



ORTHODOX CHANT IN PORTUGAL TODAY PROJECT PRESENTATION¹

PROJECT TEAM

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I INTRODUCTION. ORTHODOXY IN PORTUGAL. THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION. ORTHODOXY IN PORTUGAL

Christian Portugal has a long history, the province of Lusitania having become Christian under the Roman Empire, subsequently receiving the already Christian Suevi and Visigoth tribes in the 5th century. The early period of Portuguese Christianity (necessarily overlapping with the processes of Christianization of the lands of what is now Spain) was marked by the activity and prayer of many saints. Amongst them are the Apostle James, who is traditionally held to be buried at Santiago de Compostela; St Peter of Rates (1st cent.); St Vincent the Martyr (d. c. 304), Sts Verissimus, Maxima and Julia (d. 304); the renowned missionary, monastic founder and theologian St Martin of Braga (d. c. 580); the martyr St Irene of Tomar (d. c. 653) and St Fructuosus of Braga (d. 665). About a dozen pre-Romanesque church buildings, mostly rebuilt, have been preserved in Portugal, chiefly in the north; they mark the different phases of the affirmation of Christianity in those lands. These include the church of the Monastery of Rates near Póvoa de Varzim, from the Suebi-Visigothic period, and the chapel of St Fructuosus, founded in the seventh century near Braga. As for the liturgy and chant, it is stated that at the beginning of the sixth century

there was experienced, then, the final phase of constitution, in the various regions of the Iberian Peninsula and in Europe in general, of a repertoire of artistically elaborate

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chants, linked to an increasing specialization of functions within the Church. The Iberian repertoire, influenced by the traditions of Gaul, Africa, Jerusalem and even Byzantium (whose troops occupied, in the second half of the sixth century and the beginning of the next, the south of the Peninsula, including the Algarve and part of the Alentejo) was certainly diversified according to the local particularities of the liturgy.²

A unification of liturgy and of repertoire took place in the seventh century, resulting in the "Hispanic-Visigothic rite," which was followed in most of the Iberian Peninsula until the end of the eleventh century, and which established a barrier between the churches of the West and the East; the decree of 1080 abolished, in favour of the Frankish-Roman rite, the Spanish-Visigothic rule in the Peninsula, within which an intersection with Eastern Christian singing could be traced.

The twentieth century opened a new wave of manifestation in Portugal of Christian traditions originating from the countries of the Byzantine rite. In the framework of a small state, and to the greatest extent in its capital, Lisbon, on account of several waves of emigration, representatives of a number of Orthodox Churches – Greeks, Armenians, Copts, Syrians, Georgians, Russians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Moldovans, Serbs and Ukrainians poured into the society as a whole. Some of them, such as the Syrians or Russian Old Believers who emigrated from Canada, are not organized into separate communities.

Essentially, however, Orthodox people come together in groups based on their common language and the church traditions of their country of origin. While some ethnic Orthodox groups are few in number and either do not have official church status, or are registered as cultural and non-church organizations, such as the Copts and Georgians, most Orthodox emigrants are organized in parishes representing the patriarchates of their countries. Parishes can either unite people of different nationalities, for example, Ukrainians, Moldovans, and Russians in the "Russian" church of the Moscow Patriarchate, or they can tend to national separation, for example, in the "Moldavian" parishes of the same Patriarchate; Moldovans, because of the common language, moreover, the same families, can attend both services of the Romanian Church and the Moldovan parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate; Ukrainians are divided into different parishes from the point of view of church organization. The third socio-ecclesiastical reality is the Portuguese Orthodox Church, which resulted, over the course of more than half a century of existence, in a number of canonical and non-canonical organizations; in addition, Portuguese people, in varying proportions, are included in almost every non-Portuguese parish.

This entire complex reality is directly reflected in church singing, presenting a picture of many components and contrasts. The music in use in parishes depends very largely on the national tradition adapted, previous experience and knowledge of the choir director responsible and the level of skill of the choir. A diversity of repertoires may thus be found, including monodic and polyphonic chants of the same national branch; nevertheless, as a rule, in each of the parishes one particular style prevails, into which others are interspersed as "exotic." For example, singing in Russian parishes is guided by four-voice repertoire, universally used within the framework of the Moscow Patriarchate, although more often it is limited to two voices for logistical reasons, but some fragments of the liturgy, in accordance with the taste of the director and the choir, might include Znamenny arrangements with ison or four-part transcriptions (reduced to two voices) of the Georgian repertoire.

² Manuel Pedro Ferreira, *Antologia de Música em Portugal na Idade Média e no Renascimento*. Vol. I. (Lisboa: Arte das Musas, 2008), 10.

Against the background of this many-sided picture of the singing in the Orthodox diasporas, the singing practice of the former Greek parish of St Nectarius of Aegina, in the Patriarchate of Constantinople stands out.

Appearing in 1994 as the first “canonical” parish approved in Portugal (earlier and for some time simultaneously, there had been the celebrations of the Orthodox Portuguese, who were not in communion with the local Orthodox churches, and of ROCOR) and becoming the host base for the Orthodox communities (Ukrainian Constantinople Patriarchate, Bulgarian, Romanian) that have gradually come to make up the Portuguese Orthodox world, the parish included Orthodox people of different nationalities and traditions, not numerically highlighting any of them. The Portuguese priest Fr Alexander Bonito did not aim at the dominance of Greek tradition; the then-psaltis Ivan Moody, being a professional musician who knows well the styles of singing of Orthodox churches, harmoniously combined polyphonic and monophonic material mainly from Greek, Russian, Serbian and Bulgarian traditions, used both by churches in the countries and in the diaspora (it was in this choir that my joint work with Father Ivan began); chants were selected during a service depending on the nationality of those present. In addition to the multi-ethnic musical profile of services, one more quality distinguishes Ivan Moody’s work as a psaltis – his systematic activity in the translation of liturgical texts and adaptation of chant repertoires from different languages church to Portuguese – a language whose presence in the parish accorded with the number of its representatives.

In 2007, the second Greek parish of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, that of St John the Russian, was opened near Lisbon, its rector being Father Ivan Moody, ordained in October of that year. The traditions of singing, laid down by him as a psaltis of the first parish, continued and developed in the new parish – the kliros is directed by his wife, a professional singer and viola da gamba player, and with the participation of other musicians and musicologists.

The inclusion of musicologists among the members of the clergy and the choir is another trait that makes the parish of St John Russian stand out against the background of Orthodox communities in Portugal. Of the three, Fr Ivan Moody and I represent Universidade Nova de Lisboa, and specifically its research unit CESEM. The university offers a course, unique in Portugal, of studies in Orthodox church music, which I created and have taught since 2011. Based on this discipline, a chamber choir was formed that includes students, mostly Portuguese.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The intersection of interests from three realities – liturgical, academic and scientific – resulted in the creation of the project “Orthodox Chant in Portugal”. In this first phase, research is carried out into the historical, patrological, iconographical, sociological, stylistic and performance contexts (there follows an article which elaborates on one of the parameters under study – that of the performance of Orthodox repertoire in concerts in Portugal) through the performance, by the Academic choir and the Pravoslava chamber choir, whose objective was to show the richness and diversity of Orthodox music (among the members are Fr Ivan Moody and me), through the creation of new repertoire, with particular emphasis on the work of Fr Ivan Moody; through the preparation and publication of a set of scores, with texts in Portuguese and/or in transliteration (From Greek or

Slavonic) of the fixed parts of the Liturgy, Vespers and Matins, the Sunday Octoechos and the propers for the most important feasts (what will be new in these publications, in comparison with extant editorial practices, is the bringing together of repertoires from the Churches of several countries and different stylistic tendencies; a contribution on the research and practical employment of the translated repertory may be found below), and through the liturgical use of the repertory being researched, performed in concert, prepared for publication and composed: this initiative began in 2018 with Vespers celebrated by Fr Ivan Moody with the choir of the parish of St John the Russian, Estoril (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), with the participation of the Pravoslava chamber choir.

The project involves various elements of Portuguese society – the academic community (teachers, researchers and students at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at the Universidade Nova in Lisbon and CESEM), members of parishes (priests and singers from the Greek, Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Serbian churches in Lisbon), and also external collaboration with a researcher from Athens and a graphic designer in London.

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