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Byzantine castrati

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ABSTRACT. *The employment of castrati in the Byzantine Church can be traced back to the choirmaster Brison in the fourth century. Brison was called upon by John Chrysostom to organize the antiphonal hymn-singing in the patriarchal church. Since eunuchs were generally considered to be remnants of a pagan past, castrati are seldom mentioned in early Byzantine sources, but beginning in the tenth century references to eunuchs or castrati became more and more frequent. By the twelfth century all the professional singers in the Hagia Sophia were castrati. The repertory of the castrati is discussed and the question is raised whether the introduction of castrati to the Sistine Chapel was influenced by the employment of castrati in Italo-Greek cloisters.*

The Byzantine state could not have functioned without its eunuchs. They figured among the most personal councillors and guards of emperors and empresses, they officiated as patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops and abbots. The intricacies of the complicated court ceremonial would have been meaningless without their knowledge; they led armies and determined state policy; they had their own schools and cloisters. Edward Gibbon's negative picture of the 'decadent' Byzantines can be attributed in large measure to his abhorrence of the physical mutilation that made them what they were.[1]

When Liudprand of Cremona visited Constantinople in the tenth century, the most valuable of his gifts to Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913–59) was deemed to be four eunuchs.[2] They were distinguished as exceptional, because they had both the penis and testicles removed, a rarity in Byzantium. The Peloponnesian heiress Danielis included 100 eunuchs among her gifts to Emperor Basil I (867–87).[3] A huge market for eunuchs existed in the capital, with preference given to those from Abasgia on the Black Sea coast. Already in the fourth century the attempt of the emperor Julian (361–63) to purge the court of eunuchs ended in failure. Theophanes Continuatus complained that so many positions at court were reserved for eunuchs that they swarmed about the palace like the flies in a stable during the summer.[4] The church fathers condemned them as remnants of a pagan past.

Thanks to the research of Rudolphe Guilland published in articles since 1943, negative perceptions of the Byzantine eunuch have gradually begun to change.[5]

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[1] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1776–88).

[2] Frederick A. Wright, *The Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (London, 1930), 209.

[3] Steven Runciman, 'The Widow Danielis', in *Études dediées à la mémoire d'André Andréadès*, ed. Kyriakos Varvaressos (Athens, 1940), 425–31.

[4] *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 318.

[5] Rudolphe Guilland, 'Les Eunuques dan l'Empire Byzantine', *Études Byzantines*, 1 (1943), 197–238; 'Fonction et Dignité des Eunuqes' (1), *Études Byzantines*, 2 (1944), 185–225; 'Fonction et Dignité des Eunuques' (2), *Études Byzantines*, 3 (1945), 179–214; 'Études de Titulature Byzantine: les Titres Auliques reservées aux Eunuques' (1), *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 13 (1955), 50–84; 'Études de

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More recently, Hiroshi Wada has been investigating parallels between Byzantine and Chinese court eunuchs.[6] Shaun Tougher and Kathryn Ringrose are now looking at the phenomenon within the perimeters of gender studies.[7] Although the Byzantines doubtless generally harboured a certain antipathy or abhorrence of eunuchs, their role in the Byzantine state was grudgingly recognized. Given the tumultuous and often ruthless nature of Byzantine lines of succession, it was most often the court eunuchs who maintained continuity by manipulating elections, crowning the victors and burying the vanquished.

In the twelfth century Theophylactus of Ohrid wrote a Defence of Eunuchs for his brother, a eunuch and cleric of Hagia Sophia.[8] Drawing on writings of the apostles and church Fathers, as well as on Roman law, the author concluded that castration was not an offence against God. Nor did the physical fact of castration have an effect on one's soul: there were eunuchs who had become saints, patriarchs, bishops and priests. Castration of a child by its parents was compared to the pruning of a growing vine. Theophylactus thus defended the practice of affluent families who took this course to ensure that one of their children could aspire to a career at court.

Surprisingly, at least for anyone familiar with the traditions of Baroque opera, the eunuchs who sang at court or in the churches of Constantinople have not been dealt with by Byzantine scholars. A preliminary outline was given in my book *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*,[9] and in what follows I will attempt to throw some light on castrati as part of the Byzantine musical establishment.

The first eunuch who had a formative influence on musical culture in the capital was Brison, a choirmaster in the service of the empress Eudoxia. According to the fifth-century church historian Socrates, Brison is credited with organiz-

Titulature Byzantine: les Titres Auliques reservées aux Eunuques' (2), *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 14 (1956), 122–57. These articles by Guilland are collected in *Recherches sur les institutions byzantines* I (Amsterdam, 1967). For a bibliography on eunuchs, see Alexander Kahzdan, 'Eunuchs', in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan (New York, 1991), 2:746–7 and Arnold Hug, 'Eunuchen', in *Pauly Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Supplementband* 3 (Stuttgart, 1918), cols. 449–55. At the last international congress on Byzantine studies at the Sorbonne in Paris (August, 2001), a session on eunuchs and castrati was organized with the participation of Georges Sideris, Shaun Tougher, Neil Moran, Horoshi Wada, Nanna Schiødt, Hilkka Seppälä and Karsten Fledelius.

[6] Hiroshi Wada, 'Zum Eunuchenwesen in Byzanz', *Orient*, 30–31 (1995), 335–53. See also his 'Die Eunuchen in der byzantinishcen Gesellschaft', *XXe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines, Pre-Actes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 2001), 3:167.

[7] Shaun Tougher, 'Byzantine Eunuchs: An Overview, with Special References to their Creation and Origin', in *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (London, 1997), 168–84, and Kathryn M. Ringrose, 'Passing the Test of Sanctity: Denial of Sexuality and Involuntary Castration', in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium: Papers of the 31st Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Liz James (Aldershot, 1999), 123–39. See also Shaun Tougher, 'Eunuch Saints', *XXe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines, Pre-Actes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 2001), 3:165.

[8] *Théophylacte d'Acride, Discours, Traités, Poésies*, ed. Paul Gautier (Thessalonike, 1980), 287–331.

[9] Neil Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting* (Leiden, 1986), 14–50 and my article 'The Musical 'Gestaltung' of the Great Entrance Ceremony in the 12th Century in Accordance with Rite of Hagia Sophia', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 28 (1979), 167–93.

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ing the nocturnal hymn-singing during the patriarchate of John Chrysostom.[10] Arian Christians had been attracting many Orthodox converts by their impressive chanting of the psalms in antiphony with two choirs of singers. Socrates maintained that St Chrysostom called upon the service of Brison to introduce antiphony into the service in Constantinople in order to win back members of his flock who were consorting with the Arians. During one of the scrimmages with the Arians, Brison is said to have been struck with a stone. Socrates claims that antiphonal psalmody was first introduced in the second century by St Ignatius of Antioch, who was inspired by a vision of angels celebrating the Holy Trinity in alternating choirs.

Brison's expertise extended beyond music, in that he was sent in the winter of 402/3 to John Chrysostom with a request from the empress Eudoxia to return from his first period of exile. John Chrysostom's correspondence includes two letters addressed to Brison from the year 404.[11] Brison can therefore be credited with establishing two foundation stones which were to influence the development of musical culture in the capital until Constantinople was taken by the Latins in the thirteenth century: antiphony between two choirs of singers and the use of castrati at court and in the churches.

In organizing the celebration of the liturgy in his newly erected Hagia Sophia church in 535, the emperor Justinian specified that the number of singers in the Great Church was not to exceed twenty-five.[12] When Heraclius (610–41) promulgated Justianian's ordinance during his reign, the number of singers remained fixed at this number, although the number of priests, deacons and readers all increased. From later documents we know that the choir of Hagia Sophia consisted of a director and two choirs of twelve singers, each with its own master. The division of the choral resources into two choirs of twelve undoubtedly existed much earlier and perhaps went back to the models introduced by the choirmaster Brison in response to the Arians. Church singers themselves were considered to be members of the lower clergy, but, unlike the higher clergy, singers and lectors were allowed to marry after ordination.[13] Singers underwent the same ordination as lectors and were tonsured. The so-called Council of Laodicea specified that the place of the singers in the church was at the ambo, the central pulpit in the nave; they were not allowed to enter the area of the sanctuary.

According to ninth-century chronologists, one of the redeeming traits of the iconoclastic emperor Leo V (813–20) was his love of music. He considered himself

[10] *Socratis Scholastici ecclesiastica Historia*, ed. Robert Hussey (Oxford, 1853), VI, 16, 6 and *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in Patrologia Graeca, 67, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1864), cols. 689 and 1537.

[11] *Joannis Chrysostomi Opera Omnia*, Patrologia Graeca, 52, ed. Jacques–Paul Migne (Paris, 1862), cols. 718 and 739. Cf. Otto Seeck, 'Brison', in *Pauly Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, neue Bearbeitung, ed. G. Wissowa 68 vols. (Stuttgart, 1897), 5:858.

[12] *Justiniani Imperatoris Novellae ad Religionem Pertinentes*, Patrologia Latina 72, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1878), cols. 921–6.

[13] Franz S. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn, 1905), 571 (canon 26). Cf. Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*, 14.

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to have a fine voice and liked to intone the beginnings of the chants for the choirs. His active cultivation of music in fact eventually led to his downfall. Immediately after personally directing the chanting of the morning Office before Christmas in St Stephen's chapel in 820, Leo V was cruelly murdered by assassins. The assassins had assumed the costumes of singers and sneaked into the palace precincts through an outer door opened to admit the singers, who lived in private dwellings in the city. After this incident singers were required to live in quarters within the imperial palace.[14] This regulation alone would have put 'bearded' singers with families at a disadvantage and must have hastened the universal adoption of castrati, who were forbidden to marry.

The prefect of the palace singers numbered among Leo's most personal intimates. The famous Skylitzes manuscript Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Vitr. 26-2, an illustrated version of the chronicles of the eleventh-century historian John Skylitzes, depicts him on folio 22. The emperor is shown conspiring against iconodules with the master of the singers as the patriarch celebrated the liturgy.[15] This beardless choirmaster, variously designated as *prostasia, arche* and *ho mikros protopsaltes* in the manuscript tradition, is presumably a castrato.[16]

After Brison, the first singer to be identified by name is Euthymius Casnes, a *domestikos* of the Great Church. His name comes up in connection with the activities of the unworthy patriarch Theophylactus (933–956), son of the emperor Romanus I. According to the historian John Skylitzes, Theophylactus was more famous for his horsemanship than for his piety. To lighten the solemnity of the service at Hagia Sophia, the patriarch appointed Euthymius Casnes as *domestikos*, who reputedly introduced diabolical dances, obscure cryings and tavern songs into the service.[17] To judge from similar accusations in the Defense of Eunuchs, these were all characteristic features of the performances of eunuchs who appeared in theatres.

As the castrati were tonsured and lacked facial hair, these traits can be used as indications for identifying castrati in manuscript illustrations and wall paintings. Possibly the earliest depiction of a castrato appears in the tenth-century *menologion* of Basil II (Vatican Library, cod. Gr. 1613) on page 142. Among the participants in a processional scene for 26 October, there can be seen a beardless, tonsured cantor in a white robe holding a scroll.[18]

The best depiction of beardless tonsured singers appears, however, in the codex Athos, Dionysiou 587m (11 c.).[19] Folio 43 contains the Gospel selection for the

[14] *Georgii Cedreni Compendium Historiarum*, Patrologia Graeca 121, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1894), col. 949.

[15] André Grabar, 'Les illustrations de la chronique de Jean Skylitzes à la Bibliothèque nationale de Madrid', *Cahiers archéologiques*, 21 (1971), 191–211.

[16] For other examples of singers in this manuscript cf. my *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*, 51–8.

[17] Hans Thurn, ed., *Ioannes Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Berlin, 1973), 243.

[18] Moran, *Singers*, ill. 10.

[19] *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts*, 2 vols., ed. S. M. Pelekanides *et al.* (Athens, 1974), 1:179.

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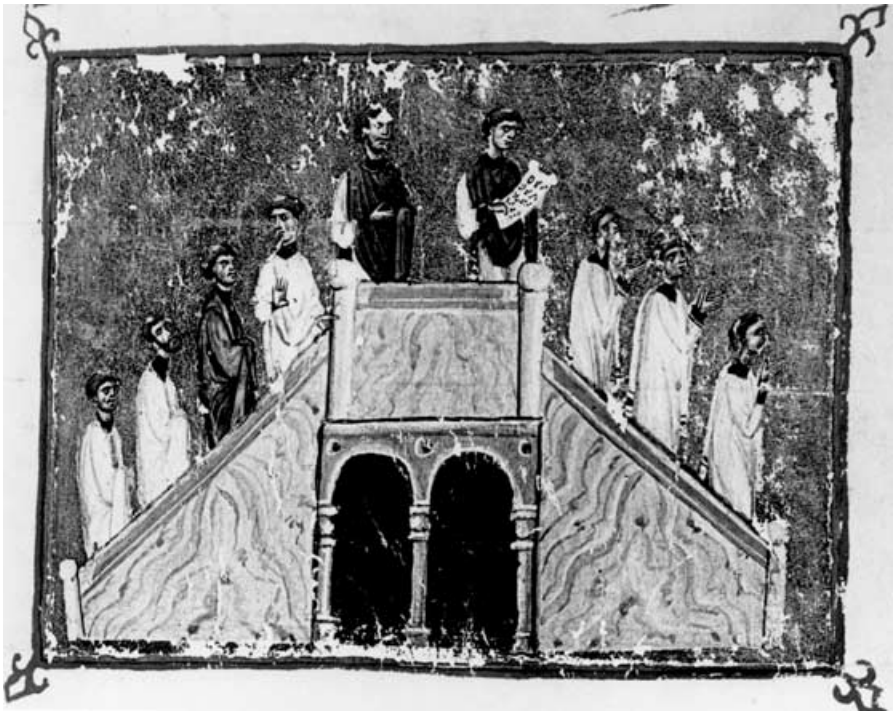


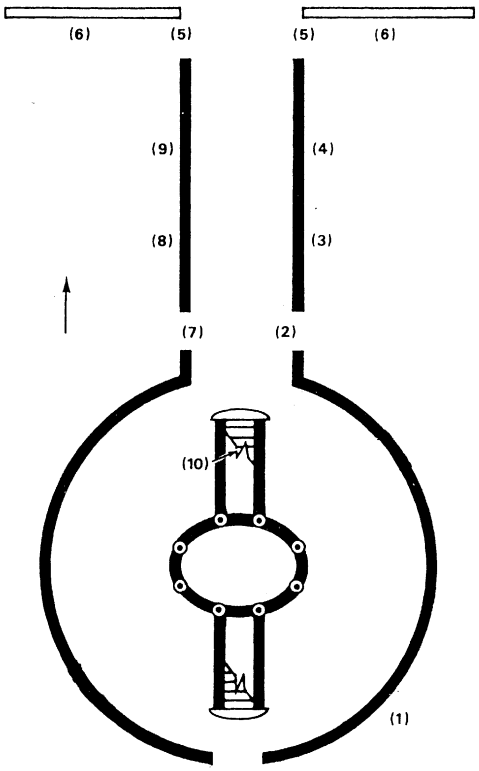
Fig. 1 Athos, Cod. Dionysiou 587 m, f. 43 (11th c.): Soloist singing Akathist kontakion surrounded by choir and readers on the ambo.

Sunday of Orthodoxy, when a special *kontakion*, known as the Akathist hymn was performed. The illustration shows a group of nine tonsured members of the lower clergy who stand on the steps of an ambo. The three to the right appear to be young deacons, as they wear their narrow band of office, the *orarion*, around their necks (see Fig. 1). As I explained in my book on the depiction of singers in Byzantine and Slavonic painting, the two figures at the top of the ambo presumably depict the senior lector, who presented the readings for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and the castrato, who sang from the roll in his hands. The clergy on the stairs would have sung the refrain to the *kontakion* verses set forth by the soloist.[20] The ambo resembles the one in the Hagia Sophia with stairs to the east and west. The arrangement of the psaltai at the ambo during the services is also discussed in my book. For regular services the singers were lined up in two rows between the ambo and the sanctuary (see Fig. 2). At coronations, platforms were erected for the singers beside the ambo. Acclamations to the emperor were accorded a special distinction. The singers, bearing lights, ascended to the platform encircling the dome, and their chants would echo through the building.[21]

[20] Moran, *Singers*, 34–5.

[21] Neil Moran, 'Zwei Herrscherakklamationen in einer griechischen Handschrift aus Süditalien (Codex gr. 161)', *Die Musikforschung*, 30 (1977), 3–13.

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1) priests
2) *domestikos* of choir on the right
3) *psaltai*
4) lectors
5) two lectors beside holy doors
6) doormen
7) *domestikos* of choir on the left
8) *psaltai*
9) lectors
10) *kanonarchos*

Fig. 2 Placement of the choir and clergy along the passageway between the ambo and sanctuary in the Hagia Sophia. The leaders of the two choirs stood at the openings in the passageway directly below the ambo with the two choirs lined up in front of them. (sketch by author).

Beginning in the tenth century references to eunuchs in Byzantine sources become more frequent, as a more positive attitude was generally adopted towards them. In his life of the prophet Daniel, Symeon Metaphrastes identified the prophet as a eunuch and discussed his castration.[22] Authors drew parallels between the corps of eunuchs surrounding the imperial throne and the heavenly choir of angels, both being outside conventional space and time.[23] The eunuch John Orphanotrophos, brother of the emperor Michael IV Paphlagos (1034–41), rose from his position as guardian of St Paul's orphanage to become the dictator

[22] *Vita S. Prophetae Daniels*, Patrologia Graeca 115, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1899), cols. 371–403.

[23] Kathryn M. Ringrose develops this theme in her forthcoming book *Transcendent Lives: Eunuchs and the Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (forthcoming, University of Chicago Press).

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of the empire's civil and military policy.[24] Emperor Leo VI fostered this trend by establishing the monastery of St Lazaros in Constantinople as a haven exclusively for eunuchs.[25] Leo VI situated this cloister on an ideal site overlooking the Marmara Sea between the main palace complex and the Manganes palace. The looming structure of the Great Church stood only a short distance to the west. It is reasonable to assume that the monastery shared in the task of training young castrati singers with St Paul's orphanage. It remains to be investigated, whether any of the 106 *stichera basilica* attributed to Leo the Wise can be linked to the St Lazaros monastery.[26]

The *typikon* and library for the Lazaros monastery appear to have been lost, but fortunately the founding document (1077) of a monastery for eunuchs in Constantinople survives in the *diataxis* for the Panoiktirmon monastery and poorhouse.[27] The author of this document, Michael Attaleiates, stipulated that the monks running his foundation and church be 'eunuchs and men free from passion' (ἀπαθεῖς). No bearded monks were to be admitted, except for blood relatives, who were both pious and elderly.With regard to the administration of the institution Michael Attaleiates wrote: 'Since I set great value on piety, I decided to install singers of hymns [ὑμνοπόλους] in the divine sanctuary of the All–Merciful.'[28] The founder, a judge of the hippodrome and the *vellum*, specifically used the technical term *hymnopoloi*. These monks were not merely *célébrants*, as translated by Paul Gautier. Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexikon* defines as ὑμνοπόλος 'singing hymns: as subst., singer or composer of hymns'. The editor cites references to *hymnopoloi* as angels in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus and as men in Synesius of Cyrene.[29] In his biography of Michael Palaeologos, George Pachymeres says the emperor contributed properties specifically for the administration of choir schools (*eis tên tôn hymnopolôn oikonomian*).[30]

The seven eunuch monks at the Panoiktirmon monastery under the ecclesiarch Anthony were instructed to carry out the doxology of day and night Offices and to observe numerous commemorations of the founder's family, the emperors and other donors in the liturgy. At one point in his *diataxis* the judge Michael Attaleiates incites the monks to angelic conduct.[31] The clearest evidence of the

[24] Nicolas Oikonomides, *Le lists de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris, 1972), 319.
[25] Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1969), 299.
[26] Constantin Floros, *Universale Neumenkunde*, 3 vols. (Kassel, 1970), 3:82–5.
[27] Konstantinos N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, 7 vols. (Venice, 1872), 1:3–69; Waldemar Nissen, *Die Diataxis des Michael Attaleiates von 1077* (Jena, 1894); Paul Lemerle, 'La diataxis de Michel Attaleiate (mars 1077)', in *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris, 1977), 67–112. Full translation in French by Paul Gautier, 'La Diataxis de Michel Attaliate', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 39 (1981), 5–143. An English translation by Alice-Mary Talbot was published on the internet in the series *Dumbarton Oaks Electronic Texts: Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, edited by John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero (Washington, D.C., 2000), 326–76.
[28] Paul Gautier, *Théophylacte*, 37.
[29] Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexikon* (Oxford, 1961), 1431.
[30] *Georgii Pachymeris De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis*, ed. Immanuel Bekker, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1835) and Patrologia Graeca 143, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1891), col. 612; see also Neil Moran, *Singers*, 26.
[31] Gautier, *ibid*., 39.

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importance of music in the monastic church is given in the inventory of books. The library contained two *kondakaria* as well as music for the *allelouiaria* and *prokeimena*, all examples of melismatic chant, which could be executed only by trained singers.[32] One *kondakarion* is described as: Ἕτερον βιβλίον, κονδακάριον, ψαλτήριον, ἔχον καὶ τὰ ἀλληλουϊάρια προκ[. . .].[33] The second manuscript with the text has the variant ἀλληλουϊαροπροκείμενα. *Prokeimena*, however, do not end with an alleluia. Perhaps this is a reference to the *prokeimenon* Ἀνάστα, ὁ Θέος, which is sung during the liturgy on Holy Saturday instead of the *allelouiarion*.[34] The second *kondakarion* contained the Miracle of the Source. In addition to the usual *sticheraria*, *menaia*, *heirmologia* and psalters, the library included an Ὀκτάηχος δικάνονος and a Βιβλίον ἔχον στιχηράρια τονισμένα (i.e., an *oktoechos* with two canons for each mode and a book with notated *sticheraria*). The musical repertory of the castrati in the Panoiktirmon church was very rich indeed.

In his *Defense of Eunuchs*, Theophylactus of Ohrid pointed to an associate of Michael Attaleiates, Symeon the Sanctified, as a contemporary eunuch worthy of emulation. The editor of the treatise, Paul Gautier, was able to deduce that Symeon had been a *megistos droungarios* in the imperial court. The term 'Droungarios tes Viglas' indicated a member of the judiciary, and the prefix *megas* was reserved for judges.[35] Symeon the Sanctified therefore certainly knew Michael Attaleiates. After his retirement in 1078, Symeon the Sanctified dedicated his life to the restoration of the Xenophon monastery on Mount Athos, bringing three beardless eunuchs with him. The Athonite monks objected, however, to their presence and had the four of them expelled. Symeon and his followers made their way to Thessaloniki, where they established a monastery for eunuchs. With the ascendancy of his former associate, Alexios Komnenos, to the imperial throne in 1081, Symeon obtained permission to return to the Holy Mountain. The Athonite council of monks stipulated, however, that this was an exception due to the sanctity of Symeon and their rule against the presence of eunuchs on the peninsula remained in place.

The situation on Mount Athos was doubtless one of the reasons Theophylactus took up his pen on behalf of his brother in the Hagia Sophia. He composed his treatise in the form of a debate the author supposedly overheard between a monk and a eunuch in Thessaloniki. Speaking of the castrati who executed the sacred music, the eunuch challenges the monk who accuses *all* of the chanters of being corrupted by the theatre, as if they could not distinguish between singing before God and before an audience. The defender of the eunuchs asks

[32] Paul Gautier, *ibid*., 97 and 125. Cf. Constantin Floros, *Das mittelbyzantinische Kontakienrepertoire – Untersuchungen und kritische Edition*, 3 vols., mss (Hamburg, 1961) and Gisa Hintze, *Das byzantinische Prokeimena-Repertoire*, Hamburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft 9 (Hamburg, 1972).

[33] Sathas reads the προκ as προκ[οπίου], i.e., of Prokopius, an unlikely solution. Gautier reads the abbreviation as '*prokeimena*' or '*les versets précédés l'allelouïa*'.

[34] Hintze, *Prokeimena-Repertoire*, 16.

[35] Gautier, *ibid*., 117. See also Alexander Kazhdan, 'Droungarios tes Viglas', in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1:663.

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the monk 'As if eunuchs filled the churches with trilled airs of licentious chansons rather than sacred songs – what an accusation!' The author reveals his erudition in musical matters by calling upon the examples of the prophet David as well as Ignatius of Antioch, who introduced antiphony to the Church after hearing a choir of angels chant in this manner. Did not the austere John Chrysostom, he says, compose melodies in response to the proselytizing efforts of Arians? Throughout this section of the treatise, the author takes it as a 'given' that the church singers in his time were castrati.[36]

Within this environment, the gender of the singers at court and in the Great Church no longer had to be disguised. Commenting on the canon relating to the marriage of church singers (*psaltai*), the twelfth–century historian Theodoros Balsamon states that this rule had become obsolete, because by his time the *ordo cantorum* consisted entirely of eunuchs.[37] Eunuchs were forbidden to marry, but were otherwise subject to few restrictions. The emperor Leo VI even allowed them to adopt children.[38]

This impression that eunuchs were finally being accepted is confirmed by two historical narratives, one from France, the other from Russia. En route to the Holy Land, King Louis VII reached the famed city of Constantinople in October of 1147. The chronicler of the Second Crusade, Odo of Deuil, recorded how the Byzantine emperor Manuel, upon learning that the French were celebrating a Mass in honour of St Denis sent a group of his clergy to participate in the commemoration of a saint common to both the Latin and the Greek rites:[39]

> Since the Greeks celebrate this feast, the emperor knew of it, and he sent over to the king a carefully selected group of his clergy, each of whom he had equipped with a large taper decorated elaborately with gold and a great variety of colours; and thus he increased the glory of the ceremony. These clergy certainly differed from ours as to words and order of service, but they made a favourable impression, because of their sweet chanting; for the mingling of voices, the heavier with the light, the eunuchs', namely, with the manly voices (for many of them were eunuchs), softened the hearts of the Franks. Also they gave the onlookers pleasure by their graceful bearing and gentle clapping hands and inflexions of the fingers.

Just before the capture of Constantinople by the Latins, Anthony of Novgorod wrote in 1200 about how the various parts of the Cherubikon hymn were divided

[36] Theophylactus of Ohrid uses the term *asmatikos* in referring to the singers. To judge by the context of his treatise, the professional church singers of his time were all castrati. Perhaps the author considered the expression as a *terminus technicus* or euphemism for castrato. The expression *asmatike akolouthia* refers to the order of service sung in the Great Church. Cf. Christian Hannick, 'Étude sur l'ἀκολουθία ἀσματική' *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 19 (1970), 243–60, and M. Arranz, 'L'office de l'Asmatikos Hesperinos ('vêpres chantées') de l'ancien Euchologe byzantine', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 44 (1978), 391–419.

[37] Theodorus Balsamon, *Canones Sanctorum Patrum qui in Trullo Imperialis Palatii Constantinopoli convenerunt*, Patrologia Graeca 137, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1865), col. 532.

[38] Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden, 1997), 202.

[39] Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, ed. Virginia Berry (New York, 1948), 68.

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between castrati, subdeacons and lectors at a service in the Hagia Sophia.[40] Anthony of Novgorod described the Transfer of Gifts as follows:[41]

> At the Transfer the castrati chant, however, beforehand the subdeacons [sing] and afterwards a single monk chants. And at that time many priests and deacons carry in the Divine Gifts. At that same time there takes place a great weeping and emotion and humility among all the people, not only in the Hagia Sophia, but also in the galleries.

The conquest of 1204 brought with it the destruction of the fragile choral organization of the Hagia Sophia and its attendant churches and monasteries, since the conquerors introduced the Latin rite to the Great Church. The eunuchs fled into the countryside or sought employment in Russia, Trepezunt or even in southern Italy. After the restoration in 1261, the glory of the original *typikon* of the Great Church could be restored only with difficulty, since much of the tradition had been oral. In the capital, Athonite monks who came to positions of influence had nothing but disdain for eunuchs. The *typikon* of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra monastery thus proscribed them: 'I order the superior and the brothers who have positions of leadership after him never to receive a eunuch in our Lavra'.[42]

In the fifteenth century Symeon of Thessaloniki remarked that the old ritual of the Great Church, the *asmatike akolouthia*, had fallen out of use after the Latin conquest and he was able to retain only a few remnants of it in the Hagia Sophia Church in Thessaloniki.[43] Symeon's instructions served as the basis for an article by Oliver Strunk on the Byzantine Office at Hagia Sophia,[44] and more recently Alexander Lingas has investigated the preservation of the *asmatike akolouthia* in Late Byzantine manuscripts.[45]

The disappearance of the valued castrati from the capital and the conversion of the Great Church to a Latin cathedral meant that its ancient repertory could be preserved only in Byzantine outposts in Thessaloniki, Epiros, Trapezunt, Nicaea, on Mont Athos or in Italo-Greek monasteries in southern Italy. Codex Λ. 3 (15 c.) from the Lavra monastery on Mt. Athos and Codex 8 (14 c.) from

[40] This division has been discussed in detail drawing on the melismatic version in the Codex Messina gr. 161, in my 'The Musical 'Gestaltung' of the Great Entrance Ceremony in the 12th century in Accordance with Rite of Hagia Sophia'; see also Moran, *Singers*, 14–50.

[41] Khrisanf Loparev, *Kniga Palomnik*, Publications of the Orthodox Palestine Society 51 (St Petersburg, 1889), 12.

[42] Cf. *Typikon of Athanasios the Athonite for the Laura monastery*, trans. George Dennis in *Dumbarton Oaks Electronic Texts*, 245–70, esp. p. 263.

[43] *Symeonis Thessalonicensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia* in Patrologia Graeca 155, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1866), cols. 536–669.

[44] Oliver Strunk, '*The Byzantine Office at Hagia Sophia*', Dumbarton Oaks Papers 9/10 (1956), 175–202.

[45] Alexander Lingas, 'Festal Cathedral Vespers in Late Byzantium', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 63 (1997), 421–59. Lingas does not make a single reference to work in this field of research by Bartolomeo Di Salvo, Constantin Floros, Nanna Schiødt, Gisa Hintze or myself. Symeon of Thessaloniki speaks of the many priests and cantors required for the complicated rite of the Great Church. Lingas, however, is of the opinion that the 'festal cathedral rite services pale in comparison with their intricate and lengthy Neo-Sabaïtic counterpart' (p. 445) and that Symeon was mistaken. Does this mean that Symeon of Thessaloniki did not know what he was talking about?

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the Cathedral of Kastoria preserve chants of the *asmatikon*. No complete manuscripts with the asmatikon in Early Byzantine notation survive, although Constantin Floros has shown that the notation of the Slavonic *kondakaria* was clearly based on them.[46]

Even if the Latins made short work of the chant books stored under the ambo when they ransacked the Hagia Sophia in 1204, enough remnants survive that the Middle Byzantine repertory can be partially reconstructed. Bartolomeo Di Salvo managed to disentangle much of the confusion surrounding the manuscript tradition in a series of articles on 'Gli asmata nella musica bizantina'.[47] Di Salvo divided Byzantine church music into two categories: the repertory of the Hagiopolites and the repertory of the Asma. The repertory of the Hagiopolites (i.e., of the Holy City of Jerusalem) consisted of four genera: (1) the *genos ekphonetikon*; (2) the *genos sticherarikon*; (3) the *genos* of the *asmatikon*; and (4) the *genos* of the *psaltikon*.

The *genos ekphonetikon* was not used for chants, but for the solemn recitation of Scripture. The *genos sticherarikon* comprises the melodies in the *heirmologion* and *sticherarion*. The chants in the style of the *asmatikon* were executed by a choir and exhibit an essentially melismatic style. The *genos* of the *psaltikon* designated an extremely melismatic solo repertory. Constantin Floros has dedicated a number of his publications to refining the definition of these *genera* in greater detail.[48] The chants of the Hagiopolites were sung according to ten different modes (four authentic, four plagal and two medial).

The repertory of the Asma or *genos kalophonikon*, in contrast, made use of sixteen modes (four authentic, four plagal, four medial and four phthorai). Di Salvo developed a definition of the repertory of the Asma based on the musical manuscripts, mainly from south Italian sources. Other differences between the repertories appear in the neumatic notation and in the vocalizations known as *teretismoi*. By comparing the instructions for the performance of the Cherubikon in the typicon of the Great Church[49] with the kalophonic version of the same chant in Messina gr. 161, I concluded that the repertory of the Asma was destined for the castrati of the Great Church.[50] An analysis of the orthros chants in the repertory of the Asma revealed that the music corresponded to the order of service used in the Hagia Sophia as well.[51]

Nanna Schiødt came to a similar conclusion after studying 741 final cadences

[46] Constantin Floros, *Das mittelbyzantinische Kontakienrepertoire* and 'Die Entzifferung der Kondakarien–Notation', *Musik des Ostens*, 3 (1965), 7–71; 4 (1967), 12–44, esp. 4:41.

[47] Bartolomeo Di Salvo, 'Gli asmata nella musica bizantina', *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, 12 (1959); 45–50, 127–45; 14 (1960), 145–78. See also the definitions of 'psaltikon' and 'asmatikon' by Lornezo Tardo in *L'Antico Melurgia Bizantina* (Grottaferrata, 1938), 37–8.

[48] Constantin Floros, 'Die Entzifferung der Kondakarien-Notation', *Musik des Ostens*, 3:20–24 and the same author's *Universale Neumenkunde*, 3 vols. (Kassel, 1970) 1:46–7.

[49] Moran, 'The Musical 'Gestaltung' of the Great Entrance Ceremony'.

[50] Juan Mateos, *Le Typikon de la grande Église (Ms. Sainte-Croix no. 40, Xe s.)*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 165–66 (Rome, 1962–63).

[51] Moran, 'Zwei Herrscherakklamationen', 3–13, and Moran, *The Ordinary Chants of the Byzantine Mass*, 2 vols., Hamburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft 12 (Hamburg, 1975), 39–41.

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in the Sticherarion in codex Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds Coislin 42 (13 c.). She hypothesized that cadences in the fourth authentic mode at a very high-pitched level were sung by castrati. She announced her research results in a paper delivered at a conference in Moscow in 1989, stating that 'I have found reasons to believe that hymns in mode IV were sung by castrati, men with women's voices, giving these hymns a special splendour'.[52]

In my study of the Ordinary chants of the Byzantine Mass, I listed five manuscripts that preserve the extremely melismatic repertory of the Asma.[53] One is from Messina (Messina gr. 161), and the other four codices are from Grottaferrata: Codex Crypt. Γ. γ. IV, Codex Crypt. Γ. γ. VII, Codex Crypt. E.α. X and Codex Crypt. Γ. β. XXXVII (vi).

The fact that these manuscripts derive from south Italian sources does not diminish their value as witnesses to the type of solo chants sung by the castrati in the capital. Constantin Floros wrote with regard to the repertory of the *asmatikon*: 'As paradoxical as it may sound, palaeographic findings leave no doubt that in the thirteenth century on Mount Athos, in the cathedrals and monasteries of Russia, as in the Basilian monasteries of south Italy, from which most of the relevant Greek manuscripts come, the chants of the Asmatikon were sung to basically the same melodies'.[54] He found furthermore, that the south Italian sources were truer to the tradition preserved in Slavonic manuscripts than the surviving Greek sources.

The boot of Italy and eastern Sicily stood under Greek influence as early as the eighth century BC. After centuries of conflict, Byzantine authority was re-established in Lower Italy by Basil I (867–86). Starting with the monastery at Rossano, Neilos of Rossano (910–1004) began his reform of the Italo-Greek cloisters. In 1004 he founded the Basilian abbey of Santa Maria di Grottaferrata east of Rome. When the Normans conquered Lower Italy and Sicily, they attempted to bolster their authority against the pope by promoting the Italo-Greek cloisters and by adapting the symbols of the Byzantine empire to their upstart regime. In discussing the ambitions of the Norman king Roger II, Josef Deér wrote that 'while the Byzantine provinces were systematically plundered by Norman pirate ships and Roger's Grand Admiral let loose flaming arrows even against the imperial city itself, ... there grew up at the same time in Palermo, like an artificial flower, a strictly Byzantine court ceremonial'.[55]

[52] Nanna Schiødt, '741 Final Cadences from the 12 months of the Byzantine Sticherarion Coislin 42', *Papers of Musicological Congress (Moscow Conservatory 27. September–1.October 1989)* (Moscow, 1989, 178–87, esp. p. 183. Cf. also her abstract 'Did Castratos Sing in the Byzantine Church?' *XXe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines, Pre-Actes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 2001), 3:168.

[53] Moran, *The Ordinary Chants*, 39–41.

[54] 'So paradox es auch klingen mag, so läßt doch der paläographische Befund keinen Zweifel darum zu, daß im 13. Jahrhundert auf dem Athos, in den Kathedralen und Klöstern Rußlands wie in den Basilianer–Klöstern Süditaliens und Siziliens, aus denen die meisten der betreffenden griechischen Handscriften stammen, die Gesänge des Asmatikons im Grunde nach den selben Melodien vorgetragen worden sind' (Floros, 'Die Enzifferung', 4:41).

[55] 'Während byzantinische Provincen von normannischen Piratenflotten systematisch geplündert wurden und der Großadmiral Rogers sogar die Kaiserstadt mit brennenden Pfeilen beschießen

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The Normans set up San Salvatore in Messina as the mother cloister of all Greek cloisters in the Norman realm. In 1131 Roger granted it freedom from all obligations to the local bishop. The Italo-Greek cloisters were viewed as essential parts of the spiritual bulwark against the pope. Pierre Batiffol and Miguel Arranz have demonstrated that San Salvatore stood directly under the influence of the Hagia Sophia in questions of liturgical order.[56] As I have explained elsewhere, the texts and music of Byzantine acclamations, the silk weavers stolen from Corinth, the Byzantine mosaic workers who created their artworks in Palermo, and the Byzantine court ceremonial all served to bolster the prestige of the Norman rulers.[57] We can well imagine that the castrati would have been treated as the rarest of Byzantine jewels transferred to a new setting.

The disappearance of the castrati from the capital had wide-reaching consequences for the type of music composed for the church after the Restoration in 1261. In Late Byzantine paintings, the members of the trivium directing the choir (*protopsaltes*, *domestikos* of the choir on the left and *domestikos* of the choir on the right) are nearly always bearded. As more and more monks assumed the patriarchal mantle, elements of the secular liturgy were replaced by forms derived from the monastic rites. Under Patriarch Athanasius the clergy of the Hagia Sophia even went on strike after he decided in 1307 to reduce their salaries and introduce a more rigid discipline.[58] As Strunk demonstrated, Symeon of Thessaloniki struggled to preserve some of these rites in Thessaloniki. The rich ceremonial of the imperial court was revived only on the more important feasts as the emperors sought out the few surviving eunuchs who served as custodians of the glory of their forebears.

The impoverished Church was less fortunate. The vacuum caused by the loss of the professional castrati meant that new melodies had to be composed, which took into account the changed musico–cultural situation. Manuscripts were suddenly flooded with the names of composers: Miloš Velimirović compiled a list of over eighty singers and composers from a single music manuscript of the fifteenth century.[59]

Composers such as John Cucuzeles were fully aware of the *asmatikon*, *psaltikon* and of the repertory Asma and they attempted to emulate the older tradition

ließ . . . wuchs in der gleichen Zeit in Palermo wie eine künstliche Blüte ein streng byzantinisches Hofzeremoniell empor' (Josef Deér, *Der Kaiserornat Friedrichs II* (Bern, 1952), 13).

[56] Pierre Batiffol, *L'Abbaye de Rossano. Contribution à l'histoire de la Vaticane* (Paris, 1891), xi and 9, and Miguel Arranz, *Le Typicon du monastère du Saint-Sauveur à Messine (Codex Messinensis gr. 115, A.D. 1131)*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 185 (Rome, 1969).

[57] 'Als solches sollte dieses älteste bekannte Beispiel des byzantinischen 'Staatsmusik', ähnlich wie die nach Palermo verschleppten Korinther Seidenweber und Mosaikarbeiter, sowie das byzantinische Hofzeremoniell dienen als Zeichen der weltlichen Machtansprüche einer aufwieglerischen Königsfamilie . . . , die sich nicht einmal davor scheute, sich mit dem Geschlecht der Komnenen gleichzusetzen'; Neil Moran, 'Zwei Herrscherakklamationen', 11.

[58] James Boojamra, 'The Ecclasiastical Reforms of Patriarch Athanasius of Constantinople (1289–1293; 1303–1309)', Ph.D. diss., Fordham University (1976), 152.

[59] Miloš Velimirović, 'Byzantine Composers in ms. Athens 2406', in *Essays presented to Egon Wellesz* (Oxford, 1966), 7–18.

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in their kalophonic chants. Therefore, even though the castrati no longer dominated musical culture in the Late Byzantine period, their inheritance was certainly alive. As for possible links to the castrati in the Sistine Chapel and in Baroque opera, the question remains open. Was, for instance, the term 'Spanish falsettist' for singers in the Sistine Chapel merely a euphemism for eunuchs from southern Italy, then held by the Spanish house of Aragon, or were the doctors assigned to the orphanages of Naples directed in their study of the *Epitome of Medicine* by Paul of Aegina, with its account of operations of castration, by aural memories of the castrati in the Italo-Greek cloisters?

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