

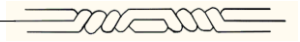
***‘Priceasna’ and ‘Koinonikon’
- history, structure and form -***

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Abstract: The beauty of the songs that are interpreted during the Liturgy while the priests and the faithful receive the Eucharist (immediately after the hymn *One is Holy, One is the Lord Jesus Christ*) or at the end of the religious services – named priceasna –, raise awareness in the community of believers¹. When we refer to this kind of songs we should think about the dynamic musical tradition of the Church, namely the current popular hymnophony (most times), because through it people express their religious feelings in a very special way. This sort of hymn is not new, it was engendered at the same time as our Christianisation, it is Romanian and Orthodox and it was a common spiritual manifestation of the people. When the Reformed Churches organized their cult (named Protestant and Evangelical churches in Romania), they took the singing patterns of the religion of the majority of the population – orthodox – and they adapted them to their specific characteristics and doctrine. In the period when Reformed leaders tried to impose their religion among the orthodox population (for Transylvania - during the historical period of occupation), they tried to impose also their

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¹ We think it would be a good idea to have an *Orthodox Book of Pricesne* to include all the hymns with their text and melody.



songs, whose text and melody were previously modified; among these songs was also some *pricesne*

It is recognized that in the Orthodox Church these hymns, as well as carols, are a real popular versified theology. Indeed, some of their melodies are not exactly suited to their content or the sacramental atmosphere in which they are presented. We often hear *priceana hymns*² of rare theological beauty but their melodies are waltz, tango or even folk songs. Therefore, one should select the ones that are closest to the traditional chant of the lectern songs, grouped and assigned to the periods of the church year (*Octoechos, Triodion, Pentecostarion*) and related to the feast days of these periods. Otherwise, we will be in great danger as, over the years, we may have some songs and melodies that have nothing in common with the Orthodox spirit (some sort of syncretistic religious songs), which will hardly be removed from the cult and the tradition of being sung by the faithful.

1. Introduction

Before referring to *priceasna* hymns, we think it is necessary to give some explanations about the structure of their vocal song and the singing in general. To do this, we must recall that both the songs structured in time and come into use, and the popular religious songs or hymns, which have developed simultaneously in the Christian society, raise a strong interest in studying religious music. However, the popular religious song or *priceasna* hymn, comprising several stanzas are composed of one or more musical ideas (*text*) coagulated with each other through various cadences³, leading to a simpler or more complex unitary whole, according to the number of ideas they contain. Depending

² Although grammatically wrong, we prefer the combination of the two words – *priceasna* and *hymn* – that makes more clear the idea which I like to express in this study.

³ Cadence is the end of a musical idea. Among forms of cadence, the most famous is the perfect cadence, which consists of the transition from stage V (dominant) of the song on stage I of the scale (in which the stuck is written), or from the stage IV (subdominant) on stage V and then on stage I (tonic)-which is perfect cadence. Cadence has the role to create an impression of leisure, solving, concluding (cadence = fall).

on the number of ideas and the music, it is considered that a song is written in monopartite (*it contains a single musical idea*), bipartite or tripartite musical form (*when it contains two or three musical ideas*).

Among the popular religious cultural products, the carols and the priceasna hymns are particularly valued. The qualities which give value to them are the religious, social and realistic character, the unifying strength, the simplicity and the sincerity. The realism and social-religious character give them the power to unite the people from a moral point of view.

Music is an infraverbal, direct communication path (speaking without words), vocal music, in spite of clarity, lack of ambiguity of the message (verbal dialogue) is maintained by accompanying words with music - an additional level of infraverbal communication “from soul to soul”, as behind the musical message there is the communication intention (*explicit or not*) of the one that composed that musical piece. By its sonority, music captivates us, it awakes a divine echo in us, and it makes us know the beauty of the surrounding world. Mobilising our moral and aesthetic sense, music gives meaning to our existence and reduces our inner tensions caused by various internal and external factors.

As far as the analysis of the musical language is concerned, we must admit that the sound material (*via sensory registration, retention and its memorizing*) appears analysable and reproducible, even if the physiological processes aren’t clarified scientifically⁴. Audio memory consists in reliving and recognising the elements of a musical language, which is designed and developed in the same manner in which verbal thinking is developed and conceived. Between the structure of musical thinking and verbal thinking, deep analogies are established and they represent the support of the isomorphism between the structural elements of the music heard and the listener's mind. In

⁴Ioan Bradu-Iamandescu, *Muzicoterapia receptivă. Premise psihologice și neuro-fiziologice. Aplicații practice și terapeutice*, București, Info Medica, 2004, p.26.



addition to the power of communication with the individual listener, music facilitates and amplifies through collective listening and its message addressed to large masses of people.

The priceasna hymns are songs that express the soul of a deeply religious people and show a total adherence to what the faithful sing, bringing Orthodox Christians together when they sing. They all comprise in their content what is best for us, for our salvation and induce us a state of self-analysis (of our consciousness) and communication that can overcome the barriers created for various reasons (*the communism in previous years*).

2. Content

Referring to the psychological dimension of religious music we have to point out some features: the solemnity of music practice and audition (*religious services, participation in its audition and practice originates from the communication with the divinity - mediated by the divine service*), moreover, in the presence of a mass of people gathered for the same purpose there is a strong suggestibility of this listener enhanced by the surrounding elements; the moods induced by the audition of this music may be dependent on the type of ritual or event that the work is dedicated to (*liturgy, vespers, funeral, or holidays: Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, regular holidays etc.*), so religious music induces similar moods to the listeners gathered at the time, and favors their state of spiritual communion.

Lately, there have been frequent situations in which there is an option when choosing religious music: its performance outside the Church (*the carol concerts on the stage, hymns, religious folk songs and other religious genres, such as symphonic concerts, cantatas, oratorios, etc.*) provides music lovers the opportunity to choose the genre they desire, even using audio and video recordings. Whether this music is practiced in the Church or outside it, religious music is required in order to achieve spiritual peace, or inner peace, relaxation, as it is said by those who do not attend church. There is a category of music lovers that seek, in the carol concerts or religious priceasna hymns, those accords full of

harmonic or melodic fidelity, full of equanimity. The creator of such a piece is guided by the conscience of faith to write such a piece. Another group, this time, only listeners, are those who feel intense aesthetic satisfaction and the requirement of their soul to listen to the piece in question again.

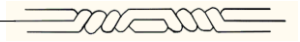
Music is, ultimately, a *medicin*, a dressing, a balm for man. In this case, the religious song (*carol, priceasna hymn, concert...*) is the healing of souls, it is an active music especially when it is sought by the whole community, it may also be passive, i.e. received, heard through various mass media, but in this situation, in order to be constructive, the listener must vibrate in unison with that song, to live it, to feel that it resonates within.

Priceasna hymns, as well as carols are an evidence of the depth of the soul and the spirit, of the religiosity and musicality of the Romanian people and they are influenced by the folk song. These forms have materialised in time and they have been taken over by professional musicians, collected, transcribed and analyzed, reaching the stage that allowed the establishment of a theoretical foundation in the musical practice (stylised and harmonised) and today they still exist in the musical creation and practice within religious communities. Analyzing the genre of priceasna hymns from a musical point of view, we will notice that besides the *rhymed* stanza there are one, two or three musical variations, with cadences of rigour⁵ and chorus⁶.

As for the tendency to alienate from the style of the traditional music (*because many see the practice of priceasna hymns as alienation from origins*), in this context, we consider that the Church must take a stand on certain songs from the cult, and it would be a good idea for the theology teachers to compile a book of priceasna hymns to be used in the worship by the whole the Romanian Orthodox Church. We think that such a book, rigorously made for every holiday, would result in a correct

⁵Valentin Timaru, *Principiul stroficității. Curs de forme și analize muzicale*, vol.II., Cluj-Napoca, Publishing House of The Academy of Music „Gheorghe Dima”, 1994, p.37.

⁶The part of a song that is repeated after each couplet.



standardisation of songs in terms of melody and doctrine (it could be a variety of texts and songs such as Christmas carols, contained in one or more volumes).

Music is an integral part of human life. As the song has the quality to sensitise the prayer, it gives the Christian the possibility to participate more intensely and committed in the liturgical life of the church. Thus, we can draw the conclusion that Church music proves to be a powerful missionary factor meant to contribute to the preaching of the word of God, to strengthen the prayer and the unity of the Church. Cultic religious music developed together with the spread of Christianity, through the emergence of Christian hymns, in particular poetic ones: Troparion, Kontakion, and Canon. Church music extends its area of distribution in all countries around Byzantium, and therefore to us.

The song has the great role to prepare the believer spiritually for an active and effective participation in his effort to dialogue with God. How true are the words of St. Basil the Great: *“Psalm singing is peace of soul, peace rewarder, pacifier of noise and thoughts wave.”* Singing helps us get rid of the *“worldly care”* and makes the emotion of communion real through the doxology dialogue with God. Thus, the song brings all the best with it: love and closeness of believers, managing to establish a bond between people through the union of voices, bringing people together in one voice. Thus, the *koinonikon* (less), and especially the priceasna hymn (*often slandered without cause*) makes precisely this.

When we refer to the importance of Church singing, we must refer to singing together since it is the only one that concludes the union between souls in the same faith and love in Christ, holding those who sing together as one body. Its practice today is a *“return to the primary Christianity”* or *“a return to the tradition of the early Church”*⁷. Singing together in the Church is, thus, a means to restore harmony of beings in Christ, or it leads to

⁷ Ene Braniște, *Cântarea poporului în biserică în lumina Liturghierului*, București, 1945, p. 263.

a growing unity in Christ, that will reach perfection in the next life when people will glorify God together with the angels, in perfect harmony with each other, says Gregory of Nyssa, the singing together of the whole community is a common experience, not merely theorising⁸.

The first missionary activity of the Church is singing together which can be achieved in any parish. The church where the Holy Liturgy is sung together is alive and vibrates due to the breath of the Holy Spirit. By singing, the believer can enrich his spiritual life, he becomes more sensitive to the existential problems of life, and he approaches, more seriously, the matter of the immortality of the soul and the concern for salvation. Singing makes the believer aware of the omnipresence of God and urges him to humility and obedience, taking heed of His greatness: “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork...*” (Romans 1, 20) “*God is with us! Understand all ye nations, and submit yourselves ...* “. By singing we live the saving presence of the Holy Trinity Spirit (*My hope is the Father, my refuge is the Son, my shelter is the Holy Spirit, O Holy Trinity, Glory to You.*), it meets all the necessary attributes in the action of the Church to integrate all its members, as living and working members in order to achieve the communion of love, which has been present since early age.

The priest has the special role to offer the faithful this means of missionary activity. He, the priest, should urge the faithful to sing together. Church singing is endowed with the power of life and can clarify, strengthen and defend the true faith, and also contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church and it is a wonderful means to prevent the trend of estrangement from the style of traditional music.

In Christianity, Church singing is not just music, but prayer that uses, very profoundly, the noblest human faculties: reason and word. On the other hand, Church singing is an imitation and joining of the angels’ choir.

⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia ortodoxă, Craiova*, Publishing House of the Archdiocese of Oltenia, 1986, op. cit, p.9.



In the Old Testament, playing instruments was overlooked because all other religions and nations surrounding Israel used them and that tempted the Jews-God thinking that using the instruments was a *lesser evil*. In Christianity, the instruments were never used. Quite late, the Latins took the organ from the East, which was invented and used in public celebrations and the imperial palaces of Constantinople, and they began to use it in churches⁹ (Protestant and Neoprottestant denominations use the instruments in a much exaggerated manner). Augustine clearly emphasises that in the prayer sung in the church, the focus must be solely on the clarity and meaning of the message and not on the melody, because that is a sin. Unfortunately, even in our Orthodox Church, there are christians and artists singing the priceasna hymns accompanied by musical instruments (*of course, not in the church*); it seems that this is the current trend of carols and priceasna hymns. Probably it is more suitable for folk voices to be accompanied by instruments [*but the problem is that both priceasna hymns and carols are becoming increasingly swaying - on stage during great performances and on television*].

The Church must be careful when choosing the songs it promotes¹⁰, especially the priceasna hymns, from the multitude of religious songs¹¹. Some songs are translated, musically transcribed and used in worship music (*it is a happy situation*). The Church must be very careful when it uses the priceasna hymns originating from a locality where many religions co-exist

⁹ *The organ was given to the French king Pepin the Short by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Copronymus.*

¹⁰ Even the truly Orthodox songs, borrowed from the Greeks in particular - often inappropriate to the taste (there is a trend for many psaltic groups in our country to replace or combine our traditional hymns with the Church songs from Greece - they are beautiful but only to listen to).

¹¹ Some are textually adapted - *but often inappropriate to our melodic tradition*, others wholly adopted - *totally foreign to the traditional genre of singing*, some are really popular folklore - *suitable for the stage performances during the fasting days: Lent and Ascension* (but these shouldn't be too lively, *for we passively witness light swings on the stage or on the sets* in the presented concerts); there are also some religious songs having the tune of Christmas carols - *totally inappropriate, except Advent period.*

and have influenced each other. Unfortunately, there are many Romanian villages in Transylvania (*in Covasna, Harghita and Mureș*) where the Orthodox faithful, being a minority, have lost their national language but kept their Orthodox rite, song and prayer.

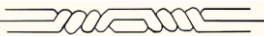
The priceasna hymns are a kind of religious music in the repertoire of the Orthodox Christian Church, which due to their warm tone and lyrics are considered a therapeutic music. Sacred therapy and music therapy brightens the soul and fills it with faith, hope and love.

The term *priceasna* (pl. *pricesne*) comes from the Slavonic *prěčistīna*, that is *immaculate*, and it represents the Orthodox Church song that covers the period of time when during the Divine Liturgy the clergy and the faithful take the Holy Communion. Worship is only religion in action¹², but, the Orthodox worship has demonstrated that it is in action through wonderful creations: priceasna hymns and carols. Later, the term became a generic name for a wide range of songs belonging to Romanian religious folklore. The priceasna hymns have a varied thematic content centered mainly on the Christian moral behavior, the prayer of forgiveness and thanksgiving, praising God, Virgin Mary and the saints. They are sung mainly in parish churches by the faithful, and lately, they have become part of the repertoire of many renowned folk artists who have made significant efforts to collect, adapt and preserve them.

The *priceasna hymn* is the song interpreted by the church singers or the choir¹³ (sometimes it is *replaced by a concert*, it may be a stylised and harmonised hymn for choir, soloists and even for soloists alone, chorus, orchestra and interpreters if outside the church) at the end of the Liturgy, when the clergy and the faithful take Communion, or at the end of the services, while

¹² Traian Dorz, *Pricesne*, Sibiu, Arhidiececezana, 1936, p.7.

¹³ Vasile Grăjdian, *Elemente de cântare bisericească și tipic*, Sibiu, Publishing House of The University „Lucian Blaga”, 2002, p.216-217.



the faithful go out of the church¹⁴. Dictionaries, however, explain the *priceasna hymn* wrongly, confusing it with the *koinonikon*¹⁵, when defining the concept of *koinonikon*, they say that in Transylvania and Banat it has the meaning of priceasna hymn. The *koinonikon* and the *priceasna hymn* are sung at the same time in the cult, but unlike the *priceasna hymn*, the *koinonikon* (= communion – with the sense of taking Communion) indicates, on the one hand, the moment of singing (that is when the clergy and the believers take Communion), and on the other hand, its songs are included in eight modes or voices. Each *koinonikon* is composed on the structure of one of the eight modes (some are sung in *papadic* tone, others *sticheraric* or even *irmologic* tone) and in the Western music¹⁶ (*on the stave* or the *linear music as we say*), a term of movement¹⁷ corresponds to each of these singing styles. The priceasna hymns do not have a specific melody, of a mode, they are *extra-modos* creations, besides mode, they are creations belonging to the people, unlike the *koinonikon* that is composed by musicians, psalm singers, and monks that know church music notation and principles, on the melodies of the modes.

When explaining the concept of priceasna hymn, most dictionaries say that it is a song that is sung during the communion of priests¹⁸, without indicating the time in the cult

¹⁴ *Dicționar de termeni muzicali*, Enciclopedica, 3rd ed. revised and augmented, București, 2010, p.112.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Lucia Vetrici, *Dicționarul tânărului muzician*, București, Didactică și Pedagogică R.A., 2007, p.8-80.

¹⁷ *Papadic* corresponds to the term *Largo* (a song that is full of melismata and notes of different values, an ample, slow song – one of the tempos of the slow parts of the sonata cycle, perhaps the church sonata); *Sticheraric* corresponds to the concept of *Andante* (a less melismatic song with a suitable tempo-something between a slow and very rhythmic song, normal tempo, usually andante cantabile, that is slow, resembling vocal interpretation); *Irmologic* has *Alegro* as a correspondent in the linear music (this song is interpreted more lively, faster, vividly).

¹⁸ *Dicționarul general al limbii române*, București, Științifică și Enciclopedică Publishing House, 1987, p.825.

when it must be sung, like the *koinonikon*. Perhaps, in time, due to the fact that the *koinonikon* was difficult to sing (*for it was very rich from the melismatic point of view and could not be interpreted by anyone but only by those who knew the notation very well*), it was replaced with a *more common* song, known by all believers, created by the people and chanted for the people, namely the priceasna hymn. There may be another explanation, namely: as all the faithful were preparing for Communion, a familiar song was necessary, so as all of them may be able to take Communion, the singers and the faithful in general; many priceasna hymns were known by heart so the faithful could sing while going to take Communion.

Another reason for replacing the *koinonikon* with the priceasna hymn (*the carols during the Advent until the Epiphany*) is the habit of preaching before the communion of the faithful. Most liturgists say that preaching at this liturgical point contradicts the internal logic of the Holy Liturgy; the preaching has the role to prepare the faithful for the Communion so it has a different context in the Liturgy of the Word (*immediately after reading the Apostles and the Holy Gospels*). But for practical reasons, so as the faithful may listen to the preaching and take the Body and Blood of the Lord, it was agreed that they should be close to each other-it justified the meaning of the word *koinonikon* (*communion*, sharing the word and the body of the Lord). This is the reason why, in most churches, after the consecration of the Gifts, after the priest's words “*Let us be attentive. The holy Gifts for the holy people of God.*”, and after the choir responds “*One is Holy, one is the Lord...*”, if a *koinonikon* is not sung when the clergy take Communion or there are no homily for that Sunday or holiday, the hymns or the spiritual songs are interpreted (*carols etc.*).

This liturgical practice of singing priceasna hymns during Holy Communion generated, in certain contexts, confusion between the traditional *koinonikon* of the Orthodox Church Liturgy and the songs with a moral-religious theme recently appeared in the melodic background of the Romanian Church.



Many of these issues will be adjusted if theological schools give more importance to church music. We speak only of a return to normality, order and tradition. Unfortunately, some believe that during the liturgical communion with the Body and the Blood of the Saviour, we can afford singing anything else, even songs from other religions, even the recitation of religious poems. Just as it is not proper to sing something else instead of the Cherubic hymn or *Holy God*, in the same way, we should not replace the *koinonikon* with anything else but selected priceasna hymns, especially in terms of text and song.

The melody of the priceasna hymns is a repetitive one, in general, usually at the first two verses we have a melody that is sung equally then the second part of the melody, at the next two verses it is repeated, marked with *bis*, differentiation coming just at the final cadence of the verse IV¹⁹.

Another explanation of the term *priceasna hymn* would be that the term comes from the Slavonic *pricesti* (*which means pure*), a song dedicated to the Mother of God – the purest person of Creation – or, maybe, a pure song sprang from the soul of the believers applying it (*in extenso*) to the other hymns. Those concerned with this genre say that the priceasna hymn is synonymous with the *koinonikon* and it comes from *priceasteni*, meaning immaculate-as, during the priceasna hymn, the faithful take the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ²⁰.

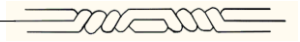
The reason why the priceasna hymns are sung with so much love by all the faithful could be the fact that if all the other songs in the worship are sung by the church singers or the choir

¹⁹In musical terms, of musical forms and analyses, *at the text* we have: **A** (verse I), **B** (verse II), **C** (verse III), **D** (verse IV)-bis, then the text is resumed from **C**, which becomes **C'** and **D'**; and *musically*: **A** (the first fragment of the melody applied to the first verse), **A'** (the same melodic fragment applied to the second verse), **B** (the second melodic fragment applied to the third verse), **C** (the second melodic fragment applied to the fourth verse, but without the final cadence)-bis, the melody and the text from **B** is resumed and becomes **B'**, then **C'** or sometimes even **D'** (with final cadence).

²⁰Florin Bucescu, *Cântarea psaltică în manuscrisele moldovenești din secolul al XIX-lea* (rezumat teză de doctorat), București, 2002, p.52.

(in many churches), at the indicated moment (*the communion of the clergy and the believers*) the believers are given the opportunity to contribute to the service through their joint song. And it is not by chance that during the second solemn moment of the Divine Liturgy (*the first being the consecration of the Gifts*) the ritual law provides the singing of the *koinonikon*, a delicate, profound song while, in the Holy Altar, special prayers are recited in order to help the priests and then the faithful to examine their soul and, thus, prepare for the encounter with Christ and the communion with Him. Exactly at this point of the communion, over the years, the priceasna hymn was sung alongside the *koinonikon*, then the *koinonikon* was replaced almost entirely (*being preserved only in traditional monasteries and in some cathedrals*), and today, the *koinonikon* being almost forgotten, it is replaced by the concert (*performed by the church choir on 2, 3, 4 voices - mixed, male or equal voices chorus*) or with the priceasna hymns (*sung by the church singer, the group of singers or the whole church community present at the service*).

So, after the liturgical Trisagion, the Cherubic Hymn and the Axion: “It is truly meet”, *the priceasna hymn* occupies an important place in the lives of the believers. There were voices and still are today that claimed that the priceasna hymn spread throughout the country from Transylvania-even in the diaspora. Those who say these things would like to insinuate that Transylvania is more colorful in terms of religion, more cosmopolitan in terms of ethnicity; therefore the priceasna hymns appeared here in the midst of various denominations. Maybe there are melodic or textual influences, but the doctrine of most carols and priceasna hymns is, undoubtedly, purely Orthodox. The only debatable thing would be some of their melodies. As far as the carols are concerned, this is a different discussion, but we mention the trend of dancing carols that we may hear in the concerts or on television, it is a sacrilege to dance to a carol or a priceasna hymn (*we do not think that we are some African tribes that have been christened recently to keep certain rituals and unite them with the Christian religion*).



The priceasna hymns spread in the early twentieth century, due to the endeavors of the movement “Army of God”, multiplying and developing (*surprisingly*) during the communism, when in spite of the authorities efforts to prevent Christians from attending churches and monasteries, the crowd sang them more lively. Singing priceasna hymns is a good thing because it is better for the faithful to sing the liturgical hymns than not to pay attention to the service.

3. The *koinonikon*

Among the songs found in the books of worship where the songs and the ritual laws of the seven praise services are included, especially the Divine Liturgy, the *koinonikon* is the only kind of song that, in most churches, has lost its purpose and the role it had in the past. The liturgists of the twentieth century have shown interest in this poetic genre whereas the musicians have been interested in the interpretation style. True, it can be sung at the Liturgy immediately after the choir sang the hymn “*One is Holy, one is Lord...*”²¹ and at the end of the services or in the concerts at various occasions and holidays, but its place is near the end of the Divine Liturgy – if there are many ministers, the one who preaches takes Communion either in the first part of the *koinonikon* or after the sermon; but even more true is that it is almost forgotten, or, at best, in our churches, if not omitted, the *Koinonikon* is recited like a verse, but even so, we lose the sense for which it was appointed (*in the churches with more priests, one priest may preach after the hymn “One is Holy, one is Lord...”*, and he takes Communion before the faithful). In the twentieth century, and sooner, this priceasna hymn replaced the preaching, then due to the development of the harmonic music, the concert replaced the *koinonikon*. Today, there is a sermon, the *koinonikon* and some priceasna hymns, or only priceasna hymns, the concert and the sermon.

²¹Petre Vintilescu, *Liturgierul explicat*, București, Editura IBMBOR, 1972, p.306.

The *koinonikon* (from the Greek *Kinonikón*) means “[song] sung together” (the communion hymn). In the early church when the priests and the faithful received Communion²² a whole psalm having the chorus “Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.” was sung. In terms of melody and rhythm the *koinonikon* is among the papadic songs, like the Cherubic hymn, the Trisagion and even the Answers at the Liturgy, being sung slowly and colorfully²³. As it can be seen from the *koinonikon* above, these have a short text (in most cases). The *koinonikon* is almost always accompanied by *terirem* (especially in monasteries). This melodic genre called *terirem* is used in the writing of the papadic songs²⁴ - which are slow and more colourful than the other church hymns, such as the Cherubic hymn, the *koinonikon* and the polieleos. These songs, in general, and the *terirem* accompanying them, require greater virtuosity of the choir of psalm singers²⁵ that perform them; they must know the notation and the interpretation very well. For this reason, the *terirem* has almost entirely disappeared from our churches during the last century, a century characterized largely by a decline of the psaltic music²⁶, especially of this genre. In the ritual books, there is a clear distinction between weekly and special *koinonikon* (of the feasts), the latter being the most representative. The most known *koinonikon* of the week is that of Sunday: “Praise the Lord from the heavens ... Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia”, Ps.148, 1 (harmonized

²²Sebastian B. Bucur, *Cântarea psaltică în manuscrise moldovenești din sec. al XIX-lea*, teză de doctorat-manuscris, Universitatea Națională de Muzică București, 2002, pp.733-735; apud Nicolae Gheorghiu, *op.cit.* p.23.

²³ We know that the papadic tone has two variants: **moderate and slow**-the *koinonikon* has a slow rhythm, see Georgeos N. Konstantinou, *Teoria și practica muzicii bisericești, op. cit.*, p. 82.

²⁴ Freely translated, papadic means priestly, namely a slow singing.

²⁵ The psalm singers choir is the group that sing in unison (with accompaniment that changes according to the cadences made by the song); the psalm singers choir should not be confused with the harmonic polyphonic choir.

²⁶ Unfortunately, there was a systematization of the psaltic songs (Hrisantic Reform) - some songs lost their specific mode of interpretation, those quarters of tone weren't interpreted anymore, bringing everything at the Western tonal-functional system (tone – half-tone).



by many of our musicians in harmonic - polyphonic style), in fact, this is the oldest *koinonikon* and one of the first harmonized after the introduction of choral singing (it is the most important composition of the papadic idiom, tone or style). The *koinonikons* (plural) on psaltic musical notation are kept in musical collections called *Koinonikon books* and in Romania the most famous collection of this kind is Heruvico-Chinonicarul of Anton Pann, appeared at the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the reasons why the *koinonikon* was replaced is represented by the poor musical training of many cantors, singers, teachers, psalm singers, etc.

A careful analysis shows that the *koinonikon* is one of the religious songs that are difficult to perform, which require a long theoretical and practical preparation of the psaltic church music. Maybe this is why the *koinonikon* can be heard today, only in the old churches and monasteries, which have a rich psaltic musical tradition. The *koinonikon* should be sung the way it is, namely long and difficult to grasp, as the melody is the one that touches the soul. But, at best, in our churches, if not omitted, the *koinonikon* is only recited as a verse but even so, we lose the sense that it once had.

The authors of church music often considered this moment of the Liturgy as a possible breach of the liturgic system, by which minimum innovations can be brought based on predetermined rules, given that, according to the local customs of the parish, the *koinonikons* or the priceasna hymns may differ from church to church, or from liturgy to liturgy. In Romanian language, the *koinonikon* and the priceasna hymn are given the same meaning, but they differ in textual and melodic content. In the early church, the Communion song consisted of a psalm verse (the hymn “Taste and see ...”- Ps.33, 9- from today's Liturgy reminds us of it).

From the ninth century, one can speak of a whole repertoire of *koinonikons* for the entire church year²⁷, the *koinonikons*

²⁷ Nicolae Gheorghiuță, *Chinonicul Duminical în perioada post-bizantină(1453-1821. Liturgică și muzică*, București, Editura Sofia, 2009, p.14.

having the function to guide the believers by telling them that the Communion follows, and to recall and individualize every Liturgy through a certain *koinonikon*. From the ninth century until the middle of the fifteenth century there is recorded a number of 22 *koinonikons*, and these represent the foundation of the other works of this kind²⁸.

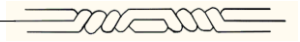
It may have been a song that was sung by itself at the time, or maybe it was sung during the Communion and after it, until the priest began the sermon. Other songs, like the priceasna hymns and the carols, may have been sung. Probably, in the early church, these *koinonikons* were much simpler melodically (because there was no notation and even after the emergence of notation, the psalm singers were not professional singers) and they were sung by the whole community because the singers’ choirs didn’t exist.

Choros, koinonia, ekklesia were notions that were circulating in the church at the same time, and *koinonia* (*comunio*) or living in communion by Holy Communion is one of the reasons why we cannot understand a universe of common reality of the Church for which we have different names. From the musical point of view the concept of **koinonia** does not refer to a group of people that have the duty to interpret the songs but to the entire community of the Church.

The *koinonikons* are sung slowly, in papadic style characterized by a greater freedom of cadence and modulation, the musical discourse is carried out like some very ornated vocalizations, almost independent of the literary text. The theorist Victor Giuleanu believes that, in fact, in the papadic songs, the separation from the prosodic rhythm is complete and the rhythmic forms are strictly musical, and separated from the accents of the text. The features of the *koinonikon* are: the broad tempo, rich ornamentation, the predominance of melismata and melodic improvisation, the rhythm is free and based on a time period (*crotchet or eighth*) that can bear divisions²⁹.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp.14,15.

²⁹ Victor Giuleanu, *Tratat de teoria muzicii*, București, Editura Muzicală, 1968, p.82.



Gheorghe Ciobanu says that the Oriental influence was felt especially in the papadic song. Probably, because of it, this musicologist made no reference to the papadic songs of the Hrisantic period (*koinonikons* included), even though he wrote an extensive study on the Romanian church music. His attitude towards the Hrisantic papadic songs is motivated to a certain point, as they were a foreign trend, coming from the East, which was imposed by the Phanariot regimes in one hundred years of reign in Moldova and Wallachia, although many Romanian scholars and musicians have taken action against these borrowings.

The multiplication of Greek manuscripts and printed psaltic works from the Phanariote period was due to the material stimulation as large sums of money were granted to the Romanians which wrote Greek music books and not Romanian books (we see the same thing in the Romanian music today). Do not forget that Greek intellectuals supported a campaign of denigration of the Romanian language and the ability to serve in the national language. Even if the Romanians had the art of Orpheus and one angelic voice, they would still sing “Wallachian” and “nothing would happen”, said Hieromonk Makarios in the introduction to *Irmologhion*³⁰.

Today, the *koinonikons* are not particularly liked by our Orthodox Christians, and they are sung mainly during the communion of the priests. The Christians prefer the priceasna hymns and the carols. This is due to their length and to their rich musical style. On the other hand, they are appreciated by the representatives of the Hellenized groups³¹. However, the melodic style of the *koinonikons* was, gradually, integrated in our Orthodox liturgical practice, first in Greek and then in Romanian, some have been translated and others were even created their own melody. Today, the *koinonikons* are sung in a very special way only by the singers who know psaltic notation very well. Besides

³⁰ Jeromonah Macarie, *Irmologhion*, Viena, 1823, p.XI.

³¹ Florin Bucescu, *op.cit*, p.52.

these, the priceasna hymns are also sung and concerts take place depending on the period of the church year.

Conclusions

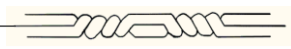
In these songs, as in all ritual texts, life in Christ is deeply felt and lived, as the whole mystery of the Mystical Body of Christ. The vibration of this life, that in school books we barely suspect, is coming from within. It's the same intimate experience of early Christianity that the Church continues faithfully, therefore, it teaches in countless texts “the transposition of the faithful in the sacrificial life of Christ, in order to sacrifice the members of the body” and “to be worshiped with Christ since we were buried with Him, and came to life with Him.”

Music is regarded as the art generating the most authentic beautiful things; it has the right to be considered the most beautiful art because it's the most vivid, the *life* term adding to its beauty.

Having to deal with problems of eternal significance, it is essential to keep in mind the huge power of music. It has the power to elevate or corrupt, it can be used for good or evil, it has the power to subdue rude and uncultivated spirits; the power to quicken thought and to awaken sympathy. All religious, poetic and musical genres, which I have spoken of, have the gift to transform human beings into living members of the mystical body of Christ.

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