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## EXPERIENCES IN ADAPTING POST-BYZANTINE CHANT INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES: RESEARCH AND PRAXIS

**Abstract:** This article presents the current state of the research and practical methodology of the adaptation of Byzantine melodies written in the “New Method” into foreign languages, with Romanian, English and Finnish serving as examples. The adaptation of independent, “fixed” melodies as well as metrical liturgical texts (prosomoia and canons) are examined. The challenges emerging in adapting Byzantine chant into Finnish are also discussed. The author also suggests some future subjects for research, which include the synthesis of examining arrangements in both “Old” and “New Method”.

**Keywords:** Byzantine chant, adaptation, translation, melodic formulae.

Byzantine psaltic art was created in the Byzantine Empire, whose official language was Greek. The music was developed in close relation to the poetical text (hymnography), which naturally influenced the musical structures of Byzantine melodies. From the very beginning of Christianity, the translation of church chants into new languages of the Christian world was supported in the Eastern parts of the Church in particular. The universality of the Church did not require the use of certain “holy” languages: the very idea of Pentecost and the foundation of the Church at this particular event did not allow the Holy Apostles to preach in one language but in the language of every people, as the Acts of the Apostles states: “Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language” (Acts. 2:6).

This also led to a diversity of church music traditions. In the first millennium, or at least parts of it, these musical traditions had some Byzantine influences, but they themselves were not mere adaptations of Byzantine melodies, excluding some curiosities. The first adaptation of Byzantine chanting tradition itself was its use in the Slavonic-speaking churches, which eventually led to the development of the *znamenny rospev* in the lands of Rus'. Other Slavic churches (Serbian and Bulgarian) preserved mainly Byzantine tradition, modifying it to correspond to their needs. However, the discussion of this part of the tradition of adaptation lies outside the scope of this article.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most classical presentations of the adaptation of Byzantine musical influences into Kievan-Russian chant is M. Velimirović, *Studies on the fragmenta Chilandarica Palaeoslavica I, Byzantine elements in early Slavic chant: the Hirmologion*, Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae, Copenhagen 1960. The Serbian Slavonic adaptations have been

This article concentrates on the adaptations made into foreign languages using the New Method presented by the Three Teachers.<sup>2</sup> These adaptations have become particularly popular in the Romanian and Bulgarian churches, in which almost the whole chant repertoire was translated and published already during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in Byzantine chant increased in many regions, including most of the English-speaking Orthodox regions, as a result of immigration from traditionally Orthodox countries (on account of Communist regimes, for example) and, on the other hand, as a consequence of the missionary work conducted in these regions. Byzantine chant in the Arabic language has become an ordinary phenomenon (for example, in Lebanon), but there are also many adaptations in English and in French. In addition, there have been experiments in Finnish (by the author of this article), Estonian, Spanish, Albanian and Norwegian, for example. I have taken into closer consideration the Romanian, English and Finnish adaptations of Byzantine music, because each one of them represents a different kind of field: Romanian has a long history of Byzantine music, English is a “new” liturgical language and Finnish is linguistically particularly interesting because of its non-Indo-European roots. I will not examine the history of these adaptations here, but will instead concentrate on their methodology.

### **Research**

Romanian researchers have studied many classical adaptations from the 19th century made by Anton Pann, Macarie Ieromonahul (Hieromonk) and Dimitrie Suceveanu, for example. Both the history<sup>3</sup> and the methodology of these arrangements have been examined, especially with respect to the Anastasimataria, which were the first collections translated into Romanian using the “New Method”.<sup>4</sup>

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examined for example by Sara – Vesna Peno in some of her articles of which two have been included in the bibliography of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the notational reform of the three chanters, Chourmouzos Chartofylax, Gregorios Protosaltes and Archimandrite Chrysanthos in 1814. The reform presented a new, more analytical neumatic notation to replace the older, stenographical notation.

<sup>3</sup> A rather good overall view of the history of these adaptations is by A. M. Dumitrescu, “Byzantine Musical Tradition in Romania as Revealed in Romanian Anastasimataria (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries)”, in: *The Traditions of Orthodox Music*, Joensuu 2007, 30–40. This article also includes a good bibliography, most of which is unfortunately available only in Romanian. I have nevertheless included the most important of these in the bibliography of this article.

<sup>4</sup> A very enlightening article concerning the methodology of the Anastasimataria is C. Moisil, “The Romanian Versions of Petros Lampadarios’ Anastasimatarion. Observations Regarding the Principles of Music Adaptation”, in: *Cantus Planus*, Budapest 2006, 151–170. In addition

In the English-speaking world, a very famous example of these adaptations can be seen in the work of Hieromonk Ephraim of St. Anthony's monastery, Arizona. His research is mainly practical and secondarily academic; however, his ideas of adaptations were very useful for many composers and chanters of Byzantine music worldwide. He has compiled extensive lists of melodic formulae<sup>5</sup> used in the sticheraric, heirmological and papadical genres.<sup>6</sup> He also wrote a fine general presentation of the adaptations of Byzantine music into various languages,<sup>7</sup> in which he expressed his approval of following the examples of those languages that have a strong tradition of singing Byzantine chant (i.e. Romanian and Slavonic).

The Byzantine music adaptations of Priestmonk Ephraim and some other authors have been discussed by Protopsaltes John Michael Boyer,<sup>8</sup> who agrees with Fr. Ephraim's formulaic approach to Psalmody. As far as I know, in addition to Fr. Ephraim's article, this is one of the few published presentations concerning the present state of Byzantine music adaptations in English.

Concerning Finnish adaptations, there are only one article and a Master's thesis by the author of this paper, which have been listed in the bibliography.

### *Adapting "Fixed" Melodies*

In this chapter, I will concentrate on the adaptation of independent melodies, regardless of their genre, papadic, sticheraric or heirmological, because the methodology used in all these genres should be approximately the same. Very good instructions and descriptions of translating these melodies were presented by Hieromonk Macarie. He states that "we are obliged to keep the melody unchanged too, and if there should be more or fewer

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to Moisil, at least Elena Chircev has studied Macarie's methods of adaptation, but again only in Romanian.

<sup>5</sup> These formulae can be found on the web site:

<http://stanthonysmonastery.org/music/Formula.html>.

<sup>6</sup> However, this terminology is only partially correct. According to modern concepts, sticheraric melodies are all melodies that are used in the singing of stichera, and sometimes they include formulae in which only one or two notes correspond to one syllable – this syllabicity is in some 20th century theoretikons confusingly called "heirmologic". I prefer to use the terms "short" – *syntomon* (usually one or two notes on a syllable), "medium slow" – *argosyntomon* (two to four notes on a syllable) or "slow" (a whole melodic phrase on a syllable).

<sup>7</sup> *Concerning Adaptation*, <http://stanthonysmonastery.org/music/Adaptation.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> J. M. Boyer, "The Transcription, Adaptation and Composition of Traditional Byzantine Chant in the English Language. An American's Brief Look at the United States", *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of the American Society of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*. <http://www.asbmh.pitt.edu/page12/Boyer.pdf>.

syllables, and unsuitable accents, be very careful in replacing them...”.<sup>9</sup> This preservation of the original melody, however, as Moasil correctly points out, means that some changes in the melody should be made, because not making them would alter the whole ideology of the music – i.e., the formulaic structure of the psaltic art: “Putting those very signs on a word that is twice as long or as short than the Greek one is sheer stupidity. (...) Also, altering the melodic flow because of the shortness or length of words is utterly wrong, and a sin”.<sup>10</sup>

As an example, I present the Stichology “Pune, Doamne” of the first mode from Macarie’s *Anastasimatarion*.<sup>11</sup> It is most probably an adaptation from the corresponding stichology of the *Anastasimatarion* of Petros Ephesios.<sup>12</sup> In the following example 1 I have listed some musical features from both compositions. The number explains how often the feature occurs, and the number in brackets gives the number of the verse in question.

### Example 1.

	Petros Ephesios	Macarie Ieromonahul
Phrases with a gorgon	24	31
Verses from Di	16	19
A low Ke note	1 (12.)	1 (12.)
A high Ni’ note	4 (3., 4., 14., 16.)	4 (3., 4., 14., 16.)
Phrases ending on Ni	1 (12.)	1 (12.)

In this table, we notice that the two versions of the text are not exactly the same according to musical criteria: the phrases including *gorgon* or verses starting from “Di” do not correspond. However, typical melodic effects used in the first mode (on the three last rows of the table) are put in the same places in the same verses, usually in order to express the affect of the word in question.

<sup>9</sup> N. M. Popescu, *Știri noi despre Macarie Ieromonahul*, Biserica Ortodoxă Română, 8, 1915, apud T. Moisescu, *Prolegomene bizantine*, 125, quoted from C. Moasil, *op. cit.*, 155.

<sup>10</sup> Macarie Ieromonahul, *Irmologion sau Katavasieru Musicesc*, Vienna 1823, vi, quoted in C. Moasil, *op. cit.*, 156.

<sup>11</sup> Macarie Ieromonahul, *Anastasimatar bisericesc*, Vienna 1823, 2–5. This work was a basis for other Romanian *Anastasimataria* printed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> and was in use until World War II (cf. C. Moasil, *op. cit.*, 154).

<sup>12</sup> *Νέον Αναστασιματάριον, Μετάφρασθεν κατὰ τὴν νεόφανη μέθοδον τῆς μουσικῆς. Ἐκδοθὲν σπουδῆ μὲν ἐπιπόνῳ τοῦ μουσικολογιωτάτου Πέτρου Ἐφεσίου. Ἐν τῷ Βουκουρεστίου νεοσυστάτῳ Τυπογραφείῳ 1820, 2–5.*



This is also the most extensive part of Orthodox hymnography, and thus it presents more challenges. When examining old Church Slavonic translations of liturgical texts, it has been noted that in some cases the metre has been considered, while in others it has not. This has also been pointed out by Miloš Velimirović.<sup>17</sup> The use of non-metrical texts eventually led to abandoning the use of the *podobn* model melodies in Slavic chant. In current Russian practice, all stichera are sung with a single automelon.

In earlier Romanian translations, written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the texts only partly follow the original Greek metre. My example (no. 3) is from the Anastasimatarion, kathisma-automelon of the third mode with its proso-moion.<sup>18</sup>

### Example 3.

#### Number of syllables

Τὴν ὠραιότητα τῆς παρθενίας σου,	12
καὶ τὸ ὑπερλαμπρον τὸ τῆς ἀγνείας σου,	12
ὁ Γαβριήλ καταπλαγεῖς ἐβόα σοι Θεοτόκε·	16
Ποῖόν σοι ἐγκώμιον, προσαγάγω ἐπάξιον	15
τί δὲ ὀνομάσω σέ	7
ἀπορῶ καὶ ἐξίσταμαι·	8
διὸ ὡς προσετάγην βοῶ σοι·	10
Χαῖρε ἡ Κεχαριτωμένη.	9
De frumusețea fecoriei tale	11
și de prealuminată curăția ta	12
Gavriil mirându se a strigat ție, Născătoare de Dumnezeu:	20
Ce laudă vrednică voi aduce ție,	13
ce te voi numi pre tine?	8
Nu mă pricep și mă minunez,	9
pentru aceasta precum mi s-a poruncit strig Ție:	15
Bucurați Ceea ce ești cu daruri dăruită.	16

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them. Thus the chanter can sing tens or even hundreds of different hymns with the same melody.

<sup>17</sup> M. Velimirović, *op. cit.*, 53–60.

<sup>18</sup> The Greek text is from *Αναστασιματάριον ἄργον καὶ σύντομον*, Μελοποιήθεν ὑπὸ Πέτρου Λαμπαδαρίου καὶ διασκεύασθεν ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου Πρωτοψάλτου. Ἔκδοσις 15η. Ἀδελφότης θεολόγων ἡ ΖΩΗ 2005, 119, and the Romanian text from *Anastasimatar*, Cuviosului Macarie Ieromonahul, Editura Bizantină 2002, 124–125.

De neschimbarea dumnezeirii Tale,	12
și de Patima Ta cea de bunăvoie Doamne,	14
intru sine spăimântându se iadul s-a tânguit.	15
Mâ cutremur de Ipostasul Celnestricat al Trupului,	17
văd pre Cel nevăzut	6
în taină luptându Se cu mine	10
pentru a ceasta și aceia pre care îi tin strigă:	16
Slavă Hristoase milostivirii Tale.	12

As we can see, the Romanian text does not follow the number of syllables provided by the Greek example precisely. The Romanian texts of the same kathisma melody do not correspond to each other, either. This can lead the chanter into two situations: either the melody has to be sung “by heart”<sup>19</sup> or a new melody has to be composed for each hymn. Both solutions have disadvantages: in the first case, it becomes impossible to sing together, and in the second, the melodic repertoire would grow significantly and the liturgical chanting books would be both too large and too expensive. Also, if the chanter is not familiar enough with neumatic notation, the great advantage of using model melodies, often learnt only by hearing, disappears. In both solutions, however, the ideal is to preserve as many melodic elements as possible from the original automelon, in order to preserve the musical richness of singing these texts.

The only language – as far as I know – that has systematically used metrical translations, is English. Metrical translations have been created both by Fr. Seraphim Dedes and the Holy Transfiguration monastery. However, these translations can never be as natural as metrically free translations, a remark made also by John Michael Boyer.<sup>20</sup> But the undisputed advantage of them is that they can directly follow the original Greek automelon, without altering it to the extent that singing the melody by heart would become impossible. I continue to use the same example from Anastasimatarion<sup>21</sup> as earlier (no. 4):

<sup>19</sup> This is a common expression used in modern Greek terminology of chanting (απ' ἑξῆς) when we want to say that the melody is being improvised according to the formulaic rules of Byzantine music.

<sup>20</sup> J. M. Boyer, *op. cit.*, <http://www.asbmh.pitt.edu/page12/Boyer.pdf>, 574.

<sup>21</sup> The translation is from *Sunday Matins Music*, translated and adapted by Fr. Seraphim Dedes, Pittsburgh 2004, 19.

**Example 4.**

Number of syllables	
Seeing the beauty of your virginity,	12
and how your purity shone forth resplendently,	12
amazed was Gabriel who cried to you thus, O Theotokos:	16
What shall I present to you as a worthy encomium?	15
What shall I address you as?	7
At a loss and perplexed am I.	8
And therefore I, as ordered, cry out to you:	11
Rejoice, O Maiden full of grace!	8
We the believers now theologize about	12
the inexplicable, incomprehensible	12
unspoken mystery of Your crucifixion and resurrection.	16
For today the realm of death and of Hades has been despoiled,	15
and vested is the human race	8
with incorruptibility.	8
And therefore in thanksgiving we cry aloud:	11
Glory to Your resurrection, O Christ.	10

This automelon and its prosomoion follow the Greek prototype rather faithfully with only minor changes in the number of syllables. These kinds of changes, nevertheless, often occur in the Greek texts as well and can be simply passed by adding an extra note here and there.

The texts follow the Greek model also with respect to word stresses. In the next table, the sign “U” indicates a stressed syllable and “-” a non-stressed syllable:

**Example 5.**

Seeing the beauty	Number of syllables	Τὴν ὠραιότητα	Number of syllables
U--U--U--U--	12	U--U--U--U--	12
U--U--U--U--	12	U--U--U--U--	12
-U-U---U-U----U-	16	-U-U---U-U----U-	16
U---U---U--U--	15	U---U---U--U--	15
U---U-U	7	U---U-U	7
--U--U--	8	--U--U--	8
-U---U--U--	11	-U---U--U-	10
-U---U-U	9	U-----U-	9



What would be, then, the correct way of approaching metrical texts? A metrical translation would, of course, be ideal, perhaps so that the automelon could be adapted, with minor changes, to correspond to the language in question. If a metrical translation seems unnatural, uncomfortable or incomprehensible, it should be substituted with a free, prosaic translation, still possibly preserving an number of syllables close enough to the original model. In the latter case, melodies should be composed for each troparion separately or improvised by each singer. Naturally, when standard liturgical translations exist, as in Church Slavonic, we should perhaps not try to change the translations but act as would best suit the language.

### *Adapting Byzantine Chant into a Non-Indo-European Language*<sup>22</sup>

As may be gleaned from the comments above, the language in question has an important role in adapting the melody: the formulaic tradition itself respects syllables and their stresses. My personal interest in adapting Byzantine music has emerged from my own experiences in translating liturgical texts and melodies into my mother tongue, Finnish. The Finnish language belongs to the Uralic language group, namely to the Finno-Ugric family, and has remarkable grammatical differences in comparison with Indo-European languages, which have generally dominated in the Byzantine musical world. The only substantial Byzantine chanting tradition that exists in a non-Indo-European language is Arabic chant, but it appears to me that their understanding of the formulaic structure of the Byzantine music, in comparison with other traditions, is limited.<sup>23</sup>

In the Finnish language, for example, the length of a vowel (and a consonant) still has an important role in understanding the meaning of the word. The word *tuuli* (pronounced with a long u sound) means wind, while *tuli* (pronounced with a short u sound) means fire. This could create strange misunderstandings. Thus, putting any kind of melismas on these short syllables should clearly be avoided.

Another typical feature of the Finno-Ugric languages is the word stress, which is always placed on the first syllable of the word, regardless of

<sup>22</sup> A more detailed description of this topic is presented in J. Olkinuora, "The Adaptation of Byzantine Chant into Finnish", in: *Composing and Chanting in the Orthodox Church*, Joensuu 2009, 142–152.

<sup>23</sup> This view of mine is supported by Priestmonk Ephraim. According to him, "it should be pointed out, though, that Byzantine music in Arabic very frequently inserts extra syllables into formulae of Greek Byzantine music. Therefore, one could justifiably argue that this standard practice of theirs is not wrong but merely represents a different tradition that is well established". (*Concerning Adaptation*, <http://stanthonysmonastery.org/music/Adaptation.htm>) Thus I would not consider this tradition as a prototype for a new chanting tradition, but rather follow the Greek Byzantine models.

its length. In Greek, the word stress is always on one of the last three syllables. This leads to the fact that some multisyllabic melodic formulae become useless in the Finnish language, as well as many formulae beginning with a non-stressed syllable. In the course of time, perhaps, some new formulae will be created to fit the Finnish language better. In my own adaptations, I have tried to follow the model of Macarie Ieromonahul in preserving the structure and effects of the original Greek melody while altering the melody to suit the Finnish text better. However, in some cases this has been a very difficult task because of the different word order in the two languages and the linguistic characteristics mentioned above. My experience is that it is necessary to be more innovative than Macarie was.

These problems have also been particularly challenging in the few metrical experiments that have been made in the Finnish language. I have translated the *Small supplicatory canon of the Theotokos* (Μικρός παρακλητικός κανών) together with Nun Kristoduli into a metrical Finnish text. We had to take into consideration both the metrical and melodic structures of the original words: in many cases, putting a short vowel even on a slightly melismatic formula changed the meaning. Also, in many cases, the Greek text began with a non-stressed syllable, which made it necessary to add a monosyllabic – often exclamation – in the beginning of the phrase. Nevertheless, we were able to preserve the original meaning of the text because Finnish has a rather free word order, especially in poetical texts. I would still consider this translation as a curiosity and not as a model for translating all metrical liturgical texts, particularly because of the lack of resources. New translations of liturgical texts into Finnish are at the moment being written: metrical structures could, perhaps, be taken into consideration by avoiding a surplus of words in comparison with the original Greek text.

### ***Instead of an Epilogue: New Challenges in the Research and Praxis of Adaptation***

As presented in this article, different kinds of experiments and solutions have been discovered concerning the translation of the Byzantine chant into new languages. Adaptations, nevertheless, predominantly represent only a small part of the Byzantine chanting tradition, i.e., the analytical versions of hymns written by the Three Teachers and their followers mainly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It seems that the greatest challenge for the work of adaptation in the future will be the adaptation of Byzantine melodies written originally in the “Old Notation”.<sup>24</sup> Some translations of these hymns have

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<sup>24</sup> It is very understandable that research in this field has not been conducted with any frequency, because this repertory is rather rare even in Greece. It is mainly used in Athonite monasteries in which longer services are conducted, and some parishes. My impression is

been made, but the most important question is: could these melodies be written also in the “Old Notation”? The fact that the psaltic art follows a formulaic structure has been widely acknowledged, but the lists of formulae do not take into consideration the basis of those very formulae, the “Old Notation”.

On the other hand, some research examines the adaptations made in the old notation, mainly in the Romanian language by Filothei sin Agăi Jipa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A synthesis of these two research traditions could solve many problems in the future adaptations of the older melodies. In my opinion, the study of these adaptations should always happen in cooperation with musicians and chanters themselves. This also serves the Orthodox Church in following the spirit of the psaltic art without altering its ideology.

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Moisil Costin, “The Romanian Versions of Petros Lampadarios’ Anastasimatarion. Observations Regarding the Principles of Music Adaptation“, in: *Cantus Planus*, Papers read at the

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that these slow (argon) melodies sound quite strange and unfamiliar to the believers and even the priests prefer shorter (syntomon or argosyntomon) melodies because of their shorter duration. In addition, the Old Notation itself is still subject to many different viewpoints, as no absolute key to the notation exists because of its stenographical character.

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*Јаако Олкинуора*

ИСКУСТВА ПРИЛАГОЂАВАЊА ПОСТВИЗАНТИЈСКОГ ПОЈАЊА  
СТРАНИМ ЈЕЗИЦИМА: ИСТРАЖИВАЊЕ И ПРАКСА  
(Резиме)

Појачку праксу православне цркве у великом степену карактерише превођење – адаптација црквених напева према литургијским текстовима на „новим“ језицима у срединама у којима иста почиње да се јавља. Мелодије, условно речено, византијског појања су се током времена прилагођавале различитим језицима, као што су румунски, словенски, арапски, енглески, француски и фински. У фокусу овог рада је испитивање румунских, енглеских и финских аранжмана, са освртом на њихове историјате. На основама румунског језика већ је уобличена појачка традиција, док се за енглески може рећи да је нови језик једногласне црквене музике за коју користимо назив византијска. Фински, као не-индоевропски језик, представља нови изазов у примени предањског појања примарно обликованог према особеностима грчког језика.

Истраживање из овог домена спроведено је у Румунији и резултати су објављени углавном на румунском језику. Такође, неки радови су писани на енглеском језику, а најзначајнији допринос представља дугачка листа мелодијских формула које је објавио јеромонах Јефрем из манастира Светог Антонија у Аризони. Истраживања у Финској су за сада ограничена на радове аутора овог текста.

Независне, „устаљене“ мелодије могу се прилагодити страном језику употребом мелодијских формула које су карактеристичне за сваки глас осмогласног система. Ипак, структура оригиналне грчке мелодије требало би да остане непромењена. Овакав став заступао је јеромонах Макарије, румунски музичар из XIX века, и јеромонах Јефрем, који је данас активан.

Метрички текстови који подразумевају одређене мелодијске моделе (подобни и тропари канона) представљају извесну тешкоћу у адаптацији напева уколико преводилац жели да сачува флуентност језичког израза. У богослужбеним књигама на енглеском језику заступљени су метрички преводи, док у оним на румунском језику текстови не прате грчку метрику. У овом случају, свака мелодија треба да буде не само продукт компоновања или импровизације појца, већ је пожељно да се сачувају неке од карактеристичних мелодијских линија датог мелодијског модела.

Покушаји прилагођавања византијског појања финском језику и даље су малобројни, али се ипак може приметити да се у том процесу углавном доследно прати структура утврђених мелодијских формула. Ипак, због дугих и кратких самогласника и акцената који се увек налази на првом слогу речи, јављају се бројне потешкоће.

Предлог за будуће истраживање у аранжирању византијског појања јесте синтеза разматраних адаптација како старог, тако и новог метода. Основа нових формула се налази у тзв. старом методу, а структуре тих истих формула се могу доследно пратити и поредити ако се могу записати и старијим обликом нотације. Овакав начин адаптације би требало да помогне у усаглашавању старијег византијског и поствизантијског музичког репертоара.

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