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The Reflections of Ecclesiastical Policy in Sacred Music: the case of Patriarch Athanasios V

Reflections of any Ecclesiastical Policy upon the entire artistic creation of the Sacred Music is something given in Eastern Chant, especially in the field of the so-called Byzantine Music, the music of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the present paper, I'll focus on the case of Patriarch Athanasios V, trying to analyze this specific phenomenon:

The Patriarch of Constantinople **Athanasios V** is an exceptionally important Church figure, widely renowned to the relevant historical research. He was a Cretan; through historians he is described as *“a wise man, whose outstanding prosperity was a scandal to the clergymen of the time; he would read European books and induce people towards education”*; moreover he is reported as *“an expert of Greek, Latin and Arabic dialects, being in parallel perfect as far as music is concerned”*.

It seems that after a brief stay in an Arabic-speaking district (probably in Egypt or Palestine, or even in any place around the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, where – logically– he learnt the Arabic language) he resided in a region in Constantinople, where he acquired a richer education (not only in Greek but also in Latin studies) and he gradually rose to ecclesiastical offices. It has already been known, through historical sources, that since 1687 he has been the Bishop of Tornovo, but I have to say that he had been holding the position earlier; in 1686, in a codex written by the monk of Iviron Monastery in Mount Athos Kosmas the so-called Macedon [codex Iviron No. 970 (Papadiki), ff. 225^r-226^v] a composition of his is anthologized, a composition which is a *Polychronion* greetings to Serpanos, Master of Ougrovlachia area, where the same Athanasios is already mentioned as Bishop of Tornovo. He served to the said Metropolis until 1692, when he was transferred to the Metropolis of Adrianople, after he had succeeded the abdicated Bishop Klemes. He served as Bishop of Adrianople until 1709, when he was elected the Patriarch of Constantinople either on May 27th or 28th 1709, succeeding his predecessor Kyprianos, in an anticipated way, characteristically described by himself in one of his epistles (written on May 28th 1709) which were addressed to the Patriarch of Jerusalem Chrysanthos.

A first intervention of the political authority of that period in his life becomes clear in Athanasios' aforementioned letter, an intervention irrelevant (at a first assessment) to the present examination of his musical activity, although later it defined not only the rest of his life but also the special shades reflected at his oeuvre; Let me explain: while the Patriarch Synod elected the Bishop of Kyzikos Kyrillos as a successor to the above-mentioned Kyprianos, when this was announced to the Vizier

Ali-Pasha Jorlolos (last name means that he was descended from Tiroloi of Thrace), who was a brother-in-law of the Sultan Mustapha II, the said Vizier refused to hold this Synodic resolution and he imposed our Bishop of Adrianople Athanasios as a successor to the former Patriarch.

Athanasios' Patriarchy was rich in activities; there are many Acta of Church Canon Law and lots of other epistles sent by him while he was the Patriarch; to quote historians again "... *due to the intense and severe way that he began to govern, he was envied and slandered to the Vizier as a money lover and innovator to our religion [...] where although he had many fans, he was unexpectedly removed from the throne...*"; he was unfrocked on December 4th 1711, while on December 6th his deprivation was read to all Constantinople Churches; according to the said deprivation "*Athanasios became Patriarch not by the Canonical Church status but through an anticipated way, whilst somebody else was then elected and invited*". The above descriptive original election of Kyrillos is implied here, an election which –in favour of Athanasios– the Vizier of that time invalidated. The mentioned Kyrillos was the one that succeeded Athanasios to the Patriarch throne (as Kyrillos IV), while he set Athanasios free of all charges (on December 6th 1713) and he ordered his innocence to be read to the Churches of Constantinople (thus, both co-conducted a service on December 26th 1713).

After that, Athanasios seems to relax in Constantinople; in 1716 the Patriarch Jeremiah writes in one of his epistles that "*Athanasios relaxes and we hope his holiness to be ruled too*"; in 1718 Athanasios is also located as one of the signatories (together with the said Jeremiah and the aforementioned Kyrillos IV) of a document for the unfrocking of the Bishop of Tyros and Sidon Euthimios. His last epistle –at least the one known to us for the time being– is one addressed to the Patriarch of Jerusalem Chrysanthos, dated on May 28th 1721. Athanasios died in Constantinople; the exact date of his death is still unknown to us; thus, taking into consideration all the above historical testimonies, his life should be determined between the middle of the 17th and the first quarter of 18th century.

In addition, Athanasios is nowadays known to us as a complete and perfect musician too; his musical education is clearly notified through various testimonies located to the musicological sources. I would, firstly, point out his reference to "*alphabetic catalogue of those who flourished in this kind of music* [i.e. Greek sacral music] *at various times*", a catalogue originally written by Kyrillos Marmarinos, Bishop of Tenos and afterwards copied by both Nikephoros Kantouniaries from Chios and Chrysanthos from Madytos; there, he is described as "*Athanasios Patriarch of Constantinople disciple of Balasios*". Athanasios' apprenticeship to the mentioned priest Balasios, an apprenticeship which definitely took place in Constantinople (where Balasios lived and was active during the last three quarters of 17th century) is though a fact of great importance; his musical education might have been completed

(in parallel to the rest grammatical studies of his as well as to any other of his ecclesiastical rising) while his teacher Balasios was young and powerful, widely and honourably known in Constantinople as a man of letters and excellent musician. Moreover, other men of Constantinople ecclesiastical environment, served at the Great Church of Christ, were students of Balasios too; for instance, Joakeim priest-monk from Rhodes the so-called Salabases, who later became Bishop of Vyzie, who obviously must have been a fellow student of Athanasios not only in musical but also in grammatical education (the last one held at the patriarchal school of Constantinople); yet another well-known student of Balasios was also Chrysanthos the so-called Notaras, who later became Patriarch of Jerusalem, whom Athanasios himself, in one of their correspondences, describes as a brother and friend since childhood.

Most specifically, Athanasios' musical activity is mainly based upon his only recently found handwritten musical codex Sinai 1282 (a book contained John Kladas' Akathistos Hymn melodies), a manuscript that is signed in f. 119^r with the following note: *“the present Oikoi were written by me, Athanasios Margounios from Crete, Bishop of Tornovo, at the year 1687 of June 1st, while I was at the prison because of Patriarch Dionysios' spitefulness”*. The hardships that Athanasios suffered *“due to Patriarch Dionysios' spitefulness”* become evident in this indirect way [we refer to Patriarch Dionysios IV, the so-called Mouselimis (+1696), who was elected Patriarch five times; he was chasing Athanasios, for reasons still unknown today, during his fourth Patriarchy (March of 1686–12th of October 1687)]; in addition, it is already noticed that *“Athanasios' oeuvre (like for instance, his well-known Kalophonic Heirmoi, especially if we take into consideration their text) owes its formation to the hardships he had suffered during his restriction to Mount Sinai”*.

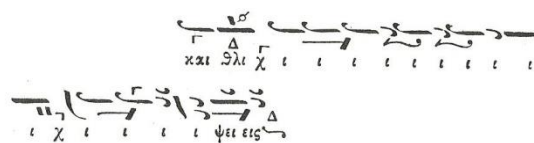
Athanasios' oeuvre should not be dated far from the time that he actively appeared to the musical reality as a codex-writer through his above mentioned handwritten codex. It seems that his oeuvre had already been completed by the end of the 17th century (not only during his musical apprenticeship in Constantinople and his gradually ecclesiastical rising, but also mainly while he served as Bishop of Tornovo –less though while he served as Bishop of Adrianople– and of course during his restriction to Mount Sinai); it was widely spread to the relevant sources after the beginning of the 18th century, boosting his wide fame as a Patriarch of Constantinople. The aforementioned Athanasios' oeuvre includes distinctive hymns of Divine Liturgy [a series of composed in fourth mode *Polychronismoi*/that is hymns appropriate to express wishes for many years (greetings, indicatively, to: Archbishop of Sinai, Bishop of Prousa, Bishop of Nikomedia Parthenios, Neophytos Exarch of Thessaloniki, Konstantinos Master of Ougrovlachia, but also generally to any bishop or other authority), one Cheroubikon composed in first mode as well as two Sunday Communion Hymns, composed in first and first plagal modes, both transcribed into the New Method system by Chourmouzios Chartophylax]; moreover his composition upon the so-called *Ekloge*/that is chosen from various psalms verses sung during

Matins service instead of the so-called *Polyeleos* psalm, in the present case a composition appropriate for Saint Catherine feast, composed by Athanasios in first mode after a relevant request of Nikiforos the Archbishop of Sinai, is of great musicological importance; it has to be noted that observing the psalmic verses that Athanasios chose in order to create the said composition, one could additionally understand the status of his mood while composing it during his above mentioned restriction to Mount Sinai: *I waited patiently for the Lord; and he attended to me, and hearkened to my supplication. And he brought me up out of a pit of misery, and from miry clay: and he set my feet on a rock, and ordered my goings aright. Many bullocks have compassed me: fat bulls have beset me round. They have opened their mouth against me, as a ravening and roaring lion. Arise, O Lord, prevent them, and cast them down: deliver my soul from the ungodly: [draw] thy sword, because of the enemies of thine hand; nevertheless, I would like to focus your attention here to the aforementioned Athanasios' two Kalophonic Heirmoi, composed in fourth plagal mode and already published in a relevant well-known musical edition; their text is taken from two very characteristic Troparia of the service of the Great Canon of Supplication to the most Holy Mother of God found especially at its 6th and 8th Odes:*

The turmoils of this life encircle me like unto bees about a honeycomb, O Virgin, and they have seized and now hold my heart captive, and I am pierced with the stings of afflictions, Maid; yet be, O all-holy one, my defender and helper and rescuer.

Times of sorrows, necessity, and trouble, and misfortunes in life have found me, O pure Maiden; and from all sides temptations have encircled me; but be my ally, and protect me in your almighty shelter.

More precisely, observing Athanasios' melody based on specific text one can easily see how the sence of the initially mentioned "ecclesiastical policy" (and especially the "consequences" of that policy) reflects at his musical creation; both of the aforementioned Athanasios' compositions are a great example of that phenomenon: I would indicatively point out some very interesting (either from a strictly musicological or a wider structural point of view) parts of the said compositions, where chromatic melodic passages are used, based especially on relevant words of the entire text; see, for example, at the second composition, at its initial musical phrase, how word **sorrows** is composed:



You could also observe the very same phenomenon at the first composition, at its initial musical phrase again, where a chromatic motiv is used (a motiv that appears twice, both times through an identical construction of its melody), now based on the words **turmoils** and **honeycomb** of the sentence: *The turmoils of this life encircle me like unto bees about a honeycomb, O Virgin,*

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