

SENSE OF “PLEASURE” IN EASTERN CHANT

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Music is by default a key element of every kind of *Entertainment*. Actually the two terms (*Pleasure* and *Music*) are almost synonymous in the geographical area of The East –especially so during the late Medieval period– and there is a plethora of relevant evidence in the rescued literature and musicological sources to support this argument. It seems that there is a mutual and interactive “dialogue” between the two terms – and it’s an ideological and philosophical dialogue as well as a completely fundamental and practical one: the musicians (the people who actually carry out the musical task) channel in abundance and mainly ensure the pleasure of the people who participate in any type of entertainment; and they do so through both their presence and their performance. However, at the same time, in order to acquire the ability to act in this way, i.e. to bring the “entertaining” dimension of music to the forefront, they themselves have to be in a position to experience music as pleasure, to grasp the multiple gratifications which are hidden in the very core of every kind of music.

In both circumstances it has to do with two high level conquests of the Spirit and the Art: **the pleasure of Music and music for Pleasure!** In the present paper I will attempt a first approach of the issue and an outline of its twofold dimension ...

What is pleasant and what's unpleasant in music is of course a matter of taste which is highly idiosyncratic¹; even though we know what *pleasure* is, *musical pleasure* is a phenomenon difficult to assess objectively. For instance, any musician and especially any performer can tell when certain pieces of music stir up strong emotional responses in people. But what actually causes such feelings of euphoria and ecstasy and why music is so important in human society, is a matter of specific musicological research².

In his paper, entitled "The Plural Pleasures of Music"³, David Huron, of Ohio State University, used the following remarkable example in order to show existing connections between Music and Pleasure; the example of the *flower* and the *bee*:

In understanding the relationship between music and pleasure it may be helpful to consider a simpler and more familiar biological analogy – such as the relationship between flowers and bees. Sexual reproduction first appeared in plants. But since plants have a limited ability to move around, the transporting of pollen from plant to plant raises formidable challenges. One of the most successful strategies employed by plants has been to make use of the mobility of insects. Foremost among these insects has been bees. The "flower" is a specialized organ whose purpose is to encourage insects to help in the process of sexual reproduction. Flowers are adaptations whose function is to facilitate reproduction by harnessing insects (like bees) to do the "heavy lifting" of pollen transport. But this can be achieved only if the flower proves to be an effective bee attractant. Hundreds of millions of years of evolution have transformed flowers into consummate "bee attraction devices." Flowers exhibit at least four design features that are consistent with this goal: (1) Flowers provide food in the form of

1 See: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296399000922>

2. See: <http://www.gizmag.com/mcgill-research-shows-dopamine-responsible-for-music-pleasure/17663/>

3. See: <https://ccrma.stanford.edu/~cc/soco/Huron.pdf>

nectar. (2) Flowers provide a distant lure in the form of smells that make use of volatile aromatics. (3) Flowers provide distant lures in the form of color (reds, yellows, and violets are popular). (4) Flowers provide a convenient "landing strip" for insects. In the case of color, the best strategy is to employ colors that form marked visual contrasts. Since the world is full of green-colored chlorophyll, the worst color to use for a flower is green. The most spectrally distant color is red, followed by orange and yellow – colors that occupy the low-frequency end of the visible spectrum. If one selects a contrasting color at the high-frequency end of the spectrum, then violet is the result. A moment's thought tells us that the most "successful" flowers will appeal to bees in as many ways as it is possible to be attractive to bees. That is, flowers are structured according to the pleasures afforded by bee brains. Whatever a bee likes, provide it.

Music appeals to humans in a similar fashion to the way flowers appeal to bees. The most "successful" musical works appeal to people in as many ways as it is possible to be appealing. Like the flower, successful musical works are structured according to the pleasures afforded by human brains. These pleasures are not limited to a single pleasurable dimension. There are sensory pleasures, cognitive pleasures, social pleasures, kinesthetic pleasures, and other domains of appeal. Moreover, within each of these domains (such as the realm of social pleasures), there may exist many distinct ways of evoking pleasure.

So, in Huron's terms as a performer of some specific pieces of music, I am a "flower" and any one person in the audience is a "bee". And in this context, it's important to pinpoint the exact quality of feelings amongst my audience arising from them listening to me performing. There was this occasion when a member of the audience sent me the following so moving note: "I am so happy I was at church and got to hear you sing again! I would like to try to explain what it felt like. I got completely wrapped up in your voice, as if I sank in a cloud or sea. But your voice also vibrated right through me

– *lifting me up, like on a magic carpet. It is a wonderful and marvelous experience*”.

I come to wonder: where is pleasure hidden? Into performer's skill and ability and consequently into the way in which any piece of music appeals to the audience, the circumstances under which any composition is generally being performed and listened to or into the music itself (i.e. into the beauty of any composition's musical structure, the fascination of any composer's fantasy)? Latter possibility – to speak again in Huron's terms – proves Music as the “flower” while performer might considered as the “bee”.

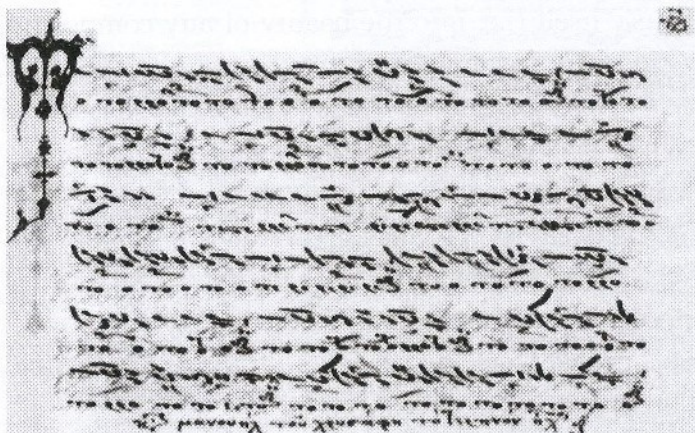
Let's take a closer look to the last question, using two very appropriate musical examples, delivered from 15th and 18th century and composed by Manuel Chrysaphes and Panagiotes Chalatzoglou respectively; interestingly, musicological sources referred to both these musical examples as the *pleasant* and the *very pleasant* compositions from the very beginning!

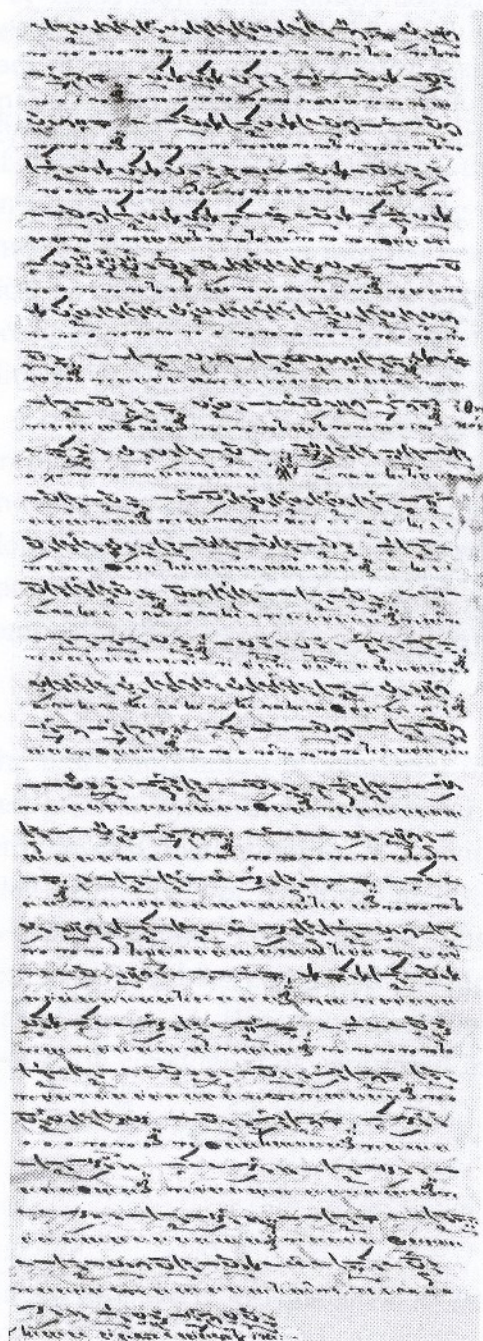
1

The first composition is composed by Manuel Chrysaphes, a very well-known Byzantine composer who flourished during the 15th century in Constantinople. It is widely known (through a rich relevant manuscript tradition) as the *pleasant composition* and it's a so-called kratema, i.e. a kind of “absolute music” based on some non-sense syllables, composed in fourth mode (even though in relevant sources, i.e. Byzantine and post-Byzantine manuscripts, it is frequently considered as composed in fourth plagal mode)⁴.

4. See Gregorios G. Anastasiou, *The Kratemata in the Psaltic Art*, Athens 2005, pp. 321-327 (No. 22).

You can see here a copy of that composition, taken from Codex Vaptopaidiou 1416 (written during the 2nd half of the 18th c. by Stavris domestikos), ff. 42v-44r; this is a version written according to the so-called old and concise type of Byzantine Notation, where one can see written down just the core and the skeleton of the entire melody:





In the score that follows you can see another way of writing down the same composition, in the form of the so-called new and analytical type of Byzantine Notation; the latter is based on a transcription made by Chourmouzos Chartophylax while it's taken here from a recent musical edition [: Charalampos Karakatsanis, *Kratimatarion I*, Athens 2000, pp. 363-371]:

Rehearsal in Western European Style, 2. A.

The image displays a page of musical notation, specifically a rehearsal in Western European style, labeled '2. A.'. It features three systems of staves, each containing musical notes and Chinese lyrics. The notation is written in a Western style, with notes on a five-line staff and lyrics in Chinese characters below the notes. The page is numbered '27' in the top right corner. The lyrics are in Chinese characters, and the musical notation is in a Western style, with notes on a five-line staff and lyrics in Chinese characters below the notes.

How come this composition has been described as *the pleasant* one from the very beginning (i.e. it was so described by the composer himself but also by the first audience and receivers)? Well, I am afraid this question has no easy or obvious answer!

In my attempt to identify the specific reason in this composition's music development, I would ask you to pay particular attention to the following musical passage of it: there, one can easily observe a kind of "musical game" between plagal and authentic version of fourth mode, a game of using the base and the top respectively of the mode's basic pentachord, i.e. notes G-C (Sol³-Do³) or – in a remarkable contrary motion – G-C (Sol²-Do³), a game the structure of which is developed like so:

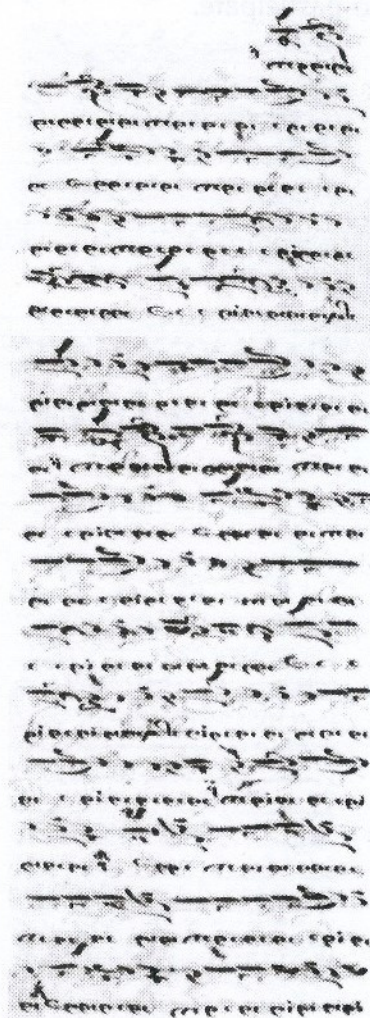
The musical score consists of four systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third systems have a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The fourth system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals, along with Greek text written below the staves.

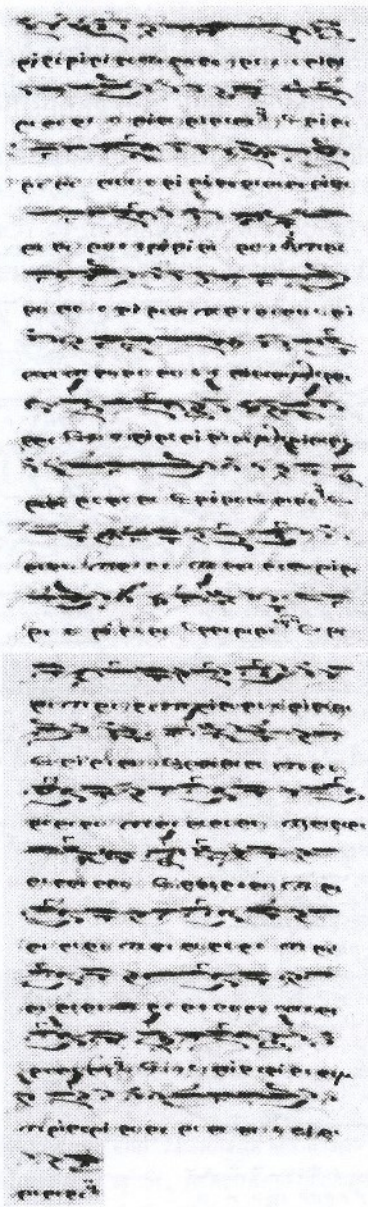
In this sense, pleasure could possibly be associated with a type of "entertainment", entertaining music, or in this case, of music entertainment which is perceived as such either because of its structure, i.e. its composition, or because of the feelings that the performance sets in motion when the audience listens to it. Such a piece of music that entertains and offers pleasure is made of the simplest possible melody material, easy to remember, which repeats a sequence in a way that generates contentment as well as offering the audience a chance to participate.

2

Besides, this is the same idea and technique at the heart of the second composition I mentioned, a composition termed the *very pleasant*.

You can also see here a copy of that composition, taken from Codex 85/223 of K. Psachos' Library (written in 1805 by Apostolos Konstas from Chios), ff. 54v-56r; that's the version written according to the aforementioned old and consice type of Byzantine Notation:





The one that follows is consequently written according to the relevant new and analytical type of Byzantine Notation, also based in a transcription made by Gregorios the Protopsaltis; the latter it's taken here from the very well-known musical edition of the so-called Kalophonikon Heirmologion, published in Constantinople at 1835 [pp. 227-230]:

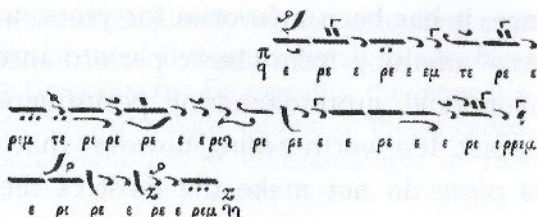
Παῦρος Πρωτοψάλτης
Χαλδαιοῦ

The musical notation consists of two systems of staves. Each staff contains a series of neumes (musical notes) and a corresponding line of Greek text. The notation is written in a dark ink on a light background. The text is in a Greek script, likely a form of Koine or early Modern Greek. The page is numbered 32 in the top left corner. The title at the top right identifies the composer as Achilleas Chaldaeakes. The text below the title identifies the piece as 'Παῦρος Πρωτοψάλτης' and 'Χαλδαιοῦ'.

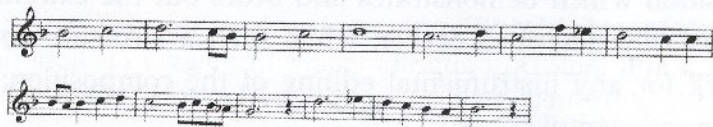
Hence, it has been a favorite for years, with numerous performances – anything from classic performances by psaltic choirs to unconventional, groundbreaking performances by Eastern Music Orchestras⁵. It's worth noting however that the orchestra versions of this piece do not make the most of the repetitive pattern of the composition which demonstrates and bears out the extremely pleasant *simplicity* described earlier, while such a structure could exactly work for any instrumental editing of the composition; let me give you an example:

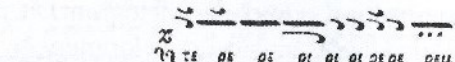
The image displays a musical score for an Eastern chant. At the top, there is a large system of neumes (Greek letters and symbols) on a four-line staff, beginning with a 'T' time signature. Below this, there are two systems of neumes, each followed by its corresponding Western staff notation in a G-clef. The neumes are written in a stylized, calligraphic manner, and the Western notation is in a standard modern staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

5. See respectively: *Revelation and Historical Witness 1088-1988; The 900th Anniversary of the Holy Monastery of St. John the Theologian, Patmos; Sung by the Choir of Chanters 'The Maistores of the Art of Chant'; Leader: Gregorios Stathis*, LP [Athens 1988 (No. II.a.3)]; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtgRZYyFkgQ>; and: *Petros Tampouris, Kratimata; masterpieces of Byzantine instrumental music*, LP [Athens 1990 (No. I.3)]; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8MOCRR0arw>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9YmXmZlits>

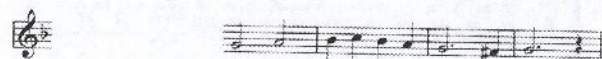


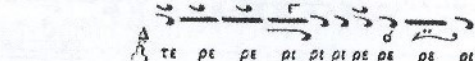
 π ε ρε ε ρε ε εμ τε ρε ε
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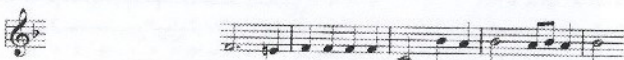


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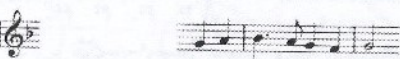


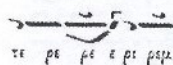
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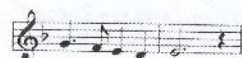
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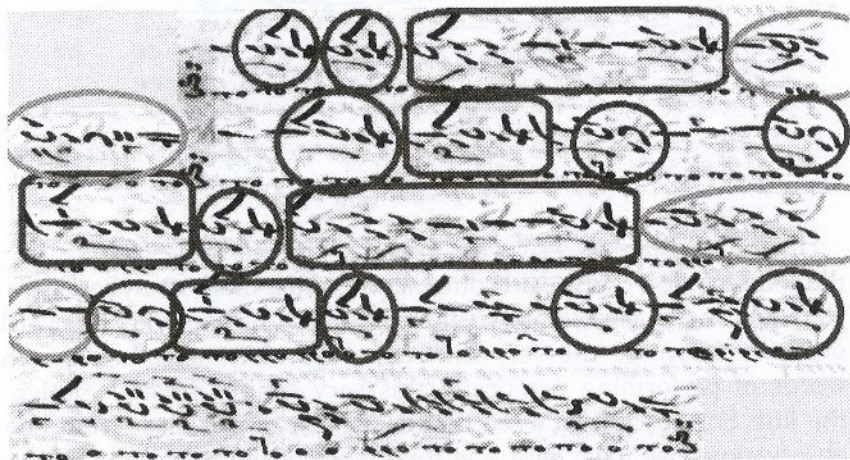


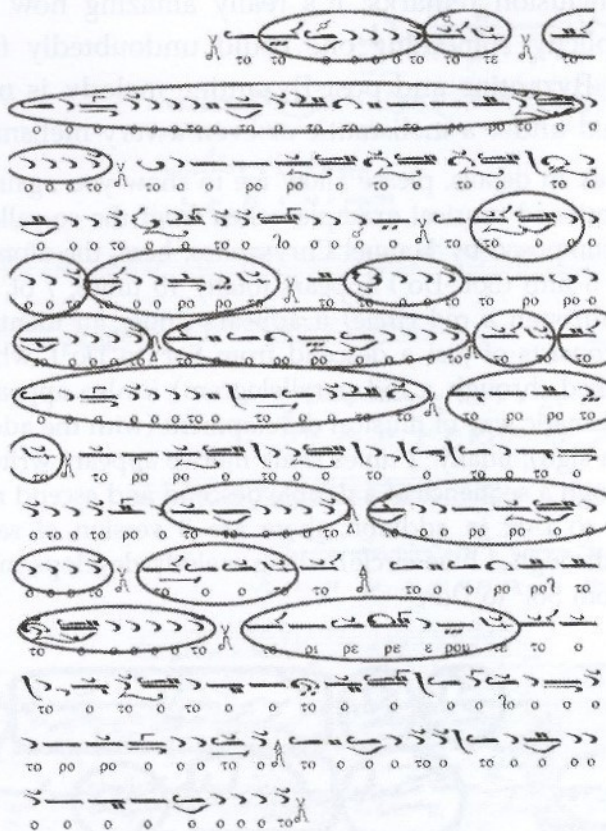




Some conclusion remarks: it's really amazing how aforementioned simplicity, something one could undoubtedly find in the core of any Byzantine and post-Byzantine melody, is most of the times covered under a melismatic or even a very melismatic cloak!

To speak in details, please allow me to show you again the previously mentioned musical example, taken from the so-called pleasant kratema composed by Manuel Chrysaphes; here, the aforementioned motive of a fifth ($\text{Sol}^3\text{-Do}^3$) appears totally 15 times; 7 of those times (marked through a red circle) it appears under an identical concise version (consists of just a descend from Sol^3 to Do^3), while 3 times (also marked through a red parallelogram) it also appears under a more melismatic way of musical development (with the additional use of lygisma sign); finally, 2 times same motive appears written analytically, through a sequence of a double descend and ascend respectively, from Sol^3 to Do^3 ; in addition, there are 3 version of same motive (marked through a blue circle) where melody develops in a contrary motion from Sol^2 to Do^3 ;





In the traditional, received, “exegeses” of the same melody, i.e. in the transcription of the said composition into a more analytical type of Notation, made especially by Chourmouzios Chartophylax after 1814, one can easily see the very different ways of transcribing, in other words of performing practically, this very simple musical motive of the fifth Sol³ to Do³; let’s see that in details; as it is clear from above observations, we have here 4 in total types of the very same motive:

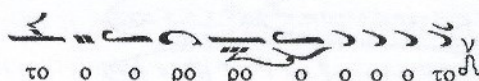
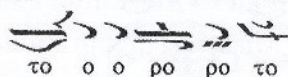
type 1 (the simplest possible),



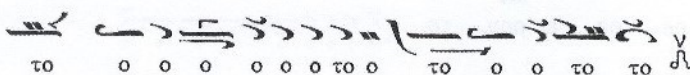
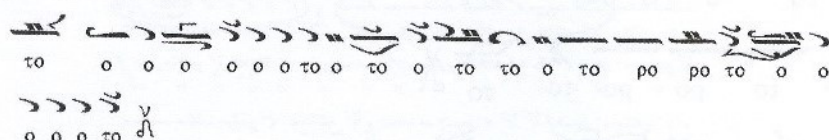
Diagram illustrating musical notation and symbols for type 1 (the simplest possible). The diagram consists of several rows of musical notation and symbols, including notes, rests, and various symbols (e.g., 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 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998, 999, 1000).



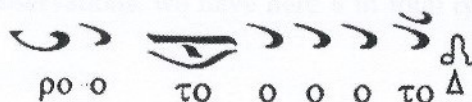
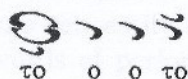
type 2 (the "melismatic" one),



type 3 (the "analytical" one),



and type 4 (the "contrary" one);



In all above types you can clearly observe different ways of transcribing, i.e. approaching and performing, the said very simple motive...

So, perhaps this odd "transformation" of *melodic simplicity* to a kind of "*melodic multiplicity*" is the distinctive element, the very key component of Eastern Chant. Still *Pleasure* is always there; *Pleasure* is still there, into the Music Structure, either hidden or revealed! *Pleasure* is still there, into the Music Performance, be it simple or complex. If I was to repeat – and re-formulate – my initial example, I would say that the most "successful" Music aspires to captivate its audience as much as possible in as many performing ways as possible. In other words, Music is structured according to the pleasure it offers to audience's brains. So, give the audience what they like! What the audience likes is what performer has to deliver ... and, in my opinion, that's the "sense of pleasure in Eastern Chant".