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REVISING THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF RUSSIAN CHURCH MUSIC, OR MYTHS AND HOW TO DEBUNK THEM

The paper¹ addresses certain issues and features of the “established” historiography of Eastern Slavic church music that appear as illogical, and for that reason, suspicious. These matters have become visible throughout the research into various aspects of the chant tradition carried out by myself since the late 1990s, and some of them have entailed paradigm shifts in my own work. It has proven difficult, however, to have established conceptions revised or even reconsidered by others. This, in turn, has a negative and potentially far-reaching effect on further work in this area, in research and education as well as in activities pertaining to practical musicianship, among them decisions regarding the selection of musical repertoire for divine services.²

The beginning of the paper deals with some particular issues that have arisen from within my research on the chant tradition of Valaam Monastery. Therein I also endeavour to analyse the mechanics of misinterpretations of history. The second half of the paper concentrates on problems of more general nature. Before you draw your weapons and start shooting the messenger, I take advantage of the situation and mention that my objective is less to state how things really are than to provide a perspective for seeing that often the truth is not on the lines but between them, and that at least sometimes we do have some equipment to dig it out.

VALAAM AND BEYOND

In July, probably of 1889 if not a year or two earlier, Dmitrij Solov'ev visited Valaam, where he attended a number of divine services. Solov'ev was a gymnasium teacher of Latin and singing in St Petersburg and also known as a church music scholar and composer. He kept a diary during that trip, and went on to publish an article entitled *Church Singing in Valaam Monastery*.³ Therein he writes, among other things:

... Valaam is ... an adherent admirer of old domestic [*drevleotečeskago*] church music, singing until this moment according to neumatic [*sic!*] chant

1 The preparation of this paper has been financed by the Kone Foundation.

2 It seems to me that not only in Finland has there been a tendency to disfavour some parts of the repertoire on imaginary extra-musical grounds.

3 Dmitrij Solov'ev, *Cerkovnoe penie v Valaamskoj obiteli* (Sanktpeterburg: Sinodal'naja tipografija / Izdanie S.-Peterburgskago Eparhial'nago Bratstva vo imja Presvjatyja Bogorodicy, 1889).

books [*po Znamennym knigam*] and not too tired to spend whole nights in church services!⁴

... Later on, thanks to its geographical location, Valaam has remarkably been spared even from the influence of the staff-note period in the evolution of our church singing art, and accordingly, in Valaam singing we encounter a living witness of the Znamenny period and a carefully cautious follower of its holy rules and traditions. In this respect, the pieces of information that we encounter here are highly valuable and important, in particular, the interpretation of melody, which agrees with or is at least close to the understanding of its original authors and singers of the Znamenny period.⁵

... the singing still remains in quite significant accord with chant books of Znamenny notation.⁶

... The little *stolp* [Znamenny] chant in the performance of the local singers is rendered in the full accuracy and purity of the best versions of the Znamenny melodies of this chant, the “Kirillovskie” in particular; the melodic affinity of tones 6 and 7 with tones 2 and 3 becomes manifest with special clarity. One’s attention is drawn also to the individual harmonization of tone 8.⁷

In all these quotations, one may notice the writer’s fervent desire to convey the genuineness and loyalty to an Old Russian tradition of the singing he witnessed. In reality, however, the choir did not sing from neumes or any books in church, although at that time there were two volumes of neumated chant manuscripts in the monastery library (now in the Orthodox Church Museum in Kuopio⁸). The end of the last quotation reveals unambiguously that the singing was harmonized. This is no major news, especially to someone who is familiar with Valaam chant manuscripts that were either written in the early twentieth century for referential purposes,⁹ or contain excerpts of the common polyphonic repertoire of the nineteenth century, arranged or composed by authors affiliated to the Imperial Court Chapel (such as Dmitrij Bortnjanskij, Petr Turčaninov and Aleksej L’vov), and others. Nevertheless, this is an interesting and valuable essay, in spite of the evaluation, or debunking, by Aleksandr Zagrebin from the year 2000, according to which “many of his [Solov’ev’s] conclusions are erroneous.”¹⁰

4 *Ibid.*, 9.

5 *Ibid.*, 21.

6 *Ibid.*, 24.

7 *Ibid.*, 25–6.

8 Johann von Gardner, “Altrussische Neumen-Handschriften des orthodoxen Kirchenmuseums in Kuopio (Finnland)” in: *Die Welt der Slaven* 18 (1973): 109–18.

9 See Jopi Harri, “On the Polyphonic Chant of Valaam Monastery” in: *Church, State and Nation in Orthodox Church Music. Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Orthodox Church Music*, ed. Ivan Moody and Maria Takala-Roszczenko (Jyväskylä: ISOCM, 2010). The research into the materials described was carried out in 2013 and 2014.

10 Aleksandr Zagrebin, “Valaam: Ostrovok russkogo cerkovnogo penija” in: *Ežegodnaja bogoslovskaja konferencija Pravoslavnogo Svjato-Tihonovskogo bogoslovskogo instituta*

In her master's thesis, provocatively entitled *Valaam Chant: The Myth of Orthodox Church Singing?*, Cantor Sofia Laukkanen offers this interpretation: "The choir of the Valaam Monastery sang in unison. The basses, tenors, and altos sang the melody in octaves. This unison singing is mistakenly referred to as polyphony by Solov'ev."¹¹ Laukkanen appears to suggest that the choir was divided into three voices, singing the melody tripled, in which case the interval between the bottom and the top would have constantly been two octaves. If the chants were sung in about the usual pitch range, the basses may have been comfortable with it, but the tenors would soon have been asked for notes approaching high C, and the boy altos for notes an octave higher still. If she had considered the musical feasibility of this interpretation, Laukkanen would certainly have been able to revise it and debunk this myth.

What is the reason for failures in historiography? One is that research is demanding and difficult, and requires a critical and suspicious mindset that not everyone has. Another is that researchers tend to have multiple contradicting roles, which they fail, or do not even want, to keep apart. In addition to being a scholar, a typical researcher of church music is also a church musician, and often an enlightener, or has a vocation for being one. It is unavoidable that these roles interact with each other. Sometimes it appears as if the workflow were dominated by the role of the enlightener. In those cases, the results of the research are regulated by the personal ideology of the researcher, which may or may not be consistent with the dominant views. The research material is seen as through this ideology and it is interpreted further to corroborate and vindicate the ideology, irrespective of what the material actually contains. An ideology and the findings that appear to support it may form a false hermeneutic circle that further strengthens the ideology.

One must hope that this could happen only by accident.¹² But sometimes one may suspect that some misreading of history has come about intentionally. The reader should be on the alert when certain marks of identification are encountered, such as: selective use of source material; interpretations not properly supported by the material; certain rhetorical means such as irrelevant verbosity or signs of logical fallacies, such as *argumentum ad nauseam*.

Everything, ideology included, originates from somewhere. Some researcher-musician-enlighteners are convinced about the exemplariness of their own tradition. Others are convinced about the depravity of their own tradition, in which case it is substituted by another ideal tradition, not illegitimate but dif-

(Moskva, 2000), 539.

11 Sofia Laukkanen, *Valamolainen sävelmistö: Ortodoksisen kirkkolaulun myytti?* (unpublished M.Th. thesis, Department of Orthodox Theology, University of Joensuu, 2008), 30.

12 This is certainly the case with Laukkanen. Quite probably, she had become immersed in the customary line of thinking in Joensuu and elsewhere that truly traditional and ancient church music must be monodic, and because church singing in Valaam was characterized as traditional and ancient, it necessarily was monodic, despite all those accounts that strongly suggested the opposite.

ferent from that one which they first encountered in their own Church. When this process is taken to the utmost extreme, the justification of everything other than one's own materials can be denied. If someone wonders about this, the reply is given that only uninitiated persons ask such questions. But such an attitude represents esotericism. It does not belong to science, not even to science that studies religious phenomena. In science, everything must be verbally explicable in such a way that understanding the argument and the explanation does not require a special ordination, membership of the holy clergy, or other ethereal gift of grace.

In order to avoid this sort of development, researchers must keep their scholarship, musicianship of one particular tradition, and ideological objectives apart. We all have the latter, and we cannot hide them. But we should be aware of them and their effects, at least if we aim at being honest with ourselves and to others. To realize that scholarship is not about changing reality but about studying it is a good point of departure. We may seek to change reality, but that is not scholarship, it is ideological education.

False readings and inferences are unlikely to be caused by ideology alone. A significant contributor is the lack of clarity in sources. One further instance, pertaining to Valaam and vulnerable to underdeveloped reasoning, is a recollection by a former Valaam hieromonk, the late Archbishop Paul of Finland, from 1938 or 1939:

The early Liturgy was a highly special experience for me, since no good singers were approved there, but only such who were not admitted to the better choir that sang from music, because of their voices. ... I sang in this choir with pleasure, and even worked as something of its conductor, although a conductor was not needed in reality. Once it so happened that I got a new singer in the choir. ... [He] sang first tenor, so loudly that some monks even got excited. ... In the early Liturgy, the choir followed the ancient manner of singing. The singing took place as in a male choir, but the second tenor and the second bass [sang] in [parallel] octaves. The first bass accompanied in between with parallel fifths.¹³

This reminiscence has been seen to suggest that along with the 'normal' church singing of the mainstream,¹⁴ in Valaam there coexisted a distinct tradition of an 'ancient' sort of singing. This would have involved something close to Western mediaeval organum, that is, the melody doubled in octaves and a third part singing in parallel fifths in between.¹⁵ Now if we analyse the quotation more closely, we notice that the choir was indeed an ordinary four-part male choir, consisting of first tenors, second tenors, first basses and second

13 Elina Karjalainen, *Arkkipiispa Paavali: Legenda jo eläessään*, 2nd ed. (Porvoo: WSOY, 1974), 55–6.

14 That is, the prevailing type of polyphonic singing in nineteenth and twentieth-century Russia as attested in published chant harmonizations by the Imperial Court Chapel, Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Valaam, and various individual authors.

15 Despite speculation about the existence of such a style in some point of history, no musical sources that would even hint at something like that have been discovered.

basses.¹⁶ Obviously, the melody was placed in the second tenor, as usual. The first tenor, respectively, was singing its upper third parallel, as was typical in Valaam. While Solov'ev's reference about doubling the melody in the bass register is perhaps ambiguous,¹⁷ music sources with this doubling written out exist. We discover that the question is effectively about omitting the true bass line, the normal functional bass that would be placed below the doubled melody.

The first bass of this set-up was alternatively known as the *kvinta* part, which is relatively static, often providing fifths for the chords.¹⁸ Sometimes it may progress in parallel fifths with the doubled melody in the bass. A constant parallel fifth motion, however, is musically awkward and therefore unlikely.

The polyphonic chant manuscripts of Valaam contain only one instance of this set-up, reproduced in Example 1. On the other hand, a somewhat similar singing practice has been documented by Leonid Malaškin for Kiev-Pechersk Lavra; a sample is given in Example 2. Examples 3 and 4 provide the beginning of the Valaam early Liturgy as it was printed in the monodic *Obihod* and rendered in a polyphonic reconstruction that is based on manuscript sources and my interpretation of Paul's description. In Example 4, where indicated, the topmost three parts have been taken from Manuscript 443, which contains music for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (no polyphonic source for the beginning of the Liturgy of St John is available, and in Ms. 443, the two "Lord, have mercy" petitions have different music), whereas the bass contains the doubling of the melody. On the last system, the *kvinta* part has first been rendered in parallel fifths against the bass, which I consider unlikely to have been the performance practice in Valaam. The following Amen provides the bass divided to contain both the true bass line (according to Ms. 443) and the doubled melody. The objective of this discussion is to point out that certain difficulties pertaining to the lack of clarity in the sources can indeed be overcome by practical consideration, by putting our musicianship into action.

EXAMPLE 1. Instead of being functional, the bass is doubling the melody. The dialogue attaching to the Gospel readings for Matins of Great Friday. Score reproduced from Valaam Ms. 318.¹⁹

16 Before the First World War, the Valaam choir was developed and known as the monastic choir, consisting of altos, first and second tenors, and basses, but this had changed to the normal male choir when there were no longer sufficient numbers of boys in the custody of the monastery.

17 According to Solov'ev (op. cit., 20), "the majority of voices lead the melody, which, thus, proceeds always doubled, or sometimes also tripled ..." In my interpretation, the mentioned doubling involves the third parallelism of one part with the melody, and the tripling would add to that the lower octave parallel of the melody in the upper *bass divisi*.

18 This is evidenced by a multitude of Valaam manuscript part-books of polyphonic chant (see Harri, "On the Polyphonic...").

19 *Sbornik notnago penija V318a-c* (three manuscript part-books situated in the Library of Valamo Monastery, Heinävesi, Finland, 1896).

Въ Великій Пятокъ на Утрени предъ Евангел.

318F-08a

T1 (third)
T2 (melody)

И ду - хо - ви тво - е - му.

B1 (kvinta)
B2 (melody)

318F-08b

Сла - ва Те - бѣ Гос - по - ди сла - - - - ва Те - бѣ.

318F-08c

Сла - ва дол - го - тер - пѣ - ні - ю Тво - е - му Гос - - - - по - ди.

EXAMPLE 2. Kiev-Pechersk Lavra *samoglasen* chant, Tone 7, according to Leonid Malaškin (1887).²⁰

Гласъ VII.

Гос - по - ди возвахъ къ Тебѣ у - слы - ши мя: у - слы - ши мя Гос - по - ди. Гос - по - ди

возвахъ къ Тебѣ у - слы - ши мя: вон - ми гласу моленія мо - е - го, вне - гда воз - ва -

ти ми къ Те - бѣ у - слы - ши мя Гос - по - ди. Да ис - пра - вят - ся мо - лит - ва мо - я,

20 *Vsenoščnoe bdenie po napevu Kievo-Pečerskoj Lavry dlja mužskago ili smešannago hora, pereloženie L. D. Malaškina, Op. 42* (Moskva: Izdanie žurnala *Rukovodstvo dlja Sel'skih Pastyrej*, 1887), 26.

EXAMPLE 3. The beginning of the Liturgy, Valaam *Obihod*.²¹

EXAMPLE 4. Polyphonic reconstruction of the beginning of the Liturgy according to Archbishop Paul's description and Mss. 443 and 413.²²

PROBLEMS OF A MORE GENERAL NATURE IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CHURCH MUSIC

Sometimes we may notice that there is imbalance between what a historiographical text is supposed to deal with and what it actually does. One would

21 *Obihod odnogolosnyj cerkovno-bogoslužebnago penija po napevu Valaamskago monastyrja*, 2nd ed. (s.l.: Izdanie Valaamskoj obiteli, 1909), 231.

22 Liturgija Preždeosvjaščennyh Darov levago klirosa V443a–c and V413 [kvinta] (four manuscript part-books situated in the Library of Valamo Monastery, Heinävesi, Finland, 1912).

expect answers to certain questions, but there are none, or rather few. This is the case with all histories of church music written in Russian for events of mid-seventeenth century and after.

Three major historians of Russian church music are Ivan Gardner, Vasilij Metallov, and Dimitrij Razumovskij. By convention they divide the topic into epochs and periods, as illustrated in Example 5.²³

EXAMPLE 5. Periodization. The epoch and period numbering for Metallov and Razumovskij are not original but have been rendered to accord with Gardner's. Indications of geographical/national influence or prevalence have been italicized. Gardner restricts the term *partesnoe penie* (*partesnoe penie*, part singing) to denote the style known as *partesny*, whereas Metallov and Razumovskij use it for any singing that involves written parts.

Gardner 1982; 1980 etc.	Metallov 1915	Razumovskij 1867–69
I. Epoch of monophonic singing (-1650)	I. Epoch of melodic singing	I. Epoch of melodic singing
II. Epoch of <i>Western-style</i> choral singing (Russia 1650–1917–?)	II. Epoch of harmonic singing (Russia 1652–)	II. Epoch of part singing (Ukraine c. 1600–, Moscow 1651–)
II.1. <i>Polish-Ukrainian</i> influence (1650–1750)	II.1ab. Part singing (Galicia c. 1600–?, Moscow 1650–?) II.1c. Concerted (<i>Polish</i>) part singing (1670s–?)	II.1a. Part singing in <i>South-western Rus</i> (Galicia, Ukraine, c. 1600–) II.1b. Neumatic polyphonic singing in <i>Russian Church</i> (17th century) II.1c. First period of part singing in <i>Russian Church</i> (1700–1780s)
II.2. <i>Italian</i> influence (1750–1833)	II.2a. Concerted (<i>Italian</i>) part singing (1764–1801) II.2b. <i>Russian</i> part singing (1770s–?)	II.2a. Second period of part singing (1725–?) II.2b. Part singing during Bortnjanskij (1800–25)
II.3. <i>German</i> influence (1834–1899)	II.3. New direction of <i>Russian</i> part singing: Bortnjanskij and all posterity (1779–1915)	II.3. Part singing after Bortnjanskij (1825–69)
II.4. <i>Moscow School</i> (1899–1917)		

The periodization is most explicit in Gardner. Unlike his predecessors, Gardner appears to emphasize the idea that in the first epoch, church singing

23 Ivan (Johann von) Gardner, *Bogoslužebnoe penie russkoj pravoslavnoj cerkvi, Istorija*, Tom II (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Monastery, 1982); *Russian Church Singing, Volume 1, Orthodox Worship and Hymnography*, transl. by Vladimir Morosan (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980); Vasilij Metallov, *Očerk istorii pravoslavnago cerkovnago penija v Rossii*, 4th ed. (Moskva, 1915); Dimitrij Razumovskij, *Cerkovnoe penie v Rossii* (Moskva: Tipografija T. Ris, 1867–69).

in Russia was native Russian and, thus, proper, whereas the second epoch was entirely dominated by some foreign, non-Russian and heterodox influence. For this reason, it was improper. The only exception is Gardner's period of the "Moscow School". He appears to idealize it as some sort of a Renaissance, or restoration of genuine Russianness in church music, that was then ended abruptly by the Revolution.²⁴

In fact, to begin with, the Moscow School (or "New Russian Choral School," as designated by Vladimir Morosan) lacks a precise definition that would stand closer scrutiny. It has been associated with certain artistic ideals, stylistic features, and composers, but in many cases these do not intersect too well. Moreover, the music effectively failed to become established in liturgical use in its own time and later, perhaps on account of its incompatibility with common liturgical aesthetics, and impracticability outside of concerts.²⁵ Thus it must be considered a marginal phenomenon. Also the ideas and stylistic features that have been marketed as Russian were actually as much a Western import as anything.²⁶

There is little doubt that here the question is about promoting a certain ideology.²⁷ In my personal interpretation (which anyone is free to challenge), its

24 Gardner, *Russian Church Singing, Volume 1...*, op. cit., 146.

25 Some stylistic features of the "New Russian Choral School" have been pointed out in Vladimir Morosan, *Choral Performance in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, reprint ed. (Madison, CT: Musica Russica, 1994), 217–8, 160–1, 231, 224–5 and elsewhere. These include a "rediscovery" of traditional chant (even though traditional chant had been sung in churches on regular basis from time immemorial, monodic sources had been in print since 1772, and harmonizations published by the Court Chapel were available); "choral orchestration" (in the sense of imitating orchestral sonority in choir music); admissibility of parallel octaves and fifths in voice leading (a feature present in vernacular polyphonic traditions, as discussed a moment ago); "constantly changing number of voices in the texture," (perhaps thus far considered restless and unfeasible in church) and drone harmonization, to which one could add a sort of neo-modalism involving the non-traditional avoidance of leading notes in the harmony. These features seldom appeared in any single work, and composers associated with this 'school' did not consistently stick to a single style. For instance, Pavel Česnokov, who has been considered one of its major representatives, wrote a significant number of works lacking the mentioned features. Morosan (op. cit., 238) characterizes Česnokov's compositions involving soloists by this value judgement: "At their worst, they exemplify the most extreme cases of saccharine sentimentality produced by misdirected nineteenth-century piety." He then strikes gold by summing up what is the essence: "Nevertheless, both in Chesnokov's time and more recently, these works have remained the favorites of concert audiences and congregations alike."

26 These include the deliberate aspiration of an archaic feel by way of 'modality', a tendency typical of common European national romanticism, as well as the ambition of writing larger-scale liturgical concert works according to the Western European idiom, even though these are considerably remote from the ethos of Eastern Orthodoxy. One may still argue that these produced a synthesis that was genuinely Russian, but was this also the case with all previous assimilations of foreign influence, and if not, why not?

27 Cf. Vladimir Morosan, "Ivan Alexeevich Gardner (1898–1984)" in: Johann von Gardner, *Russian Church Singing, Vol. 2: History from the Origins to the Mid-Seventeenth*

roots are in a special kind of nationalism. Gardner was an expatriate, and he probably felt that his nation had ceased to exist. This was ultimately the fault of the imperial government in that it collapsed, causing the demise of Gardner's native country and nationality. For Gardner, it seems, Western influence was the apparent external cause of the decay that destroyed Russia, and was therefore evil. Apparently this all started in the mid-seventeenth century, when, in Gardner's words, "liturgical singing ceases to be considered as a form of worship itself and begins to be viewed as *music* introduced into church services."²⁸ This obscure argument has usually been taken as uncritically as almost everything that Gardner published, even when no evidence is presented, as is often the case.

It seems that in Gardner's mind, the imperials represented those who gave birth to the catastrophe and consequently, anything that could be associated with their government was depraved and deserved all defamation.²⁹ This included the Court Chapel, its choral traditions, its directors, its chants and their supposedly Protestant harmony (obviously a myth!), its harmonizations of synodal and vernacular chants, the supposed promotion of liturgical abbreviations (as if otherwise divine services would have been and would still be celebrated without omissions), and so forth.³⁰ Gardner may well have been sincere in his conviction that somehow the government had managed to disseminate these corruptions everywhere in Russia and beyond, thus adding to its evilness.³¹

In this light, one should be cautious in embracing Gardner's views on an overwhelming foreign influence in everything that took place in church music between 1650 and 1899, as well as a revival of true Russianness from 1899 until

Century, transl. and ed. by Vladimir Morosan (USA: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), xvi, where he summarizes Gardner's agenda. Morosan concludes: "Most of all, Gardner tried to show ... that liturgical singing was not a matter to be determined by personal taste." In fact, Gardner was not slow to judge church music according to his own taste, as the recordings made by Archbishop Paul of their discussions in 1971 in Kuopio reveal (totalling some four hours, these are held in the archives of the Valamo Monastery in Heinävesi). It is not unlikely that these conversations, as well as the four lectures Gardner gave, which were later published in Finnish, have had a notable (not altogether productive) impact on the Orthodox church music scene in Finland.

28 Gardner, *Russian Church Singing, Volume 1...*, op. cit., 145. See also Gardner, *Bogoslužebnoe...*, op. cit., 9–10.

29 The imperial government as a cause of malady in church music is explicitly brought up in *idem*: "And this opened the doors for the most uncritical following of the secular fashion, the general tone and direction of which came from the imperial court and from the bureaucratic taste of St Petersburg."

30 For a summary of Gardner's malignant and usually baseless criticism of the Court Chapel, see Jopi Harri, *St Petersburg Court Chant and the Tradition of Eastern Slavic Church Singing* (Turku: University of Turku, 2011), 19–23.

31 Similarly contemptuous attitudes towards traditions associated with the past imperial regime can be observed in the writings of émigré theologians such as Georges Florovsky and Alexander Schmemmann.

the Revolution, since this may be more myth than unbiased and credible historiography. The same applies to various claims of sudden and fundamental transitions in liturgical culture. Even when evidence is presented, it is possible that its probative force is being magnified.

Whereas Metallov and Razumovskij are obviously more neutral than Gardner in their interpretations, another form of nationalism is visible in their work. Both of them could still associate with the nation from the context of which they were writing, and thus, their nationalism was reasonable and mild. Its most visible manifestation is perhaps that they tend to describe everything from a Moscow perspective. St Petersburg is seen more as a province, Ukraine as a foreign country, and Galicia as if it were on another planet. Accordingly, the history of something starts only when it is introduced in Moscow.

As Martin Hansen-Chernetskiy has pointed out,³² a nationalistic undertone is discernible even in much of the work of Soviet scholars of church music, often producing effects that obfuscate the findings and, in the eyes of a Western reader, are quite bizarre. A 'native' researcher appears to see qualities that are not there, potentially leading to myths that deserve to be debunked. The background of this is that church music could be studied only as part of the 'great' heritage of Russian culture, the culmination of which was the Soviet state. In order to get a book or paper on some mediaeval chant repertory published, the author probably had to emphasize its musical excellence and Russianness. In the memoirs of Dmitry Shostakovich one can read that there was a saying: "Russia, the homeland of the elephant,"³³ ridiculing the Soviet doctrine that everything significant had been invented by Russians in Russia. To a certain extent, this situation is visible even in post-Soviet Russian research on church music.

If we return to Gardner, Metallov, and Razumovskij, the most obvious drawback in their historiographies is the composer-centric approach. This is particularly noticeable for the second epoch, during which, especially at the beginning of the period, composers were often not Russian. Usually they were Ukrainian, but this is not underlined, because great men with Slavic names could easily count as Russians.³⁴ According to these historians, great composers wrote new compositions for the Church in novel styles, and that is what makes history. However, it is not mentioned that such works had a minimal share of what was actually sung in divine services. Consequently, a later scholar needs to be independent in figuring out what the actual repertoire consisted of.

32 Martin Hansen-Chernetskiy, *Signs and Objects: The Reconstruction of Old-Russian Znamennyj Rospev* (unpublished master's thesis, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2011), 8–9.

33 Solomon Volkov, ed., *Dmitri Šostakovitšin muistelmat*, transl. by Seppo Heikinheimo (Helsinki: Otava, 1989), 207. Originally: "Россия — родина слонов".

34 When in the summer of 2014 I was singing in St Petersburg in a concert of "Russian church music," as it was advertised, the programme incorporated works by the Bulgarian Dobri Hristov.

In all probability, what dominated church music was traditional chant. This is how it is even today. The proportion of chant may have been lower in Liturgies, but in other services, compositions by great men were sung only quite sparingly. Today, in a normal vigil of a Russian or Ukrainian cathedral or any church with two or three or more decent singers, compositions are limited to the number of non-changing parts. In evening services below the vigil rank,³⁵ almost everything may consist of chant. Only quite exceptionally, on major feasts perhaps, are free compositions sung for changing parts, such as *prokeimena* or *heirmoi*.

The scholars could have done a better job by writing about what was really sung and in what fashion. The probable reason why they did not is that they did not consider it to be of sufficient interest. Possibly, for Razumovskij and Metallov and their contemporaries, this was too obvious: any reader could find it out just by going to the nearby church. For Gardner, the situation was different, but he may have believed that he himself did not have access to a valid living tradition in order to put the retrospective method into action.³⁶ Another alternative is that the truth may have been too unpleasant to be dealt with. In his *magnum opus* Gardner virtually dismisses any traditions of monastic singing, with the exception of some recollections of his 1926 visit to the St Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos:

[During] the decades there [at the St Panteleimon Monastery] there were found many stylistic currents of Russian polyphonic church singing of the nineteenth century which uncritically intermingled. In the singing to a tone [в гласовом пений], a strong influence of Court Chant could be felt. Among the singing brethren there were great admirers not only of plain church singing but also admirers of Italianate concerti of the beginning of the nineteenth century. ... [The] monks performed some concerti without distinct arrangements for male choir, from the mixed choir parts. The soprano part was sung by the high tenors, the alto part by lower tenors, and so forth. Should it happen that the first tenor sang below the baritone, this did not bother anyone.³⁷

This description, written with an air of disappointment, is sufficient to reveal that the singing set-up was not very different at all from that of Valaam and probably not from other pre-revolutionary Russian monasteries in general. Also in Valaam, the singers could make use of music for mixed choir just by reassigning the parts without much regard to particulars, and even today in Heinävesi this is standard procedure.

What Gardner, to his horror, appears to recognize as “a strong influence of Court chant” may hint at the harmonic style in which the local generic chants

35 The common parochial practice in Russia and Ukraine is to celebrate matins and the first hour after vespers on all ferials.

36 In my opinion, a historian can access the past only from the direction of the present, and, besides, here it is invaluable to be a practicing church musician of the tradition that is being studied.

37 Gardner, *Bogoslužebnoe...*, op. cit., 552–3.

were sung, or it may be that also the melodies were close to Court chant.³⁸ It seems, incidentally, that this was the common way of singing chants in oral-based harmony all over Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the nineteenth century, and probably also in the eighteenth century, if not before.³⁹ This practice is mentioned by several authors, including Gardner himself, but it falls short of proper analysis.⁴⁰ Had Gardner preferred to investigate the issue systematically, he might have been able to avoid the pitfall of not recognizing the similarity of what he thought was a distinct style of harmonization of the Court Chapel and that of oral-based harmony. As he did not, we have something of a myth to debunk. So let us take the bull by the horns.

In this harmonization, the question is essentially about doubling the melody in the upper third, attaching a bass, adjusting the melody for leading notes where needed, and possibly adding a filler part, the one that in Valaam was known as the *kvinta*. Nevertheless, Gardner quite incredibly claims that this set-up could have originated in *kanty*, the genre of non-liturgical spirituals of Ukrainian or Polish origin that allegedly became popular in mid-seventeenth-century Russia.⁴¹ Thus he manages to prove to himself and perhaps to some of his audience that singing chant in this harmony was a foreign import, non-Russian, non-liturgical and unorthodox, yet he says that it was adopted all of a sudden. There is some paradox there, possibly.

Contrary to that, the Galician author Porfirij Bažan'skij is of the opinion that in the Eastern Slavic region traditional chant had always been sung in that way.⁴² He remarks that whereas the Byzantine Greeks sang in unison and con-

38 I must admit to having made a similar misinterpretation when I first encountered the polyphonic manuscripts in Valaam in 1999. At that time, and even later, I had accepted mechanically what I had been reading in books written by Gardner and others. So my impression was that whatever it was what I saw in the part-books I found in the library vault in Heinävesi, it looked like chants of the monodic Valaam Obihod having been arranged by someone *in the style of the Court Chapel* (see Jopi Harri, *Suomalainen kahdeksansävelmistö ja venäläinen traditio* [unpublished Licentiate of Philosophy thesis, Department of Musicology, University of Turku, 2001], 45, footnote 209). The reason why the chants of the Court Chapel had assumed a certain style of harmonization was then beyond my understanding. The relation of various Eastern Slavic chants to those of the Court Chapel was investigated in Harri, *St Petersburg*...

39 It may have been known even in the sixteenth century (see Harri, *St Petersburg*..., op. cit., 45).

40 See Harri, *St Petersburg*..., op. cit., 60–3. The harmonic framework of this sort of polyphony has been analysed in *ibid.*, 168–72 and in Jopi Harri, “Principles of Traditional Harmonization in Eastern Slavic Chant” in: *Composing and Chanting in the Orthodox Church. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Orthodox Church Music*, ed. Ivan Moody and Maria Takala-Roszczenko (Jyväskylä: ISOCM & University of Joensuu, 2009), 228–54.

41 Johann von Gardner, “Murros slaavilaisessa kirkkolaulussa 1600-luvun puolivälissä ja sen seuraukset” in: Johann von Gardner, *Luentoja venäläisestä kirkkolaulusta*, transl. by Hilikka Seppälä (Joensuu: Joensuun yliopisto, 2000), 77–8.

42 Porfirij Bažan'skij, *Istorija ruskogo cerkovnogo penija* (L'vov: Tipografija Stavropigij'skogo Instituta, 1890), 47.

sequently had only the melodies written in notation, “also in Rus’, only the main melody was written in neumes, [while] *the other parts* were not written,” but sung by ear. The argument is reinforced by the famous quotation from *Stepennaja kniga* in which reference is made to “tripartite sweet singing” (supposedly in three parts) that would have been introduced in churches even during the reign of Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise (r. 1010–54).⁴³ In my interpretation, the historical reality here is less important than the fact that Bažan’skij has no difficulty whatsoever in assuming that church singing in Rus’ had been harmonic quite from the outset. That may well have been the common experience in Galicia: there perhaps was no collective memory or tradition about the church singing once upon a time having been without harmony, after which the harmony would just have been introduced at some point. Had there been such a tradition, reasons to conceal it are not apparent, rather the contrary.

Bažan’skij mentions further that it required only a few hours of work to acquire the necessary skill to sing in harmony from monodic books.⁴⁴ While such singing may nowadays be rare among Eastern Slavs, a similar practice is alive and well in Romanian Banat.

The polyphonic manuscripts of Valaam that were written down from the actual singing for reference purposes, contain chants typical of Valaam but also versions that appear in the Synodal square-note books, neatly harmonized with the parallel third method. Example 6 reproduces the first sticheron of the litia on Pentecost from Ms. 420 for demonstration. Also in this case, the melody is doubled in the bass register, or “tripled,” as Solov’ev puts it. In order to investigate the applicability of this method to other chants, I have made some experiments. One of those covers all twenty-five gradual antiphons of matins. It transpired that such harmonizations can indeed be attached quite mechanically and without much creative effort to any chant, and no modifications to the melodies are necessary. In this case, the melodies were taken from the Synodal *Octoechos* of 1900.⁴⁵ The result is stylistically close to what one would expect to have been sung at Valaam, as can be seen from Example 7, the first gradual antiphon of Tone 2. When compared with the Pentecost sticheron that is in the same tone and transposition, it can be seen that the harmonic framework is very similar, despite the fact that the selections of formulas are different in both melodies, the antiphon does not have the melody doubled in the bass, and in the antiphon, the harmony has been written to be suitable for a faster tempo.

43 Cf. Morosan, *Choral...*, op. cit., 4.

44 Bažan’skij, *Istorija...*, op. cit., 73.

45 *Oktoih notnago penija, sireč' osmoglasnik, obderžaj vozsedovanie voskresnyja služby osmi glasov, s bogorodičny vseja sedmicy* (Sanktpeterburg: Sinodal'naja tipografija, 1900).

EXAMPLE 6. Znamenny chant as sung in Valaam.⁴⁶

The First Sticheron of Litia on Pentecost, Tone 2

(Transposed down by a fifth in respect to the original.)

Valaam Ms. 420
(Znamenny Chant)

Во про-ро- - - цѣхъ воз-вѣс-тилъ е-си намъ путь
спа-се- - ні-я, и во А-пос-то-лѣхъ воз-сі-я
Спа-се нашъ, бла-го-дать Ду-ха Тво-е-го. Ты е-си
Богъ пер- вый, Ты и по сихъ, и во вѣ-
- - ки Ты е-си Богъ нашъ.

EXAMPLE 7. First gradual antiphon of Tone 2, in Znamenny chant, rendered in harmony.⁴⁷

46 Litijnija stihiry dvunadesjatyh prazdnikov levago klirosa V420a–d (four manuscript part-books situated in the Library of Valamo Monastery, Heinävesi, Finland, 1901–2).

47 Jopi Harri, arr., Stepennye antifony, glas 2, znamennago rospeva. <<http://ecmr.fi/>

СТЕПЕННЫЕ АНТИФОНЫ, ГЛАСЪ Б:

Антифоны поются скоро.

Антифонъ 1-й

Знаменнаго распѣва
(Октоихъ 1900),
обр. Jopi Harri

На не - - - - - бо о - - - - - чи пу - ща - ю

мо - е - го сѣрд - ца къ Те - бѣ, Спа - - - се,

спа-си мя Тво-имъ о-си-я-ни-емъ. По-ми-луй насъ

со - грѣ - ша - ю - щихъ те - бѣ мно - го на вся - кій часъ,

О Хри - стѣ мой, и даждь об - разъ

11
 прѣ - жде кон - ца по - ка - я - ти - ся Те - бѣ.

13
 Слава... / И нынѣ... Свя - то - му Ду - ху е - же цар - ство - ва - ти

16
 по - до - ба - етъ, о - свя - ща - ти, по - дви - за - ти

18
 тварь: Бѣгъ бо есть е - ди - но - су - щень От - цу и

21
 Сло - ву.

If investigated further, it transpires that the harmonic language that results from the third parallelism does not differ significantly from that of the Court Chapel *Obihods*, or from other chant harmonizations published by the Chapel. There are some differences in the part-writing idiom, and the Chapel published music for mixed choir and usually preferred wider settings and parallelism at the sixth rather than at the third, but the chordal vocabulary and progressions are practically identical. Thus, the argument that the Court would have im-

pregnated Russian church music with foreign harmony is in great danger of falling apart, or as a myth, becoming debunked.

The nature of this oral-based harmony is actually different from that of those artistic harmonizations of various styles that had to be written out in full and that are discussed in historiographies. The difference arises from the fact that the harmony can be mechanically attached to any traditional chant melody. Its application is optional, but it is something that is always potentially there, even when not visible in music. In that it does not differ from the practice of singing Byzantine chant to *isokratema*. This also is in accordance with the interpretation of Bažan'skij

Quite probably, singing chant in harmony was introduced not suddenly but gradually in Russia, starting in the sixteenth century if not before, but may have reached Moscow and become prevalent there only later. We cannot tell for sure, because this did not leave much trace in the manner in which the chants were written down. Whether singing chant in harmony from monodic sources was a Western or an Eastern invention effectively remains an open question, even though I am unaware of similar practices in Western churches – a fact that may or may not be indicative of something.

CONCLUSION

The first myths debunked were specific to Valaam: instead of the singing tradition being exceptionally ancient or stylistically extraordinary as suggested, we managed to point out that it was not, although it did have characteristic features that made pilgrims and other visitors experience it as somewhat original. Then we turned to the periodization in historiographies, paying attention to the effects of nationalism⁴⁸ that, especially in the case of Gardner, appear to be more than subtle. The final myth to be debunked is that in reality, a monodic chant book is not much of an indicator that a singing tradition absolutely must have been monophonic.

My sincere hope is that these considerations will not be ignored when someone embarks upon writing a new and updated general historiography of Eastern Slavic church singing – for which it is already high time.

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48 It is not difficult to notice that nationalism is at stake even in Solov'ev's accounts of Valaam singing.

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