to address an aesthetic problem; there seems also to have been a social will to discipline and perhaps also to educate the people from the poor strata. Here, I would like to refer to the social discourse on the *kanonárchēs* (canonarchs, similar to the choristers in Western churches).

In Europe starting from the middle of the nineteenth century, a growing public anxiety about poor children began to haunt the middle classes. Revealingly, a professor of music at Oxford (England) noted at about that time that the chorister boys were selected from the lowest reaches of the society. The professor lamented that these youngsters were “badly schooled, badly cared for in morals and religion, snubbed, despised, slighted and eventually sent forth into the world with no adequate provision for their maintenance” (Ehrlich 1985:94–95). In the Ottoman Empire sometime in the 1860s, according to a recent study, systematic institutional initiatives began to be taken to solve the problem of orphans and destitute and abandoned children (Maksudyan 2008).

Hence it might not be a coincidence that in Raptarhis’s critical essay, the *canonarchs* appear as an emblem of undisciplined children of little means, who are prone to bring forth chaos. They serve as a platform, I think, for the author to pour out his criticism against the lower ranks of society. He refers specifically to «τα ακανόνιστα υποβοηθήματα των λεγομένων κανοναρχών, παιδων πολλάκις εκ της ευτελεστέρας τάξεως του λαού λαμβανομένων, παρεμβαλλόντων τας ατάκτους κραυγάς των εις την τύρβην εκείνην» (“the tuneless assistance of the so-called *canonarchs*, who are mostly children drawn from the most inferior ranks of the folk, interjecting their disorderly cries in that turbulence”) and claims that the cacophony is so great that it gives «ιδέαν του Βαβυλωνίου εκείνου κράματος» (“an idea of the Babylonian mixture”) (Raptarhis 1860:18).¹⁴ Also, the following passage should be noted for the author’s strong disapproval of the undisciplined, crude behavior of the *psaltes* and the defects of the liturgy in Orthodox churches:

ιδομέν πότε δύο ψάλτας ερίσαντας μεταξύ των εν ώρα λειτουργίας ως πρός την εκλογήν ενός τροπαρίου, και μετά τας αλληπαλλήλους διακοπάς και χασμωδίας, ο μὲν εις ἑσαλλεν επιμόνως το ιδικόν του, ο δε ἄλλος το παρ’αυτοῦ προτεινόμενον εις διόρθωσιν, ἐπὶ τέλους δε ο εις παροργισθεὶς εγκατέλειπε μεθ’ ὕβρεων την θέσιν του και ἐξήλθε της εκκλησίας (Raptarhis 1860:19)

I once saw two *psaltes* quarreling between themselves during the liturgy about the choice of the *tropario* [chant] of the day, and after a sequence of repeated interruptions and pauses, one of them insistently chanted his choice, while the other one chanted the one that he had suggested as correct; finally one of them, utterly enraged, abandoned his position with curses and left the church.

Apart from its implicit social connotations, the excerpt may be read as a cry for professionalism in ecclesiastical chanting and for a centralized institutional training of the *psaltes*.¹⁵ In the long footnote that includes these sentences, Raptarhis explains why he wrote an essay so critical of the Orthodox churches. According to him, the general lack of order, discipline, and manners in Greek Orthodox churches and the present poor state of the performance of the liturgy harmed the image of the ethnic-religious community, especially in the eyes of outsiders. The journalist seems affected deeply by a sense of collective insult. In his words, he was moved to write «εκ της εθνικῆς ημῶν φιλοτιμίας μη ανεχομένης οράν το ημέτερον ἔθνος προσβαλλόμενον ὑπὸ των ξένων» (“out of our national honor, not being able to endure seeing our nation insulted by foreigners”) (Raptarhis 1860:19). His comment suggests that in the middle of the nineteenth century, members of the Greek Orthodox community in Constantinople perceived church service and one of its most definitive aspects, liturgical music, as crucial determinants of ethnic/national dignity. Indeed, there was an intense debate on music within the Greek Orthodox community, relating music to certain social and political concerns and

conceptualizing it as a kind of bonding agent for the unity of the Church and the Greek nation.

The Musical Society of Constantinople

Ο εν Κωνσταντινούπολει Μουσικός Σύλλογος (The Musical Society of Constantinople, MSC), was founded by local Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects in April 1863 in Pera, and functioned in the community school of Panagia.¹⁶ Its chairman was Dimitrios Paspallis, a prominent banker and businessman from the parish of Pera/Stavrodromio. Paspallis belonged to the group of bankers in Constantinople who supported the reforms of the 1860s and 1870s, and was the business partner of the famous banker Christakis Zografos (Stamatopoulos 2003:452). Paspallis knew both ecclesiastical and European music well. It seems that certain community members with important social and political power contributed to the formation of the musical society; for instance the member of the prominent neo-Phanariot family Stavrakis Aristarhis was also involved in the foundation of the musical society. Furthermore, the Greek Orthodox intelligentsia supported the Society, offering enthusiasm and expertise. One of the founders of the Society, the medical doctor Heracles Vasiadis, who was also chairman of the Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος (Greek Literary Society), was an ardent classicist and connoisseur of the art of Classical Greece. Regarding the “continuity” issue of “modern” Greeks in relation to Greeks of the ancient past, he defended an idealized picture of Greek antiquity in contrast to the model of coexistence of the Greek Orthodox populations within the context of Ottoman “multiculturalism” (Stamatopoulos 2007:82). The General Secretary of the Musical Society of Constantinople was Andreas Spatharis (1837–1901). He received a university education in Berlin and, upon his return to Constantinople, worked as a physics and mathematics teacher at various Greek Orthodox high schools, in particular at the Great School of the Nation. At the same time, he took part in various commissions assembled by certain Patriarchs and other patrons for the examination of ecclesiastical music and its restoration to its “original” form against the supporters of Westernizing polyphonic church music (Kasianis 1976:32–33). Spatharis conducted experiments in the physical qualities of sound and he calculated the ratios of musical intervals. His scientific contribution legitimized the work of the commissions appointed for the solution of the “musical question,” since science was seen as equivalent to “progress” in the high age of Ottoman modernization.

Among the initiators of the musical society were numerous *psaltes* employed, by and large, in the churches in the districts of Pera, Galata, and Tatavla. As mentioned earlier, Pera/Beyoğlu in particular, where the musical society was located, had become the center of European lifestyles, habits, and consumption patterns in Constantinople in the middle of the

nineteenth century. New patterns of sociability had emerged in spaces including theaters, European-style cafes, patisseries, and cultural associations. The multi-ethnic financial and intellectual elite of the city who frequented those venues exchanged and cultivated views that envisioned a modern, rational, and secular society.

The perception of music that was influential among the educated elite in Greek Orthodox society throughout the nineteenth century attributed a civilizing quality to music, which was hardly emphasized to the same extent with respect to the other arts. The myth of Orpheus was a frequent reference combining the message of the “civilizing mission” of music with a reverence for ancient Greece, a past towards which the Greek Orthodox community felt a particular cultural attachment that made it one of the central elements in its identity discourses. The affective powers of music were underlined with reference to the legendarily civilizing figure of Orpheus, who could tame animals, stop the flow of rivers, and hence control the natural forces with the music of his lyre. Literate Constantinopolitan Greeks made the lyre of Orpheus the logo of the Musical Society. That choice is telling for two reasons. First, it affirmed their identity as Greeks by paying tribute to the ancient Greek ideal, which they considered to be their own past. Second, it aligned Constantinopolitan Greeks both with the ancients and with contemporary Europe in its associations with championing the moral mission attributed to music. Indeed, just by establishing a musical society, the group revealed its members’ belief in the transformative, and indeed the pedagogical, power of music over the social influences of their own community and the larger society in which they were situated. Furthermore, for the nineteenth-century educated elite, music was science as much as it was art—and we should not forget that “science” and its twin, “objectivity,” were among the engagements and values supported by the rising middle classes. The abundance of terms in the statute of the Musical Society, such as εξακρίβωση (verification), διασάφηση (clarification), and πιστή και ακριβής γραφή/μετάγραφή (true and precise writing/transcription of music), reflects this attitude clearly.

The founding aim of the Musical Society of Constantinople was «η εξακρίβωσις, ανάπτυξις και διάδοσις της εθνικής ημών μουσικής, ιεράς τε και κοσμικής, κατά τε πράξιν και θεωρίαν» (“the ascertainment, development, and dissemination of [our] national religious and secular music, regarding both its practice and its theory”).¹⁷ To achieve this aim, the members of the Society undertook what we might call an “archaeological excavation” into the past layers of music history, striving to discover the historical connections of present and past.¹⁸ Music history became a subject of intellectual and ideological concern for the nineteenth-century Greek intelligentsia, mainly because, for the making of a glorious national past, the contemporary music of Greeks had to be linked to the music of ancient Greece. It should be noted that the “musical

question,” with its various aspects, was by no means limited to Constantinople. Almost a decade later, a Greek Orthodox cleric from Trieste, Eustratios Thereianos, published a treatise in which he aimed to show that the Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical music descended from ancient Greek music (1875). In his essay, he also addressed the question of the relationship between the music of the ancients and that of the contemporary Europeans. By arguing for the greater divergence of European music from the music of ancient Greece, on the one hand, and the proximity of Greek ecclesiastical music to ancient Greek music, he tried to prove that the Greek Orthodox hymns had a stronger claim on the musical legacy of ancient Greece, and so to persuade his readers that Greek ecclesiastical music should not be harmonized according to the polyphonic system of Western European music.

Another musical inquiry engaged the history of music in order to work through the relationship of the Greek and the foreigner, both Eastern and Western.¹⁹ In the middle decades of the century, educated Greeks of Constantinople were intrigued by the historical relationship of Greeks to those people perceived as Asian.²⁰ Regarding the musical discourse, the general tendency was to argue that features and components of Asian (sometimes referred to as “Eastern” or “Ottoman”) music were not foreign but were instead authentically Greek. Heracles Vasiadis, for example, during a public lecture at the Greek Literary Society, stated that the rhythms employed in ecclesiastical music, which were “inserted by the Ottomans,” were “nothing but Greek in Asian form.”²¹ Folk music was a favored field of interest for questions of continuity and authenticity. The Musical Society mentioned in its statute its goal to document national folk songs: «Πιστή και ακριβής γραφή, καθ’οιανδήποτε μέθοδον, των μελών των εθνικών ημών ασμάτων, παλαιών τε και νεωτέρων, ηρωϊκών, εορταστικών» (“Faithful and accurate notation, by whichever method of the melodies of our national songs, both old and new, heroic [and] celebratory”).²² Needless to say, this phenomenon had its ideological and conceptual origins in German Romantic nationalism, which asserted that the character or “soul” of a nation was preserved in its folk melodies. What is especially interesting, and what breaks the anticipated mold of Romantic nationalism, is the attention the Society also paid to accurately recording the folk melodies of non-Greek neighboring peoples, e.g., Albanians, Slavs, Moldovlachs, and Turks: «Πιστή και ακριβής σημείωσις, δέκατέρας της γραφής καθαρώς δημοτικών μελών άλλων έθνων, και μάλιστα περιοίκων, οίον, Αλβανών, Σλάβων, Μολδοβλάχων, Τούρκων κλπ» (“The faithful and accurate notation, by notating each individually, of purely demotic melodies of other nations, especially those close by, such as the Albanians, Slavs, Moldovlachs, Turks, etc.”).²³ Constantinopolitan Greeks’ interest in the folksongs of Albanians, Bulgarians, Turks, and Vlachs may reflect a desire to compare those songs with what they imagined as the corpus of a Greek folk music, and thus to draw the borders of a distinct Greek

folk music tradition. Or, considering that in the nineteenth century the nations mentioned here were also claiming historical rights to the same geography as Greeks, namely Thrace and Macedonia, their study of the folk music cultures of these ethnic groups might be related to the hope of proving their assimilation by Greek culture/Hellenism. Due to the lack of further evidence, both are speculations. However, whatever the motivation, concerning the music of the Orthodox Church, their approach seems to be relatively inclusive.

The MSC encouraged research on particular local traditions of Orthodox ecclesiastical music. After the fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century, the chanting tradition of Byzantine Greeks survived in monasteries around the Mediterranean, mainly in the churches of the Peloponnese, and in Crete, where it was brought by immigrants from Constantinople who settled on the island, including the famous church musicians Ioannis Laskaris and Manouel Doukas Chrysochris (Romanou 2009:106). In the seventeenth century, after the capture of Crete by the Ottomans, the Cretans who immigrated to the Ionian Islands brought a revival of Byzantine chant, which became known as the basis of the polyphonic chanting of the Ionian Islands, as Katy Romanou observes (2009:106). Thus it is not surprising that the members of the MSC, interested in discovering a purer Byzantine style, encouraged research on the ecclesiastical music traditions in Crete and the Ionian Islands: «Πιστή και ακριβής σημείωσις, δέκατέρας της γραφής του λεγομένου Κρητικού ύφους των εκκλησιαστικών ημών ασμάτων, ως ψάλλονται εν ταίς εκκλησίαις της Επτανήσου, της Κρήτης και αλλαχού» (“Faithful and accurate notation of each one individually of the so-called Cretan style of our ecclesiastical hymns, as they are chanted in the churches of the Ionian Islands, Crete, and elsewhere”).²⁴ Furthermore, in 1867, the Musical Society commissioned a treatise on ecclesiastical music of the Ionian Islands by Panagiotis Gritsanis, a musician originally from Zante (Gritsanis 1867). The Ionian Islands had recently been annexed to Greece after the half-century of British rule (1814–1864). The particular assignment of the treatise was “an attempt to show that the Orthodox tradition in the Ionian Islands was not alienated from the tradition of Constantinople,” as Romanou has noted (2009:106). In order to prove that the ecclesiastical music tradition of the Great Church embraced all variants used in different Orthodox contexts, the MSC expressed interest also in non-Greek liturgical music traditions «ως και του παρά Σλάβοις Βουλγαρικού εκκλησιαστικού ύφους» (“also for the Bulgarian ecclesiastical style of the Slavs”). However, while the “center” avoided the alienation of the local and peripheral traditions, at the same time it projected the Great Church of Constantinople as the ultimate representative of the Byzantine musical tradition, and invited «αντιπάρθεσις των μελών τούτων προς τα παρ’ἡμῖν κατά την Βυζαντινήν ἢ Αθωνιάδα παράδοσιν ψαλλόμενα» (“the comparison [of other music] with the melodies chanted by us, according to the Byzantine or Mt. Athos tradition”).

The debate on the reform of ecclesiastical music

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Greek Orthodox churches in various cities of Europe, most particularly in Vienna, moved away from the traditional monophonic music of the Eastern Orthodox Church and adopted a liturgical music which was modernized according to the rules of European polyphony.²⁵ More specifically, the general practice was to harmonize the existing ecclesiastical hymns, re-composing them for four voices accompanied by the piano. The main architects of this reform movement, which started in the 1840s, are known to be the Greek chanter Ioannis H. N. Haviaras, a teacher of ancient Greek philology at the Greek school of Vienna, and his colleague, Benedict Randhartinger, the palace chapel meister.²⁶ However, the musical tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church was understood by many to demarcate the line between foreignness and Greekness. Mingling with the urban elite of Vienna and sharing certain musical tastes with them, the members of the Viennese Greek community identified themselves with liberal, progressive, and secular worldviews. However, this was at the cost of facing the accusations of the church authorities against them that they had adopted foreign habits. Similar dilemmas and polarizations were common in the Kingdom of Greece. The increasing presence of European music in the public spaces of Athens caused anxiety in certain circles, which expressed itself against the spread of European culture, which people saw as threatening for the future of both Greece and Hellenism (Vernardakis 1873:5–8). Hence, the zeal concerning the improvement of the existing state of religious and secular music did not leave the educated classes in the Greek capital unaffected. A decade after the formation of the Musical Society of Constantinople, in 1873 an ecclesiastical musical society was established in Athens, according to a contemporary, “by men who were zealously committed to patriotism, aspiring to ameliorate the unpleasant situation of music in the city of Pallas Athena” (Papadopoulos 1890:394–395).

The hyphos of the Great Church

During the nineteenth century, the key notion of ὑφος (*hyphos*, manner), or “the manner of the Great Church,” emerged as a concept and ideal that referred both to a certain reform vision regarding ecclesiastical music and to the authority of the Patriarchate in Constantinople over the musical tradition of the Church. It designated the Great Church of Constantinople as the source of the “genuine” chanting style of the Orthodox Church and the core of ecumenical Orthodoxy. According to Antonis Aligizakis, the term *hyphos* began to appear in the titles of ecclesiastical chant collections in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the ecclesiastical chanting style in Constantinople developed its own exclusive traits (2008:75). One of its typical examples is the

first Patriarchal edition of the *Τυπικόν εκκλησιαστικόν κατά το ύφος της του Χριστού Μεγάλης Εκκλησίας* (*Ecclesiastical Ritual according to the Hyphos of the Great Church of Christ*) (publ. in 1838 and 2nd ed. in 1842), edited by the *Protosaltis* of the Great Church, Konstantinos Vyzantios (Terzopoulos 2004). In the following decades, the motif of *hyphos* often appeared in the liturgical music books and became one of the major elements in musical discourse. For instance, in the prologue to the fourth edition of the collection of liturgical chants *Ταμείον Ανθολογίας* (*Treasury of Anthology*), published by Theodore Phocaeus, the publisher used phrases such as «το ύφος και το μέλος της καθιερωμένης Εκκλησιαστικής Μουσικής» (“the *hyphos* and the melody of the established ecclesiastical music”) or «από τοσούτων ήδη αιώνων καθιερωμένου εκκλησιαστικού ύφους» (“the ecclesiastical *hyphos* already established many centuries ago”) (Phocaeus 1851).

In 1870, a letter sent by the Patriarchate to the Metropolitan of Amaseia/Amasya Sophronios employed the term *hyphos* to articulate a long tradition of ecclesiastical music. In the letter, the Metropolitan was notified that a Greek Orthodox family in Sinope/Sinop possessed a manuscript book on parchment, dated to the eleventh century, which contained ancient music lessons from the Byzantine period written in the musical characters of that time. The Metropolitan was requested to persuade the family to deliver the book to the Patriarchate so that it could be examined by expert musicians, with the expectation that their studying the ancient notation system used in the manuscript would be useful for the restoration of the *hyphos* of ecclesiastical music.²⁷ The same term was used in specific contexts to emphasize and exercise the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In 1886, the Patriarchate demanded from the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki Grigorios the rejection of the book *Εγκόλπιον Ιεροψάλτου* (*Cantor’s Handbook*) published by Dimitris Voulgarakis, saying that the three-member special commission formed by the Holy Synod banned the use of the book due to its corruption of the ancient traditional *hyphos* through the alteration of the ancient original forms of the ecclesiastical chants.²⁸

Actors and events in the “musical question”

In 1877, the Greek Literary Society formed a musical commission to work on the present issues of musicological concern.²⁹ The commission’s main goals were the studying of music and “its elevation to its previous status and eminence.” More precisely, the commission would prepare a system of music instruction to be used in the Greek Orthodox schools modeled on the pedagogical approaches employed by “civilized nations” to “cultivate a moral aesthetics of music” in the people. The commission also decided to write down some of the church chants and old hymns in European notation. This was, in fact, a radical decision, which drew the opposition of certain *psaltes* within the community.³⁰

In 1878, the “musical question” became more urgent when the members of the parish commission of the Church of Panagia in Pera/Stavrodromio attempted to use polyphonic music in their divine services. Subsequently, the Patriarchate warned the board of the Church of Panagia, saying that its members “ignored the fact that the limits of the jurisdiction of the parish commission extend by no means beyond the administration of the finances; they transgressed those and interfered with the rights of the highest spiritual authority, the Great Church, on which the spiritual regulation and the provision of the churches depended.”³¹

In the last months of 1879, the ongoing debates about the continuity of the Greek musical tradition and the existing unsatisfactory state of liturgical music came to a point of crisis in which two different models of reform clashed in the columns of the newspaper *Neologos*. One proposed remedy emphasized the importance of the investigation of the theoretical problems. It prioritized research into the ancient musical treatises, with an implicit aim to restore the dignity of music in the Eastern Orthodox Church by attributing to it an ancient past. The other model of reform adopted a more practical approach, which avoided extensive and burdensome work on the theoretical issues, and insisted on the systematization and improvement of ecclesiastical music using modern, “scientific” means.

A polemical debate between two major *psaltes* is interesting. Eustratios Papadopoulos, *Protopsaltis* at the Church of Eisodion in Pera/Stavrodromio, claimed that after the fall of Constantinople, due to the dissolution of the Music School and mixing with Turks for a long time, the ancient τρόποι (patterns) and the ecclesiastical ήχοι (tones or modes) degenerated, their intervals changed, and the ελάσσον (the minor tone) emerged on account of the ignorance and bad habits of the cantors (Papadopoulos 1879). Rejecting the argument of the former, the erudite *psaltis* Panagiotis Kiltzanidis asserted that the three kinds of music described by the ancients—diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic—were still extant in contemporary Greek music (Kiltzanidis 1879:5). He also wrote that ecclesiastical music was as ancient and εθνική (national) as the Greek language, and that the first Church Fathers and musicians inherited the music together with the language from their ancient ancestors (Kiltzanidis 1879:2).

Interestingly enough, during the heated musicological debates among the church singers, the banker Dimitrios Paspallis wrote an article in *Neologos* entitled “To those concerned with the rectification and improvement of our ecclesiastical music.”³² He called on the *psaltes* to abandon their theoretical discussions, which “brought no benefit to the public,” and appealed to the Patriarch for a reform of the chanting practice. Paspallis insisted that the present performance of liturgical music repelled the Christians so much that some of them stopped going to the church. After publishing Paspallis’s article, the editors of *Neologos* refused to publish Kiltzanidis’s theoretical article,

saying that there was no one in this world who could understand it and that Paspallis’s article had already given an answer to the theoretical discussions. Kiltzanidis criticized Paspallis’s practical approach to the issue of reform as well as his total rejection of theoretical discussions about the tones and species in music, saying that they were fiction. However, as he wrote in *Neologos*, for Paspallis the main issue was that the contemporary church music was not pleasing the congregation and not appealing to it aesthetically in the way it was performed, due to the arbitrariness and the ignorance of the *psaltes* (echoing I. Raptarhis’s discourse). Furthermore, he put forward the view that after the fall of Constantinople, except in Mount Athos, the musical tradition could not be maintained intact, the knowledge of the old notation dwindled, and a corruption of taste and the insertion of Asian/Turkish idioms prevailed. However, he also encouraged the restoration of the music, saying that it was possible to clear it of its “foreign and barbarian” elements and to reendow it with its ancient beauty and simplicity. Subsequently, Paspallis prescribed the following points for the improvement of ecclesiastical music. He called, first, for the establishment of a musical council assembled from impartial musicians who knew the scientific system of European music; second, the compilation of a new, systematic anthology of ecclesiastical chants complying with the ancient prototypes and purified of all «κακόφωνη οθνεία» (“cacophonous strangeness”) and «θηλυπρεπής χαρακτήρας» (“effeminate character”) (Kiltzanidis 1881:37); third, the enforcement of brief, dignified, and unified chanting in the churches and the punishment of the arbitrary behavior of *psaltes* during the liturgy. Finally, according to Paspallis, the slow hymns chanted on important feast days had to be reformed by removing the «ασημάντους βαρβαρικός και ξενικός συλλαβάς» (“meaningless, barbarian, and foreign syllables”) (1881:38).

The public discourse on traditional ecclesiastical music was full of such Orientalist descriptions.³³ In 1874, Isidoros Skylitzis, a journalist from Athens, wrote in the Athenian newspaper *Efimeris* that Byzantine music (read: ecclesiastical music) was “no more than a barbarian medley of Jewish, Arabian and Turkish loans.” He recommended the introduction of polyphonic music to church services, particularly the Italian style, which, according to him, was the only true descendant of ancient Greek music (Hatzipantazis 1986:38–39).

In January 1880, Patriarch Joachim III responded to these debates in the community by issuing two encyclicals addressing the *psaltes* of Constantinople. These decreed that *psaltes* should chant plainly, keeping the rhythm, in a modest, calm, dignified, clear, non-ostentatious, and melodic manner: «ανάλογον πρὸς τα θεία αὐτῆς ἄσματα, ἔχουσιν το μεγαλοπρεπές ἐν τῆ ἀπλότητι, το τερπνόν ἐν τῆ εὐρυθμία καὶ το σεμνόν ἐν τῆ μετὰ ταπεινότητος, ἡρεμίας καὶ κατανύξεως καθαρὰ, εὐκρινεῖ, ἀπερίττω καὶ ἐμμελεῖ ψαλμωδία» (“chanting [which is] in compliance with the sacredness of these hymns, being

magnificent in its simplicity, pleasurable in its harmony, decent in its modesty, calm and dignified in its clarity, non-ostentatious, and melodic”) (Papadopoulos 1890:421). The encyclicals also warned the cantors and the *canonarchs* about their attire, which was expected to be uniform and decent. The first encyclical lauded ecclesiastical music as a valuable heritage, which had to be improved and elevated, as its source was the music of the ancient Greeks (Papadopoulos 1890:420). The second encyclical targeted the parish church boards by stating: «Ουδεις δέ προϊστάμενος ιεράς εκκλησίας, η έφορος, η πρόκριτος δύναται να καταναγκάσει τον ιεροψάλτην ίνα ψάλλη τι απάδον τη παρούση εγκυκλίω» (“No presiding clergy of the holy Church, trustee, or notable can force the cantor to chant in a way that is incompatible with the present encyclical”) (Papadopoulos 1890:424). This was probably a reminder of attempts to introduce polyphonic music to the Church of Panagia in Pera/Stavrodromio in 1878, and was closely linked to Joachim’s general determination to prevent the trampling of the ecclesiastical and the clerical element by the lay elite. As far as his general policy was concerned, he defended the position of the high clergy also in the administrative matters of the community.

Joachim III advocated an “Orthodox Commonwealth,” and during his term, the Patriarchate of Constantinople claimed and tried to protect its rights in administering the Orthodox populations against the challenges of both the Hellenic state and the Ottoman government (Exertzoglou 1992; Kechriotis 2007; Kofos 1986). His stance on the “musical question” cannot be separated from his general attitude of taking a distance from a single ethnic identification and his ideal of consolidating the Patriarchate of Constantinople as the sole institution, which preserved and promoted a religious tradition that united all the Orthodox in an ecumenical sense. His particular interest in the “musical question” was closely connected with his promotion of the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church (hence its liturgical music) and his advocacy of an ecumenist discourse focused on Constantinople as its center.

In 1881, the Patriarch formed a committee composed of the prominent church musicians of the city and assigned them «την τακτοποίηση και την διακανόνιση» (“the ordering and settlement”) of ecclesiastical music and its «καθαρισμός» (“purge”) of foreign melodies that did not exist in the ancient music (Ekklesiastiki Aletheia 1881:47). The Patriarchal Musical Committee consisted of the Archimandrite Germanos Aftionidis, Andreas Spatharis, the *Protopsaltis* of the Patriarchate Georgios Violakis, the *psaltis* Ioasaf Rossos, the *Protopsaltis* of the Church of Eisodion in Pera Eustratios Papadopoulos, and finally the *Protopsaltis* of the Church of Neohorio (Yeniköy) Nikolaos Ioannidis (Ekklesiastiki Aletheia 1881:47).

After nine meetings, the Musical Committee submitted a report to the Patriarch on 25 March 1881, emphasizing the need to construct a special musical instrument, which could produce the tones of ecclesiastical music. In 1882, the

Patriarchate sent a letter to the chairman of the Committee, G. Afthonidis, rendering its approval for the construction of an organ according to the new division of the tonal intervals (the “scientific division,” as the letter said), on which the Committee was working, and authorized the use of the new instrument in the instruction of music.³⁴ Wealthy and generous members of the community financed the construction of the musical instrument. In 1883, the prominent merchant Stefanos Zafeiropoulos donated 300 liras to be used for various purposes related to the improvement of ecclesiastical music and the financing of the Music School. In the relevant correspondence between the parties, the following points were emphasized: the “purging” of the ethnic-religious heritage and the “scientific” nature of the research that was being done. The letter sent by the Patriarchate to Zafeiropoulos informed him that about 100 liras of his donation would be reserved for the construction of a new instrument at a European factory. According to the letter, this new instrument would have an extraordinary effect not only on ecclesiastical music, which it would save from «ολεθρίας ξενικής επιρροής» (“devastating foreign influence”), «αλλά και εις τον μουσικόν εν γένει κόσμον ίνα παρασθή αφορμή νέας κινήσεως και ζωής και χειραγωγήσιν εις μέρη τέως άδυστα της απεράντου ταύτης επιστήμης τους εν αυτή ασχολουμένους» (“but also on the musical world in general, as it would provide an occasion for a new movement and life, and guidance for those who have been studying this vast science in its hitherto inaccessible parts”).³⁵

The Musical Committee used modern means to rectify the execution of church chant. It aimed to eliminate arbitrariness by standardizing and improving the instruction of music through the use of an organ. The organ or *psalterion*, which could produce the scales of the eight ήχοι (ecclesiastical modes), was shown to the Patriarch and other church officials and then installed in the Sixth Music School of the Great Church, to be used in teaching.³⁶ The Committee also gave the ecclesiastical chants a constant and precise tempo through the use of a metronome, with an expectation of establishing a uniform chanting with homogeneous sound in the church choirs in the long run. Hence, it sought to refute the negative qualities attributed to the existing church music, e.g., that it was irrational, parochial, and arbitrary (in the discourse of the Westernizing upper classes), through a “scientific” treatment of music and by taking measures aimed at the elimination of arbitrariness in chanting. What made the work of the Musical Committee most effective was its novel approach toward the “musical question”: its members aimed at founding a solid theoretical structure based on the vocal tradition and “follow[ing] a clearly experimental route” that was not beholden to any of the existing theories.³⁷ The musicians in the Committee depended on their own aural and vocal experience, which was sensitive to the subtleties of the chanting practice; thus they measured the intervals and then reproduced them on a monochord with movable frets whose values they subsequently calculated.

Conclusion

In the Greek Orthodox community of nineteenth-century Constantinople, musical discourse—especially the discourse on ecclesiastical music, encapsulated in the term “musical question”—was closely related to a wide range of seemingly disconnected issues, such as the aesthetic judgment of religious music, the formation of social and national identity, the integrity of the *Rum millet*, and the Westernization of the Greek community’s lifestyle.

The “musical question” was certainly about improving the liturgical music aesthetically, making it pleasing to the ear. Arguments in this direction focused on the dwindling of religious piety and the decreasing church attendance by Greek Orthodox community members. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Constantinopolitan Greek Orthodox also began to see their sacred music as a marker of the status of their own ethnic-religious community with respect to other groups in the wider Ottoman society. Therefore, in the writings and public expressions of the Greek Orthodox educated elite, we often see a call for orderly and harmonious church choirs. Meanwhile, aesthetic judgment and musical taste were growing in significance for the members of the Greek Orthodox educated middle-class such as doctors, journalists, and teachers, who wanted to differentiate themselves from the people of lower class and standing. For some of them, the aesthetic uplift of the church music depended on rewriting the music to bring it into compliance with the rules of harmony of Western European music.

At the same time, however, for the building of the nation and the identity of the Greek Orthodox, the investigation and the proof of the continuity of Greek music over the long historical spectrum was crucial. Some participants in the musical debate strongly believed that for a thorough rectification of Orthodox church music, first, the relations and continuities among contemporary ecclesiastical music, Byzantine liturgical music, and ancient Greek music had to be illuminated. Thus, for them, the reform of Church music had to be based on the genuine and continuous tradition of Greek music, whose basic principles were so divergent from contemporary Western music that taking the latter as a model was out of the question.

In Constantinople, the vocal tradition of the Great Church was upheld by church musicians who had been students of an able group of predecessors: cantors who were known to have been the loyal transmitters of the specific *hyphos* of the Great Church of Christ. Thus not surprisingly both the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Musical Society of Constantinople emphasized the “purge” of music from later inventions and foreign influences, aiming at excavating and restoring the unadulterated *hyphos* of ecclesiastical music. In their efforts to cultivate a “national” music tradition, they called for the discovery, the ascertainment, and the faithful recording of lay/folk music and ecclesiastical music.

Ultimately, the musical discourse articulated by Constantinopolitan Greek Orthodox literate groups was shaped by these divergent factors. At a time of social transformation and national identity building, concerns related to the preservation of the Orthodox religious community, the overlapping debate on history and continuity, the multiple references of Greek identity which had to be negotiated, and modernizing notions about the civilizing power of music all came rather unpredictably together in a project to reform and rectify Greek ecclesiastical music.

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NOTES

Acknowledgments. This article is based mainly on the material used in Chapter 2 of my forthcoming book *Music and Nation in the Greek Orthodox Community of Ottoman Istanbul* (Indiana University Press). A shorter version was presented as a lecture at the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies, Princeton University, on 25 October 2011. I owe many thanks to my intriguing audience at Princeton, especially to Professor Peter Brown. Also I would like to thank Dimitrios Stamatopoulos for his suggestions and bringing Chrisothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou’s article on I. M. Raptarhis to my attention. Finally, I am indebted to the *JMGS* reviewers and editors for their helpful suggestions and comments.

¹This and all English translations of the Greek originals are mine. I would like to thank the *JMGS* editors for their corrections and suggestions.

²In the second half of the nineteenth century, Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities, musicians, bureaucrats, and intellectuals in Greece, Europe, and the Ottoman Empire repeatedly expressed their concerns for the present state of the teaching and performance of ecclesiastical music. They addressed this issue as the “musical question.” See Gritsanis (1870) and Kiltzanidis (1881).

³Recent studies have challenged the use of the term *millet* for the early years just after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (fifteenth century) and its static conceptualization, and they have highlighted the changes in the meaning and the connotations of the term through the centuries (Braude 1982; Goffman 1994; Kechriotis 2005:135–140). As to the term *Rum milleti* and the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Konortas (1999) notes that not until the eighteenth century did the Patriarch of Constantinople, backed by the very powerful Phanariot elite, succeed in having the Orthodox community of the empire defined by the Ottomans as *Rum milleti*; only then did he begin to exercise his authority fully over all the Orthodox Christian populations of the empire.

⁴Anagnostopoulou (2010) notes that Helleno-Ottomanism has been studied as a “fixed and structured ideology” (2010:80) in comparison to other ideologies, which developed within the context of the *Rum milleti*, or in contrast to the “Great Idea.” She proposes conceptualizing Helleno-Ottomanism as “a transitional political discourse” (2010:80), an expression of the transition of the *Rum milleti* in the Ottoman nineteenth century. She also questions the view presenting Helleno-Ottomanism as the ideology of a single specific class of *Rum* and suggests that perhaps it was a much more complicated, composite phenomenon in which many different ideological tendencies found expression (2010:82).

⁵ Also see Erol (2011:304).

⁶ I use the term “class,” referring to the notion of “cultural capital” in Pierre Bourdieu’s work (1979).

⁷ For a brilliant theorization of the relationship between political ideology and music, see Fulcher (1999).

⁸ *Ο εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος* 1863:146.

⁹ I. M. Raptarhis (1838–1871) was born in Phanar into a rich family. After his elementary studies, he studied at the School of Commerce on Chalki. He did not engage in commerce; rather he devoted himself to the learning of arts and letters. Since his youth, he was deeply interested in theater and especially in translating theatrical works from ancient Greek to modern Greek (Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou 2007:97–98). He emphasized the moral and pedagogical benefits of using texts from ancient Greek literature in education (2007:106). Raptarhis contributed significantly to the intellectual and cultural life of the Greek Orthodox community in Constantinople. He published the journal *Επτάλοφος* (*Seven Hills*) between 1862 and 1865. See Gedeon (1932:35, 52).

¹⁰ Of particular interest is the fact that Raptarhis wrote his satirical tract immediately after Joachim II was elected Patriarch, with the support of a group of merchants and bankers in Constantinople, including the famous bankers Georgios Zarifis and Christakis Zografos. Rumors about Raptarhis’s activities have to be taken with a grain of salt; but it is interesting that Gedeon (1932:63) places Raptarhis within a group of satirists who conspired with the Metropolitan of Arta Sophronios and some influential members of the community to dethrone Joachim II. Joachim II pursued a heavy-handed approach to quell Bulgarian demands. In the months that followed his election, he removed from office three Metropolitans sympathetic to Bulgarian interests, namely the Metropolitans Hilarion of Makarioupoli, Auxentios of Dyrrachium, and Paisios of Philippoupoli. While we do not have any direct evidence indicating Raptarhis’s attitude regarding the Bulgarian question, he seems to have believed in reformist and rectifying measures for its solution. In his tract, he insistently called for the maintenance of the unity of the Church and its congregation.

¹¹ In the period between 1858 and 1862, a provisional committee drafted the series of laws known as the *Γενικοί Κανονισμοί* (General Regulations) for setting new principles concerning the administration of the *Rum milleti*.

¹² Actually, Kiltzanidis’s articulation of a lament about the loss of “ardor” regarding the church music should be viewed in light of the ecclesiastical music reform that was in the air. In the rest of the prologue, he tries to convince his readers that the implementation of European melody as some demanded, could not bring forth the desired improvement and restoration.

¹³ Paspatis 1862:275–276, cited in Exertzoglou (2000:27–28).

¹⁴ The word «βαβυλωνία» in Modern Greek means chaos, tumult, and everyone talking all at once, possibly in association with the Tower of Babel. It is worth remembering the famous comedy by Dimitrios Vyzantios (1838) entitled *Βαβυλωνία, ή η κατά τόπους διαφθορά της ελληνικής γλώσσης*, which refers to the wide range of dialects, local idioms, worldviews and mentalities existing in the Greek geography of the Eastern Mediterranean, reflecting the reality of the Greek Orthodox populations in the middle of nineteenth century.

¹⁵ To remedy the situation, in 1866, the Patriarchal School of Ecclesiastical Music was opened to offer music instruction. See *Κανονισμός της Πατριαρχικής Σχολής της Εκκλησιαστικής Μουσικής* (1866). Increasingly in the following decades, the Greek Orthodox *psaltes* began to assemble in musical associations and reflect upon the “problem” of the amelioration and improvement of their chanting practice.

¹⁶ The idea of establishing a musical society emerged during the sessions of the Greek Literary Society (founded in 1861). The founders of the MSC, except the church singers, were also members of the GLS: i.e., medical doctor Heracles Vasiadis, the president of GLS; Gavril Sofoklis, the vice-president of GLS and director of the school of Pera/Stavrodromio (Beyoğlu);

the Great Logothete Stavrakis Aristarhis, the general secretary of GLS; and other members such as the medical doctor Ioannis Galatis, banker Dimitrios Paspallis, teacher Andreas Spatharis, Xenofon Triantafyllidis and Vasilios Piladis. Except one or two names that I could not identify, fifteen of the total of twenty-nine founders were *psaltes* in various churches of the city. For more information on the Greek Literary Society, see Exertzoglou (1996).

¹⁷ *Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινούπολει Μουσικού Συλλόγου* (1863:5).

¹⁸ “[...]the clarification of the different music notations used by ancient Greeks (Aristoxenos, Alypius, etc.) and by Christian composers (St. John of Damascus, Ioannis Koukouzelis, Petros of Morea, Thre Teachers, Grigorios Levitis, Hourmouzios Chartophylax, and Archbishop Chrysanthos) and comparing their methods with the notation of the foreigners’ (ξένων) [Western notation]” (*Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινούπολει Μουσικού Συλλόγου*, 1863:11).

¹⁹ «... και ο παραλληλισμός αυτής προς άλλων εθνών, ανατολικών τε και δυτικών, αρχαίων και νεωτέρων . . . » (and the comparison [of this music] with other nations, both Eastern and Western, ancient and modern) (*Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινούπολει Μουσικού Συλλόγου*, 1863:5).

²⁰ On 13 February 1871, the newspaper *Κωνσταντινούπολη* announced Heracles Vasiadis’s lecture on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer in comparison with *Shahname* of the eleventh-century Persian poet, Firdevsi. *Konstantinoupoli*, no. 1029, 13 February 1871.

²¹ *Ο εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος*, Volume 4 (1865 December–1870 May), 1871, 190.

²² *Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινούπολει Μουσικού Συλλόγου* (1863:13), no. 15.

²³ *Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινούπολει Μουσικού Συλλόγου* (1863:13), no. 16.

²⁴ *Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινούπολει Μουσικού Συλλόγου* (1863:12–13), no. 12.

²⁵ Following the examples of the Greek Orthodox churches of Vienna and Trieste, the Europeanization of liturgical music spread to other Greek Orthodox churches in Europe, for instance in Paris, Marseille, London, and Manchester. It is interesting to note that around the same time the Jewish communities of Europe also introduced the organ and polyphonic music into their liturgy. For instance, the Jewish community of Prague began to use the organ in its religious service in the 1830s.

²⁶ In 1848, the two musicians published the scores of a funerary mass they had composed. See Haviaras and Randhartinger (1848). The mass was composed for soprano, tenor, baritone, and bass voices, accompanied by the piano.

²⁷ Archive of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople 1870.

²⁸ Archive of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople 1886.

²⁹ The session of 28 April 1877, *Ο εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος*, Volume 12 (1877–1878), 1879, 172–175. The members of the Musical Committee were banker Dimitrios Paspallis, physics-mathematics teacher Andreas Spatharis, cantor Ioasaf Rossos, cantor Eustratios Papadopoulos, the prominent scholar of Byzantine hymnography Mattheos Paranikas, Archimandrite Germanos Afthonidis, and deacon Daniel as secretary.

³⁰ After the dissolution of the musical commission, Paspallis authored a pamphlet, dated 15 December 1879, in which he explained why the work of the commission was interrupted and defended the aims of the latter. He criticized the *psaltes* of Constantinople who blocked the reform of ecclesiastical music begun by the musical commission when it wrote down the ecclesiastical chants in Western notation. In his pamphlet, Paspallis described the *psaltes* as fanatics who fought against every new idea since the Renaissance, and he warned, «Κατά τον Γαλιλαίον και τόσους άλλους φιλοσόφους, εις τα πάνδεινα κατέδικασεν ο φανατισμός, το πείσμα και η αγυρτία» (according to Galileo and many other philosophers, fanaticism, stubbornness, and inflexibility lead to condemnation) (1879: 5).

³¹ Archive of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople 1878.

³² See “Προς τους επιειμένους την επανόρθωσιν και βελτίωσιν της εκκλησιαστικής ημών μουσικής,” *Neologos* 18/30 October 1879, published in Kiltzanidis (1881:30–38).

³³ I use the term “Orientalist” referring to Edward Said’s work (1978).

³⁴ Archive of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople 1882.

³⁵ Archive of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople 1883.

³⁶ For a description of the psalterion, see Romanou (2006:17): “The psalterion had an organ mechanism, the wind being provided in the pipes with bellows activated by pedals . . .” Romanou adds that the psalterion was repaired and its octave was expanded at the time of Patriarch Constantine V in 1898.

³⁷ Στοιχειώδης διδασκαλία της εκκλησιαστικής μουσικής (1978:11): “[T]he Committee, refraining from the use of every prior theory, followed a clearly experimental route, and the nature of the scale was confirmed gradually through many trials.”

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