

KOSTA P. MANOJLOVIĆ (1890–1949)  
AND THE IDEA OF SLAVIC AND BALKAN  
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## KOSTA P. MANOJLOVIĆ AND CHURCH MUSIC

### Kosta P. Manojlović's and Serbian Church Chanting\*

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Ecclesiastical singing was one of Manojlović's principal interests. His works reveal that he was preoccupied with discovering the origins and historical development of singing that accompanies worship in the Serbian Church, and that he was also interested in melographic works. Due to his extensive experience with singing, acquired at the Belgrade Seminary, he developed an excellent method for redacting the unpublished works of Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac. He truly admired Mokranjac, who introduced him to the knowledge of music, which is why he always subscribed to the manner of singing perpetuated by Mokranjac in his works (in singing practice, this manner was known as "Belgrade" variant). Manojlović's efforts in searching for and preserving Serbian musical monuments were not without results; one can also mention his pioneering effort in the field of musical paleography. Each of these roles of Manojlović's deserves separate study. This paper might be seen as a prolegomenon in that it envisions more complete reviews of Kosta P. Manojlović's contributions in the future.

"An idealist romantic", as he really was (MANOJLOVIĆ 1948), Kosta Manojlović transformed his sympathies for the creativity, traditions, and past of Serbian peasants into a personal mission of developing national culture. One particularly important part of that culture at the turn of the 20th century was the ecclesiastical singing tradition. Without assuming the necessary critical distance, Manojlović adopted from his predecessors the theory of distinct Serbian ecclesiastical singing, which was motivated by patriotic emotions and national religious identity in the second half of the 19th century, and continued to promote it further in his written works and lectures (MANOJLOVIĆ 1921, 1924, 1925, 1946). Both his published works about the history of Serbian church music and manuscripts of his lectures from the Bogoslovija Svetog Save [St. Sava Seminary] and Muzička akademija [Music Academy] in Belgrade are

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compilations of the findings of previous studies rather than the results of original research: this is particularly evident in his arguments for the originality of Serbian ecclesiastical singing, i.e. its national characteristics. Manojlović was familiar with all published works on the history of ecclesiastical singing. He was especially fond of papers written by passionate researchers of Serbian antiquity, Archpriests Lazar Bogdanović (1893) and Dimitrije Ruvarac (1898, 1924, 1926). Manojlović also quoted papers on the state of contemporary singing practice, as well as prefaces in anthologies of ecclesiastical chanting by Tihomir Ostojić (1896), Gavriilo Boljarić, and Nikola Tajšanović (1891).

Manojlović reached only a few original conclusions regarding the history of singing. The fact that the Serbs adopted ecclesiastical chanting from eastern Christians, primarily from the Greeks,<sup>1</sup> was unquestionable for Manojlović. The general emancipation of Serbian folk elements into ecclesiastical songs, the clearest “reflection of the Serbian national soul”, according to Kornelije Stanković (1862, 1994), resulted in the separation of Serbian people from Greek cultural centers and the Serbian acceptance of Western cultural models, as Kosta Manojlović believed.<sup>2</sup> One of the main “national musical characteristics” of Serbian ecclesiastical chant, as Manojlović claimed, was its “nice and wide line of melody, which is especially evident [...] in the *Heruvimska pesma* [*Cherubic Hymn*], as well as in *Dostojno jest’* [*It is truly Meet*], the hymn dedicated to the Holy Theotokos, and the *Koinonikon*.” (MANOJLOVIĆ 1935: 11).

However, more than all the other proponents of the distinct nature of Serbian folk singing, Manojlović objectively concluded that Serbian melodies, despite their centuries-long preservation in oral tradition, still have discernible Greek origins (1923: 165).<sup>3</sup> Manojlović often emphasized the importance of

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1 In the “Predgovor” [“Preface”] to Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac’s *Opšte pojanje* [*General Chant*], Manojlović quotes Jules Jeannin (*Mémoires liturgiques Syriennes et Chaldéennes / recueillis par Dom Jeannin O. S. B.* Paris: Leroux, 1925–1928) and says that catabasis on Holy Cross Day is essentially an ancient Syrian song from the 5th or 6th century AD. Besides Syrian influence, and without further argumentations, Manojlović mentions influences of the Armenians and other Eastern nations on the development of Serbian ecclesiastical song. He also claims that there are many common elements between Serbian ecclesiastical music and Gregorian chant, especially between the Ambrosian chant *Te Deum Laudamus* and the Serbian song of the same name sung in the sixth tone, which he describes in detail (MANOJLOVIĆ 1935: 7–8).

2 In *Žitije Svetog Simeona* [*Life of Saint Simeon*], Saint Sava mentions the singing of Greeks, Georgians, Bulgarians, and Serbs at the funeral of St. Simeon, his father; Manojlović has interpreted this fact as evidence that by the end of 12th and the beginning of 13th century there was already a distinct Serbian ecclesiastical singing practice (MANOJLOVIĆ 1923: 157).

3 A certain Nikola, former teacher and singer in the church of Holy Virgin Mary in the town of Bitolj, had sung for Manojlović from a neumatic score in a compilation edited by Bulgarian musician Nikolaj Trandafilov Slivnenac printed in Bucharest in 1847. This neumatic anthology was gifted to Manojlović by Josif Cvijović (1878–1957), Bishop of Bitolj and later Metropolitan of Skoplje. Manojlović concluded that there was a common singing tradition in the Greek and Serbian churches, with the Greek and Slavonic languages, respectively, at its core (MANOJLOVIĆ 1923: 159–160).

comparative study of Greek and Serbian singing, just like Tihomir Ostojić who was the first to claim, in 1896, that Serbian studies of Byzantine music could not be established appropriately without serious study of Greek-Serbian chanting connections (OSTOJIĆ 1896: 11).

A faithful student of Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, Manojlović did not express his personal aesthetic judgment of Greek singing unambiguously, although he did claim that the incorporation of national character in the ecclesiastical singing practice of the Serbian Church entailed the rejection of “disliked elements of Greek singing”, as written in his “O crkvenoj muzici kod Srba” [“On Serbian ecclesiastical music”] (MANOJLOVIĆ 1921: 112). “Vibrations of the throat, sobbing, and crying” were integral to a singing manner that, according to Manojlović, was a Greek, or “oriental”, remnant in Serbian singing. Melismas, which Mokranjac consciously excluded from his melographic inscriptions because he thought of them as distasteful and outdated in the context of new musical tendencies in Serbia, remained a characteristic of the so-called Karlovci variant of melody, as Kosta Manojlović claimed.

The more comfortable life of the priests, monks, and other clergymen, as well as their experience of global culture and secular life of Germans and Hungarians, had made the Karlovci variant of Serbian Orthodox ecclesiastical singing much more secular, so the line of melody is often fuzzy, and the unnecessary repetition of certain musical phrases results in monotony (MANOJLOVIĆ 1923: 169–170).<sup>4</sup>

Seduced by Mokranjac’s magnificence, Manojlović also accepted the ruling stereotype of the two variations of Serbian ecclesiastical singing. Nevertheless, it was he who pointed out the lack of difference between the chanting styles of Sremski Karlovci and Belgrade. This opinion gained importance by the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that, within the single Serbian Church, split by state borders into two dioceses, the Karlovačka mitropolija [Metropolitanates of Karlovci] and Beogradska mitropolija [Metropolitanates of Belgrade], there was some singing rivalry, which had become quite evident by the time that Manojlović studied at the Belgrade Seminary. Although many church singers from Vojvodina had published numerous annotated volumes of church melodies, students of the St.

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4 Manojlović’s claim follows the explanation that the secular features of the Karlovci chant are rooted in the differences of the region lying beyond the Sava and Danube Rivers, which are, in turn, based on the culture and way of life of the Serbian migrants, climate, and geographical traits (MANOJLOVIĆ 1923: 169).

5 The debate about singing in Vojvodina and Serbia unfolded in the pages of various journals in Vojvodina and Serbia (PENO 2016: 134–135).

Sava Seminary in Belgrade, including Kosta P. Manojlović, were not at all familiar with the contents of these publications.<sup>6</sup> It is also important to note that not even one singer from Vojvodina had ever doubted that “the ancient spring of Serbian Orthodox ecclesiastical singing” was in Karlovci, and that Karlovci singing was “unique and the best among the Serbs” (ANONYMOUS 1898: 157; ŽIVANOVIĆ 1899). By contrast, there were no arguments in favor of the antiquity or exceptionality of “Belgrade” ecclesiastical singing. However, the greatness of Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac was more than enough for Kosta Manojlović and Mokranjac’s fellows, who uncritically lavished praise on the “Belgrade” melodic variation.

As Manojlović himself reports in *Spomenica Stevanu St. Mokranjcu* [*Memorial book to Stevan St. Mokranjac*], he had diligently multiplied, collected, and kept his teacher’s melographic work. After his return from Great Britain, he redacted and published these writings under his teacher’s name in 1935, in a collection titled *Pravoslavno srpsko narodno crkveno pojanje. Opšte pojanje* [*Orthodox Serbian Folk Ecclesiastical Singing. General Chant*].<sup>7</sup> Motivated by the “feeling of filial gratitude” and the need to complete the work of Stevan Mokranjac, Manojlović compiled in one book two singing variants, more manufactured than real: Mokranjac’s (Belgrade) and Karlovci variations. Wanting to record the notated melodies that Mokranjac did not manage to finish, Manojlović allowed his readers to become acquainted with church melodies recorded by Kornelije Stanković and various other, more or less known authors.<sup>8</sup> Several years before preparing this collection, Manojlović had enumerated the main melographers and editors of collections of Karlovci singing in his *Memorial Book to Stevan St. Mokranjac*. He had also concluded that there were almost

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6 Mokranjac and other professors of singing in the Belgrade Seminary did not even mention the existence of those notated books in their annual school reports. The Deacon of Belgrade Cathedral, Milivoj Petrović, an honorary professor of church music in the Belgrade Seminary and close associate of Mokranjac, was a protagonist of this debate. He announced the printing of Mokranjac’s *Oktoih* [*Octoechos*] ten years before it was actually published. This was his way of showing displeasure with the proposal to use the notated *Octoechos* by Karlovci chanters Gavriilo Boljarić and Nikola Tajšanović, which had already been published, to teach church music at the Belgrade Seminary (PETROVIĆ 1897, 1898, 1899).

7 Soon after he came back to the country in 1919, when he became a professor at St. Sava Seminary, Manojlović published Mokranjac’s *Strano pjenije* [*Foreign Chant*] in 1920, based on existing lithographic editions. Preparation of *General Chant* took fifteen years, a process that he described in detail in the foreword to the 1935 edition (MANOJLOVIĆ 1935: 1–4).

8 In Manojlović’s collection one can find melodies from the notated books of Gavriilo Boljarić and Nikola Tajšanović, Tihomir Ostojić, Petar Kostić, Jefta Petrović, and Jovan Kozobarić; from a songbook by an unknown editor with melodies sung at the Sombor Teacher Training School, and from songbooks of Joca Pajkanović, Dimitrije Stojčić, and Lazar Terzin; beside melodies of “Serbian sound”, there are melodies from the collection of Bulgarian musician Manasi Pop Todorov (MANOJLOVIĆ 1935: 5–6).

no differences in melody between the Karlovci and Belgrade variants. Without thorough research, however, he reiterated that Karlovci chant was “characterized by melismas, ornamentals... and a more secular manner”, while this was not the case with Belgrade chant, “which is characterized by a more serious line of melody” (MANOJLOVIĆ 1923: 171).<sup>9</sup>

It is a well-known fact that Mokranjac intervened to “clean up” melodies that he heard from his chosen and reliable informants. Similar to the singers north from Sava and Danube rivers, these informants also showed some tonal variations that Mokranjac, the renowned Serbian composer, educated in the West, boldly rejected as signs of bad taste in music. Melographic inscriptions by this grand old man of Serbian music suppressed the common, “outdated” singing manner in favor of the successful, “more serious and more solemn” Belgrade musical variation. Manojlović expanded upon his esteemed teacher’s melographic work and, therefore, participated in the creation of “Belgrade singing”, but, in his works, he never called this the “more serious and more solemn” melographic stylization, which was quite familiar to him under its true name (MANOJLOVIĆ 1935: 7). He could only state that “Mokranjac did not engage in a comparative study of Serbian and Greek ecclesiastical chants in order to discover what was typically ours”, but he did, emphasizes Manojlović, “use the comparative method in selecting and writing ecclesiastical melodies of the Serbian Orthodox Church and, in doing so, uncovered what was important in the line of melody. This entire work belongs to the sphere of culture and history, and its musical value rests in its harmonizing treatment of ecclesiastical melodies and songs of the Serbian Orthodox Church” (MANOJLOVIĆ 1923: 174). In this sentence Manojlović, Mokranjac’s faithful follower confirmed his own artistic *credo*, which will be further expressed in his church compositions (Đaković 2015: 69–72, 116–118).

Manojlović realized that the creative opus of Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac had gained special national status and become part of the national canon canonized, something that no musician of any new generation could or wanted to avoid at the beginning of their artistic career. As such, one can understand Manojlović’s uncritical and ideological commitment to his esteemed teacher. His commitment to Mokranjac and a wish to complete Mokranjac’s work on ecclesiastical singing is illustrated by the fact that Manojlović, while working on *General Chant*, traveled to Studenica monastery to find Mokranjac’s autograph (MANOJLOVIĆ 1935: 2–3).

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9 Manojlović’s remark that in the works of melographers from Karlovci one can notice “greater melismatic variations” cannot be generalized, nor it can be ascribed to all writers and chants, either syllabic or developed.

Manojlović could not find Mokranjac's original writings, but was nevertheless responsible for preserving two other sources important for the history of Serbian ecclesiastical singing. In 1934, in the library of the Visoki Dečani monastery, Manojlović discovered Greek neumatic manuscript No. 49,<sup>10</sup> written in 1749 by Jovan Hadži-Hristodul, Protocanarchos of Larissa.<sup>11</sup> In this anthological compilation, Hierodeacon Ananija Dečanac of Visoki Dečani, temporarily residing in Skoplje to study singing under a certain Mr. Ignjat, left an inscription on the lower margin, in ff. 3-18 (PENO 2008).

Manojlović made a priceless contribution to Serbian musicology by photographing twelve pages from neume compilation No. 93 from the National Library of Belgrade. Manojlović thoroughly studied this manuscript, destined to be destroyed with all other ancient books and documents during German bombing in 1941, and published his pioneering conclusions regarding neume semiography in an article titled "Zvuci zemlje Raške" ["The sounds of the land of Raška"].<sup>12</sup>

An integral study of Kosta P. Manojlović's contributions to ecclesiastical music has not been written to this day, and even those more or less known facts, published in various works, have not been compiled nor critically reviewed. All future researchers in this field should acknowledge several facts. First, although Manojlović's contributions to the historiography of ecclesiastical singing are not very original, it would be useful to thoroughly explore his opinions about his predecessors, the spokesmen for the theory of independent national singing in worship. Second, although Manojlović was aware that there were no significant differences between singing manners within the Serbian Church, i.e. between the singing traditions of Karlovci and the Belgrade Seminary, he had "ideological" reasons for subscribing to a thesis that the Belgrade variant was more appropriate for worship. Manojlović's subjective support for the ruling stereotype is properly understood only in the context of his loyalty to Mokranjac's melographic contribution, which was "canonized" as national singing manner. Third, the description of methods

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10 The manuscript is today kept in the Odeljenje za arheografiju Narodne biblioteke Srbije [Archeographic Department of the National Library of Serbia].

11 The inscription is located in f. 124, written in Greek in red ink. It translates as follows: "This book was written on May 16th, 1749 by me, unlearned Jovan Protocanarchos of Larissa. You pious Christians, who sing, praise God in the highest, singing and celebrating tri-solar common hymns to Theotokos by Jovan Hadži, Christ's servant." Under the inscription, the year 1749 was written in sepia and black ink. This manuscript is today kept in the Archeographic Department of the National Library of Serbia in Belgrade.

12 The same manuscript was mentioned by Milenko Živković (1932) and Svetozar Matić (1932). Manojlović also mentioned the so-called *Beogradska psaltikija* [Belgrade Psaltika] in his 1946 paper "Za tragom naše stare svetovne i crkvene muzičke umetnosti" ["On the trail of our old secular and ecclesiastical musical art"].

that Manojlović used in redacting the chants that he printed under his teacher's name also requires original study. It is important to establish how Manojlović treated chants that had not been written down before him. Fourth, Manojlović's contacts with renowned scientists and creative contributors to national culture, with whom he participated in the collection of musical antiquities, have not been properly explored yet either. New research is needed to complete the picture of Manojlović as a man truly devoted to the musical past of the Serbian people.

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