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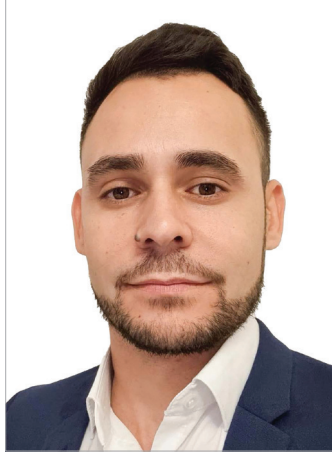
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Biographical note

Cătălin Cernătescu is interested in research on sacred chant, having expertise in Byzantine musical paleography and alternative systems for the notation of Orthodox music. As a scholar dedicated to the restoration and promotion of early church music, he has successfully secured multiple grants allowing him advanced studies in this field. He has authored, edited, and was coeditor of 15 volumes on Byzantine music and musicology. His work has been presented at numerous international conferences and symposia in Greece, the UK, and Romania.

CENSORSHIP, CONTROL, AND COMPLIANCE IN BYZANTINE MUSICOLOGY IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA*

Cătălin Cernătescu

Abstract

My paper examines censorship and control in Byzantine musicology during the communist regime in Romania. The investigation draws upon archive materials from the Romanian Composers and Musicologists Union which reveal a previously unknown narrative. Within these records, covering the years 1950 to 1989, I unearthed unpublished accounts on Byzantine musicology and on scholars writing on church chant. In addition to identifying explicit instances of censorship, I have sought evidence for the compliance with the policies that heavily restricted the use of theological vocabulary. Furthermore, I have examined how musicologists outside such expert groups engaged with the research conducted by their peers. Through this pursuit, I aim to enhance the understanding of how specialists in sacred chant navigated the intricate landscape of cultural dynamics during a tumultuous historical period.

Keywords: Byzantine musicology, sacred chant, censorship, ideology

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1. Introduction

My interest in the censorship and control which Romanian Byzantine musicology was subjected to during the communist regime is relatively recent. New research horizons opened via the participation in two international conferences on politically controlled music, organized between 2021 and 2022 by Professor Nicolae Gheorghiuță at the National University of Music Bucharest (UNMB).¹ I realized at the time that it would be a fruitful endeavor to go deeper into a less explored theme. Four experts had previously written about how ideological control regulated, conditioned and shaped the discourse of Byzantine musicology. Franz Metz (2000), Elena Chircev (2012, 2020), Nicolae Gheorghiuță (2015) and Costin Moisil (2019) have highlighted various sides of the phenomenon, constructing a very well-documented overview. In their turn, musicologists Valentina Sandu-Dediu (2002), Octavian Lazăr Cosma (2020), Florinela Popa (2022) and Monica Lup (2023) wrote about the limits which the narrative of religious music had to fit. It seemed that these investigations had thoroughly covered the matter. It was only after I started working with documents from the Romanian Composers and Musicologists Union archives, currently accommodated by the UNMB, that I was able to appreciate the potential of unpublished documentary sources to enrich some chapters in the history of Byzantine musicology between 1950 and 1989, the period on which I focused my attention for the present study. Everything I knew about the massive censorship of the domain came exclusively from papers and from the anecdotes of Byzantine musicologists who had survived the regime, so immersing myself in the UCMR archives was a profoundly revealing cognitive experience. These documents revealed unknown and sometimes astonishing situations involving the few specialists on sacred music who were members of the Union. Careful analysis of several hundreds of files confirmed that political interference in institutional processes was a powerful coercive factor for cultural producers. The evidence exposes multiple contexts in which sacred music specialists, were, like their peers, compelled to produce cultural-semantic distortions of scientific discourse in order to support the symbolic representations imagined and idealized by the Power.

2. Methodological approach

This investigation is based mostly on unpublished documents from the Romanian Composers and Musicologists Union archives. Since they cannot currently be organized according to library standards, the selection of the files I studied has been carried out in a rather random, but controlled manner. I tried to select the material according to its importance in institutional processes and the likelihood of identifying significant information. Thus, I was more interested in the files of the musicology section than in those of the symphonic or choral music sections, as well as in the secretarial records, in internal and external correspondence, transcripts, purchasing plans and materials, notes and information records. In addition, I paid attention to those files with press clippings, which contain a considerable amount of information about Romanian musicology and the Union's activity.

Of the more than 1000 records I studied, approximately 250 are related to Byzantine musicology. A few dozen of those illustrate situations or contexts in which the authors of writings on religious music faced censorship or control, imposed either from outside the institution or from within it. As the documents are abundant in information, I selected only the most relevant ones for this paper, those likely to contribute to outlining the unknown history of the field during the communist regime.

At the same time, I limited my research, both temporally and methodology-wise. As I was not interested in Byzantine music and musicology during the two dictatorships that preceded the official installation of communism in Romania (the Carlist and Antonescian regimes), I focused on the period 1950-89, the outer limits determined by the documentary materials discovered in the UCMR archives. Even if Byzantine musicology was of interest to other specialists able to publish in the few periodicals issued by the Orthodox Church (especially in *Studii Teologice* [Theological Studies] and *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* [Romanian Orthodox Church]) without being heavily censored, I focused exclusively on those who were active in the Composers Union, whose discourse was carefully controlled and directed towards politically and ideologically relevant themes. Simultaneously, I sought evidence of their compliance with the policies that severely restricted the possibility of employing a theological vocabulary, perceived as an emanation from a competitive ideological field, religion (Vasile, 2010, p. 226). I was also

interested to see how other musicologists, outside the group of experts, related to the research of their fellows or to sacred music in general.

In order to understand how the field evolved within a politically controlled institution as well as the actions taken by those who studied church chant, I had to look for answers outside the boundaries of my familiar field. Particularly helpful were my readings in anthropology, sociology, history and linguistics. Writings by Katherine Verdery, Dennis Deletant, Vladimir Tismăneanu and Cornelia Ilie were illuminating, helping me to understand the mechanisms behind the relations between cultural workers, institutions and the Power during the communist period. For instance, Katherine Verdery's sociological investigations (1994) contain the "key" to explaining the behaviors of Byzantine musicologists and those with whom they interacted in various contexts within the Composers' Union. Following the models described by Verdery, who explains the causes of the compliance of cultural producers under totalitarian rule, I was able to interpret several situations whose meanings had initially evaded my grasp. Reading Tismăneanu (2003) and Deletant (2010) facilitated my understanding of the political dynamics of the reference era. Cornelia Ilie's papers on the semantic roles in totalitarian discourse in Romania (1998, 2005) also convinced me that it might be profitable to follow some linguistic markers that indicate the existence of ideological control and censorship.

3. General outlines of the political context

After the official assumption of power by the Communist regime in Romania on December 30, 1947, the apparent symphony between Church and State became increasingly dissonant. Drawing inspiration from the Soviet model, the totalitarian regime implemented a range of strategies to curb the influence of the Church on society. In the fundamental handbook of communism, rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology, religion was perceived as a significant impediment to socialist advancement and was targeted for complete eradication. The Directorate of Propaganda and Agitation recommended in 1949 that the Ministry of Arts and Information make films to combat superstitions, especially persistent in rural areas, and, through cinema caravans, screen Soviet documentary which, on the one hand, would reflect the harmful character of religious prejudices, and on the other hand, would advocate atheistic scientific theories (Vasile,

2010, p. 227). In the following years, the ideological machinery was put to work with the goal of reeducating the working people. In the 1950s and 1960s, powerful propaganda tools such as the printed press were engaged in the process. The efforts of reputable State publishers such as the official scientific and political publishers (Editura politică and Editura Științifică) were directed towards translating anti-ecclesiastical writings to promote an atheistic-scientific education. *The Origin of Religion* (1956), *The Bible for Believers and Non-Believers* (1961), *The Atheist's Guide* (1961 edition), *The Essence of Christianity* (1961), and *The Funny Bible* (1962), soon became the preferred textbooks for lecturers, propagandists, and agitators engaged in combating religious superstition. The newspapers also allocated extensive coverage to fighting religious mysticism. In the emerging ideological landscape, religion-themed works had difficulties in getting published. Anything remotely associated with mystical beliefs was met with strong rejection and marginalization. To prevent drawing unwanted attention, research on religious music had to disguise its content by incorporating it in the broader context of celebrating the autochthonous musical heritage (Gheorghiuță, 2015, pp. 42-43).

4. A brief overview of Byzantine musicology in communist Romania

Byzantine musicology is a rather young discipline, dealing with the study of orthodox music of Byzantine tradition and also known by the generic, slightly ambiguous name of Byzantinology. In Romania, the first research on sacred chant was carried out towards the end of the 19th century. Due to the lack of a coherent methodology and the use of predominantly ecclesiastical terminology, these early explorations could not be assimilated to the domain of musicology.

The foundations of the first Romanian school of Byzantine musicology were laid only in 1932, by Reverend Ioan D. Petrescu (1884-1970), an intellectual with a solid musical education acquired at Schola Cantorum in Paris and whose research and working methods caught the eye of scholars, from the West in particular. After 1950, several of Petrescu's disciples developed a strong fascination for this field, by then gradually evolving. Assembled around him were such researchers as Gheorghe Ciobanu (1909-97), also an ethnomusicologist, Marin Ionescu (1909-92), Titus Moisescu (1922-2002), director of Editura Muzicală (the official music

publisher), and clergy members such as Grigore Panțiru (1905-81) and Sebastian Barbu-Bucur (1930-2015). They were among the few researchers of religious music who were members of the Romanian Composers and Musicologists Union, restructured in 1949 and subsequently placed under the authority of the Committee of Art and Culture of the Ideological Directorate of the Romanian Communist Party.

Aware of the potential opportunities that historiography could offer, Byzantine musicologists gave special attention to this aspect of their research. Adopting such a strategy inevitably made them targets of rigorous ideological scrutiny. Maneuvering musicological discourse between the two dominant languages of the communist regime, Marxist-Leninist and nationalist, could not be achieved without compromises. Following the reestablishment of nationalism as a cultural strategy in 1964, Byzantine music scholars were tasked with meeting the regime's anticipations and creating sustainable representations of Romanian historical continuity. Their firm stances and investigations from angles inaccessible to other musicologists brought them substantial accumulations of symbolic capital as well as various benefits: documentary visits in the country and abroad, short-term mobility and, occasionally, scholarships abroad. By thoroughly rejecting adversarial theories, such as the influence of cultural Slavism,² their studies indirectly contributed to strengthening the legitimizing narrative of the governing elite and underscored the distinct *national* character in music. Traditional musicology had been unable to document the existence of a Romanian musical culture before the 17th century, but Byzantine musicologists — most of whom had solid theological studies and were Greek, Slavonic, and ancient musical notations experts — managed to overcome this temporal “handicap”. They have done so by meticulously researching one century at a time, ultimately arguing, based on written documents, for the existence of Romanian music in the 11th century and even earlier. As a result of their research, works on the history of music presented an autochthonous musical art that was at least 1000 years old and thus a unifying element of Romanians in terms of ethnicity and language. Attuned to the set of values of cultural nationalism, the Byzantine musicologists succeeded in ensuring their representativeness within Romanian musicology, to which they also conferred the status of a key discipline for tracing a deeply Romanianized history. It was only through the study of church chant that the antiquity of local music could be satisfactorily demonstrated.

One explanation for Byzantine musicologists embracing a nationalist cultural rhetoric relates to the impossibility of adopting a position of ideological neutrality, given that the regime operated with absolute binary labels, which also applied to the guilt of being passive towards an ideological phenomenon or aspect: non-adherence to Protochronism³ automatically translated as opposing it, neutral views automatically mean anti-nationalist views, etc. Thus, once Protochronist theories had monopolized all fields of culture, musicologists as well as other categories of specialists such as writers or archaeologists became engaged in a vigorous competition to feed this regime-instrumented trend, competing for resources such as important positions, institutional and private privileges, funding for scientific publications, less intense ideological control, etc. The model used by the Power to allocate resources favored those capable of constructing historical and cultural models that could substantiate the idealized past of the country (Verdery, 1994, pp. 70-71). This may explain why, at the turn of 1980s, UCMR was interested in reinforcing its ranks of musicologists with a fresh intake of Byzantine musicologists. They counted on their ability to interpret various sources and to investigate the evolution of the ancient Romanian musical culture. The origins of this heritage were being pushed further and further back, almost to the moment of ethnogenesis in the first centuries of our era.

Byzantine musicologists, a particularly valuable human resource, could therefore contribute to the consolidation of a politically engaged musicology as relevant as archaeology, history or literature studies. Sacred music specialists have decisively contributed to filling the gaps in the history of music through their attempts to prove the existence of original ancient musical practices, uniformly spread throughout the country, indirectly feeding ideological fixations focused on authenticity and genealogy (Tismăneanu, 2014, p. 48). Thus, they had to become carriers of indigenist cultural policies, ostentatiously trumpeting the originality and exceptionalism of local religious music culture, fruits of Romanian creativity.

5. Discussing church music in the early 1950s

Despite the atheistic climate enforced by the regime at the end of the 1940s, discussions about Byzantine chant persisted within the university environment, albeit sporadically and often containing the necessary

ideological clichés. For instance, in his class on the history of Romanian music from 1951, UCMR secretary and State Conservatory professor Zeno Vancea ensured that sacred chant received adequate attention. Although his lectures contained numerous references to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, Vancea boldly explored some themes related to Byzantine music. While completely avoiding ecclesiastical terminology, he employed it carefully, aligning with prevailing political discourse. Talking about Anton Pann (1796/7-1854), Byzantine music composer and performer, Vancea portrayed him as a “church chanter”, but also highlighted his role as a “propagator of folk music” who developed a political program for “the struggle against the feudal order” (Vancea, 1951, p. 40). Pann’s comprehensive efforts were acknowledged as an exceptionally valuable contribution to shaping the culture of the nation.

In 1954, Vancea, now vice president of the Composers Union, along with several other members of the Musicology Bureau, proposed topics on sacred chant for the 1955 work plan of the Romanian Academy. The Musicology Bureau argued for the compilation of a catalog of musical sources that would also include Byzantine music manuscripts, as representing the oldest evidence of indigenous musical culture. The catalog would have served as a reply to the invitation extended by the International Association of Libraries, which aimed to create a repertoire of medieval music sources. However, as the project initiators soon lost interest in Byzantine music, concerns arose regarding the perceived lack of recognition for the antiquity of our country’s musical culture (Proces-verbal nr. 5 [Minute no. 5], 1954, p. 5). From this moment onward, considerable efforts were made to involve sacred chant specialists in cataloging manuscripts found across the country and from abroad. It is likely that this key moment underpins Reverend I.D. Petrescu’s inclusion in the Union starting November 1955 (Dumitrescu, 1998, p. 127). But, despite his remarkable academic qualifications, he was at a disadvantage because of his profession, and he soon had to face hostile reactions.

6. I.D. Petrescu, the priest with a call for musicology

Active participation in the cultural life of the creative unions seemed to be the compulsory professional route both for those recognized as outstanding personalities in a particular field and for those who sought to accumulate personal capital and career advancement. As an exception to these general

trends, reverend I.D. Petrescu, who enjoyed prestige more internationally than locally, had to be persuaded, and insistingly, to join the Composers Union. His admission occurred at the end of 1955, although it was not recorded in any internal document. Musicologist Octavian Lazăr Cosma (b. 1933) recalls that Petrescu was insistently courted by the Union's leaders. In their attempts to convince him, they presented a distorted reality regarding the Party's attitude towards the Church:

How difficult it was to bring among us, at the Union, this scholar who knew ancient notations, who had frequented the ancient libraries of Europe [...] We won him over by telling him that the regime was lenient, whereas it was in fact intransigent and an sworn enemy of the Church. (Cosma, 2021, p. 150)

After the closure of the Academy of Sacred Music in 1948 following the implementation of the education reform of the same year, Petrescu retired into self-imposed isolation (Moisescu, 1999, p. 10; Cosma, 2021, p. 132). Viewing his institutional affiliation as an entry into a system controlled by a regime to which he showed neither admiration nor attachment, Petrescu avoided getting too involved in the work of the Union, although two years before his death he had been appointed honorary president of the Musicology Bureau (Cosma, 2019, p. 477). At any rate, in the first years with the Union, Petrescu was the subject of controversial discussions, fueled by the anti-ecclesiastic attitudes of the representatives of the Power.

In September 1959, during the committee meeting of the Musicology Bureau, the case of Reverend Petrescu — acclaimed as the most prominent Byzantine musicologists in the world at the time and enjoying the recognition of many foreign scholars — was discussed (Stenograma ședinței de comitet [Transcript of the Board Meeting], 1959, p. 28). Union's leader Ion Dumitrescu (1913-96) revealed that he had personally encouraged Reverend Petrescu to undertake the monumental work *Études de paléographie musicale byzantine*, which would be published only in 1967. This scholarly endeavor aimed to shed light on the relationship between Byzantine music and Romanian folk modes. According to Dumitrescu, the challenges of Byzantine chant were captivating the attention of intellectuals worldwide and fueling debate and exploration. Byzantinology issues also held an important position on the UNESCO agenda for science and art. During the Archaeological Congress held in the Netherlands that same year, the representative of the Romanian

People's Republic was approached by attending scholars regarding Reverend Petrescu's groundbreaking work. They suggested gathering a substantial amount in US dollars and Belgian francs to support Petrescu's ongoing research, insisting that the book be officially commissioned and published by UNESCO.

Reverend Petrescu's positive reception in the West stood in stark contrast to the distorted image propagated by "malicious sources within the Union" (Stenograma ședinței de comitet [Transcript of the Board Meeting], p. 29). Dumitrescu himself had faced denunciation from "less esteemed members of the Unions which, because of the emptiness inside their heads and in a destructive spirit" accused him of financially supporting priests, referring to the compensation granted to the musicologists for the submitted studies, which was also granted to reverend Petrescu for his work (Stenograma ședinței de comitet [Transcript of the Board Meeting], pp. 29-30). After receiving complaints, the competent state authorities conducted an inspection of the Union's financial records but found no irregularities. The consequence of this specific event and other similar incidents was the termination of state funding for publishing musicology books. The situation escalated to the point where an official in the state administration exclaimed, "Give me a break with musicology!" and suggested that "in order to get rid of musicologists, only translations should be printed" (Stenograma ședinței de comitet [Transcript of the Board Meeting], 1959, p. 30).

Nevertheless, on November 1, 1960, the Composers Union sent a list containing information about Romanian musicologists to its Russian counterpart in Moscow. Alongside concise biographical information, Petrescu was described as a "reputable Byzantine musicologist" (Către Uniunea Compozitorilor Sovietici [To the Union of Soviet Composers], 1960, p. 191). While the educational backgrounds of other scholars were mentioned, the intentional omission of his theological studies was likely deliberate, as was that of the fact that he was a member of the clergy.

Reverend Petrescu was repeatedly invited to contribute to the Union's editorial projects. His only other work apart from his monumental work on Byzantine musical paleography (1967) was an article in the first 1965 issue of *Studii de muzicologie* [Musicology Studies]. In his works, Petrescu avoided the use of ideological jargon, which had also infiltrated musicology and he consistently approached research in a quasi-academic manner, without mimicking the language of the regime.

7. A Trojan horses and other myths story

While I.D. Petrescu, with his widely recognized erudition, stood out by being insistently courted by the Composers Union, other Byzantine musicologists had to explore alternative paths to join the organization. Until near the end of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej's regime of Stalinist imprint (1948-1965), with a few exceptions, it was almost impossible to discuss the possibility of exploring themes related to sacred music.

Reflecting on the development and spread of Byzantine musicology within the Composers Union, I found the analogy of the Trojan horse from Greek mythology to be particularly fitting, as it aptly describes how specialists were able to penetrate this politically controlled structure. Initially, musicologists such as Gheorghe Ciobanu and Titus Moisescu engaged in research on other topics, including folklore and classical music. As central policies began to increasingly emphasize ancient Romanian cultural assets, musicologists underwent a spectacular metamorphosis, becoming dedicated researchers of the sacred music phenomenon. Concurrently, other specialists, like Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, cleverly disguised their research on church chant as investigations into early music, gradually expanding the religious vocabulary while still within the limits of ideological tolerance. To ensure their relevance in such a hostile environment, I.D. Petrescu's successors had to fuel the founding myth of Dacian lineage and other historical imaginaries produced by the Power, emphasizing in particular what historian Lucian Boia calls the "antiquity – unity – continuity triad" (Boia, 2018, p. 9).

Passionate researchers didn't waste the opportunity to write about sacred chant, even within the confines of an ideologically controlled discourse. By the middle of 1963, the new generation of musicologists began to address certain aspects of Byzantine music, articulating them in an appropriate language. At the first meeting of the Union's Bureau of Musicology in June 1963, one such young musicologist-researcher was Stelian Bucur or Sebastian Barbu-Bucur,⁴ with his paper "Early Romanian Music in Oriental Notation" (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de lucru [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1963, June 6, p. 112). Although Bucur was not yet officially a member of the Composers Union, he was, judging by the formidable disguise of the contents under the cover of a catchy title, surprisingly familiar with the ideological jargon used in the organization. Despite his substantial contributions to the development of the field and perhaps because he was ordained by the Church as deacon, Sebastian

Barbu-Bucur was accepted as a candidate member only in November 1970.

Equipped with appropriate resources to uphold the official narrative of uniqueness and continuity, Byzantine musicology started to make headway within the Union. Its significance was perceived in the context of the increasing necessity to write a history of Romanian music that would satisfy the Party's ideological expectations. This issue was raised for discussion in multiple sessions of the Musicology Bureau throughout 1963. Considering that the earliest written documents attesting to the existence of musical practice on Romanian land appeared only in the 17th century, Byzantine musicology was tasked with bridging the historical voids through music manuscripts, whether Romanian or Greek, found in various libraries and monasteries.

Mainly concerned until then with ethnomusicology, Gheorghe Ciobanu, graduate of theological studies and disciple of I.D. Petrescu (Moisescu, 1999, p. 110), took advantage of the favorable conjuncture and turned his attention to sacred chant. A skilled connoisseur of Byzantine music and leveraging the advantage provided by the respectable status he already enjoyed as an ethnomusicologist, at the June 20, 1963 meeting he requested approval for travel expenses for a research trip to the study in the libraries of monasteries in northern Moldavia. The Bureau regarded this initiative as praiseworthy, maintaining that "the materials in these libraries are of particular importance for *The History of Romanian Music*" (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de lucru [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1963, June 20, p. 118). Five months later, the Bureau took note of Ciobanu's work report and concluded that the amount allocated "was properly spent" (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de lucru [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1963, November 21, p. 154). Motivated by the positive reception of his undertaking, in 1964 Ciobanu started invoking at the Bureau's meetings the importance of studying Byzantine music manuscripts, arguing that in order to support musicology "we must give broad support and help to all" (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de organizare [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1964, February 29, p. 3). Drawing upon his recent research experience in the field, he attempted to persuade the Bureau about the existence of a large quantity of "ancient manuscripts, written on Romanian land, that remain undeciphered and unexplored" (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de organizare [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1964, February 29, p. 3). Boldly, Ciobanu also offered

to organize a course in Byzantine notation at the Union in the autumn of the same year, with the aim of researching old manuscripts.

Acknowledging the existence of some lacunae in the history of Romanian music, the work plan of 1964 included a seminar on musical culture until the end of the 18th century. As Ciobanu intended to address the issue of Byzantine music, he emphasized, albeit with caution, that the material should be reviewed in advance. His prudent attitude was due to the increased political control over the Union. In April, a surprising announcement came. The State Committee for Culture and Art appointed an observer, granting him permanent participation in the Union's meetings. In the presence of this observer, perceived as a man of the regime, defensive actions were swift to emerge. The ever-cautious Gheorghe Ciobanu wisely requested that the meeting agenda be shared in advance to facilitate active participation in analyzing and resolving various issues (Procesul-verbal al ședinței Biroului [Minutes of the Meeting], 1964, April 13, p. 5).

8. Shaping the narrative and purpose of Byzantine musicology

Starting from the end of 1964, a series of events would propel Byzantine musicology as one of the most significant cultural fields, validating its practitioners as key researchers in the eyes of the regime. On the agenda of the last meeting of December 1964 was the discussion regarding the invitation addressed to Romanian musicologists to participate in the Bydgoszcz Early Music Festival (Poland) in 1966. Members of the Musicology Bureau emphasized that the Romanian delegation had to consist of well-trained individuals with historical expertise, as a symposium on Byzantine music was scheduled after the festival. During this event it was crucial to demonstrate that Byzantine music had influenced not only Slavic but also Romanian music, countering any potential innuendos about the country's cultural or historical desynchronization or inferiority. Gheorghe Ciobanu, one of the three musicologists selected to participate, presented a paper on "Byzantine Musical Culture in Romania from the 15th to the 18th Century", whose analysis by the Musicology Bureau in June 1965 is the only one recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Discussions indicate a strong sharing of ideological alignment within the Union. The way scientific discourse was recalibrated illustrates the musicologists' zeal and experience in such practices. One of the members was resolute

in emphasizing the uniqueness of Byzantine musical culture. In his opinion, since some monasteries in northern Moldavia distinguished by their universally recognized unique architecture, the existence of an equally unique musical culture was self-evident. At such an event as the Bydgoszcz Early Music Festival, promoting the country was crucial, hence it was advisable that it be introduced as “Romania”, and not “Romanian People’s Republic”. In case of lacking documents to support certain claims, “their absence should be downplayed, not emphasized” (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de lucru [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1965, June 11, p. 97). Addressing another member’s opinion that the paper would reveal how inefficient Romanian musical culture was, the Secretary of the Union recommended that Ciobanu’s report show greater optimism and proposing that “instead of using negations, affirmative statements should prevail in describing phenomena” (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de lucru [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1965, June 11, p. 98). A few days later, the reports for the festival in Bydgoszcz had been corrected, and the Musicology Bureau convened once again to acknowledge the modifications.

Gheorghe Ciobanu’s focus on the study of sacred music was particularly timely, given the Union’s lack of specialists in this area. The strict political control during the Dej regime had deterred all possible substantial contributions to this field. It was only during Nicolae Ceaușescu’s dictatorship (1965-89), with its apparent ideological relaxation, the opening towards the West and the need to combat the tendencies of neighboring socialist states to appropriate national assets, that a new generation of Byzantine musicologists was activated, with Ciobanu as its uncontested leader. In a report on musicological activity and the problems it faces, dated April 1966, in which it was stated that “the musicologist is a responsible militant, essential on the front of our socialist ideals-based music” (Probleme actuale ale activității muzicologice [Musicological Activity Today and the Problems it Faces], 1966, f. 119), such Byzantinology researchers as I.D. Petrescu and Nicolae Lungu (1900-1993) were recognized as active members of the Musicology Bureau. The work of the Bureau was praised, emphasizing the efforts made to apply Marxist-Leninist principles to the study of music. In spite of the efficiency of the methods, there was a major problem: too little was known about Romanian music up to the end of the 18th century, which could leave the undesirable impression that there had been no professional musical production before that time. For this reason, the Union initiated a nationwide exploration of monastery archives and libraries, a venture that

promised significant contributions to the annals of Romanian music. The scarcity of experts in sacred music documents was a pressing concern, as their disappearance would permanently hinder the development of a comprehensive history of indigenous music.

One of the important sectors of Romanian musical reality from the past - Byzantine music - is about to be almost impossible to investigate. Several Romanian personalities of the older generation showed interest in Byzantinology. Today, however, there is no such connoisseur or specialist among the younger generation. The lack of a musicology section in education that, among other things, would include Byzantinology as a basic discipline or as a specialization has led to this dire situation, which, if not urgently corrected, may cause irreversible damage to the elaboration of the history of Romanian music. We must therefore take advantage of those few Byzantinology scholars who can still pass on their knowledge to the younger generations. Otherwise we will have to learn Byzantinology from foreigners (Germans, French) or to import Byzantine musicologists. (Probleme actuale ale activității muzicologice [Musicological Activity Today and the Problems it Faces], 1966, f. 120)

Byzantine musicologists strengthened their position by advocating the safeguarding of active specialists, fostering knowledge transfer across generations and an emphasis of how failure thereof would inevitably lead to the undesirable influx of foreign expertise. These arguments would soon yield the intended outcomes.

A musicological debate was planned for the end of 1966 at the Composers Union Committee. One of the key topics was Byzantinology, which had started to pique the curiosity of musicologists and scholars through the exploration and dissemination of anonymous works and those of notable composers from the past. The religious origins and purposes of the discovered manuscripts and chants were often overlooked, incorporated instead into the national cultural heritage. The analysis of these hymns was part of a strategy to showcase the richness of ancient Romanian music to the world. Seizing this advantageous moment, Ciobanu proposed, in the meeting of November, 3, three research areas in old Romanian music: folklore, Byzantine and Gregorian music, and secular music creation. He also offered once again to give an introductory course in Byzantine music for Union members, an unprecedented move in the political climate of the time, and required the Union management's approval.⁵ Management representative Vasile Tomescu appreciated the

initiative “to reinforce the pool of musicologists and to specialize in fields that are no longer viable.” (Procesul-verbal al ședinței de lucru [Minutes of the Working Meeting], 1966, November 3, p. 143).

That Byzantine musicology could constitute a formidable and profitable research route into the country’s musical past was also demonstrated by the success of the Romanian specialists at the Early Music Festival in Poland. After the event, the state-controlled Romanian press lavishly praised the three musicologists who proved the existence of a musical culture “of high compositional level in eras considered ‘blank’ in our music history” (Cosma, 1966, p. 5). The Bydgoszcz festival had thus become one of the international stages where Romanians could showcase the splendors of their ancient musical heritage, especially the one ecclesiastical.

Following that remarkable triumph, efforts to promote the involvement of Byzantine musicologists in international conferences were significantly amplified as the West was generously opening itself to these pioneers who promised to unearth a fabulous history of ancient Romanian music. In the fall of 1967, the International Congress on Byzantine and Eastern Liturgical Music was to be held in Rome. As early as February, the members of the Musicology Bureau were proposing the country’s participation in the scientific event, suggesting Gheorghe Ciobanu as the most suitable representative. His attendance was also encouraged for other reasons. After a long time, I.D. Petrescu’s work *Etudes de paléographie musicale byzantine* had been published that very year by Editura Muzicală and had already been sent abroad. As Petrescu’s perspective sometimes conflicted with the Western Byzantine musicologists’ approach, in the eventuality of a debate Ciobanu had to promptly intervene with a patriotic position. The Bureau considered it “absolutely necessary” for musicology to assert itself in an international session in the field of Byzantine musicology, “in which our country has a rich artistic and scientific tradition” (Extras din procesul-verbal [Extract from the Minutes], 1967, February 2, p. 122). Interestingly, in the records of this meeting, as in most other cases, the parties involved are depersonalized, merely playing the appointed ideological role. Proposals and decisions are taken unanimously by the entire Bureau, thus by the institution, not by a particular member, and the emphasis in this instance is placed on the country’s participation, while the specialist is only a minor character. Placing Ciobanu behind the nation-state emphasized the latter’s preeminence in the system, the former being nothing but an element of the socialist machine. Presumably, an appeal to the state and to UCMR as an organization, the most sacred

political structures of the regime, together with the collective assumption of ideas or decisions, were the ingredients for success in delicate matters, as well as safety precautions in case of backlash from censors.

9. Adjusting to the increased political control

The Union unanimously appreciated Ciobanu's diligent efforts in documenting the existence of a Romanian music during periods devoid of other evidence. However, during the General Assembly of Composers and Musicologists in December 1968, at which General Secretary of the Communist Party Nicolae Ceaușescu also participated, Ciobanu focused his speech solely on accomplishments in the field of ethnomusicology, omitting the significant findings in Byzantine musicology ("Adunarea generală a compozitorilor și muzicologilor" [General Assembly of Composers and Musicologists], 1969, pp. 2-3). The presence of the "supreme leader" among Romanian musicologists was a confirmation of the regime's strict control of the creative unions.

Starting from the second half of 1971, Romanian culture had to submit to an increasingly firm political control. Nicolae Ceaușescu's speeches of July 6 and 9, 1971, known as the "July Theses", redefined the expectations of the regime towards cultural producers, including musicologists. In the spirit of a neo-Stalinism based on a symbolic-ideological mode of control, book censorship resumed, and intellectual production was required to support the cultural vision promoted from the top (Verdery, 1994, p. 81).

In his July speeches, Ceaușescu emphasized the role of the Party in coordinating all levels of social life:

When we speak of the role of the Party as the leading force in all social activity, we must not neglect education, literature, art, music, science, or any other sector, because, as we have already pointed out, we are looking at the problem of building socialist society not only from the point of view of its material basis, but in its general context, encompassing all aspects of social, material and spiritual life; therefore, the Party's strength, its leaders, must be felt in all spheres of activity. It is necessary that this question be well clarified, theoretically and ideologically, so that there can be no more ambiguity. It is equally necessary that there should be full understanding of the role of the state, because the working-class state has the right to interfere in literature, in the plastic arts, in music, and to admit only what it considers to be in keeping with socialism, with the interests of our socialist

fatherland. This is the role of the state in society, and it will be so until the state disappears! (Ceaușescu, 1971, p. 51)

As for the Composers Union, resistance to the new cultural directions imposed by the regime was minimal, in contrast to the Writers Union, which, realizing the absurdity of such measures as taken following the July theses, engaged in protest actions by various means, becoming an “oppositionist barricade” and attracting significant repercussions (Deletant, 2010, p. 185).

Indeed, ideological pressure was making itself increasingly felt within the Union. In March 1972, for example, the Romanian presence at the Bydgoszcz Festival fell under discussion. To obtain approval for the concert program, which also included sacred music, the members of the Bureau proposed that the ensembles prepare an audition to be attended by a representative of the Council of Socialist Culture and Education⁶ (Proces-verbal [Minute], 1972, March 29, p. 76).

However, in May 1972, the proposals for the first issue of the volume *Izvoare ale muzicii românești* [Sources of Romanian Music] grouped several titles under the topic *Church Chant*, which meant that Byzantine musicology was to play an equally important role in the new cultural climate. A particularly interesting episode that took place during the meeting of the Musicology Bureau on June 7, 1972 is worth mentioning. The minute of the meeting records a plea for exploiting religious music resources through audio recording. This daring initiative enjoyed the support of the Bureau members, who strove to construct an argumentative discourse in the purest ideological jargon. The attempt to record sacred chant, even if only for documentary purposes, was indeed bold, and only explicable by the role that Byzantine musicology played in consolidating cultural symbols. Arguments were of the most diverse kind: Byzantine music, inherited from an exceptional ancient culture, contributed significantly to understanding the evolution of Romanian music; the scarcity of specialists in the theory and interpretation of this music was a cause for deep concern, and it was therefore necessary to record pieces for posterity, to be used exclusively for documentation.

To achieve a decisive win, the initiators of the project had dressed up sacred music as ideological music:

Considering the importance of the Byzantine music heritage for the study of the overall evolution of Romanian folk music, as well as of art music, the

need for scientific knowledge of the appropriate interpretation in terms of musical structure, as well as the aesthetic function and ideological content, specific to this field of our music in the past, appears imperative, fully justified. [...] the recorded material will be used exclusively by specialists, with the approval of the management of the Composers Union, based on the recommendations of the Musicology Bureau (Proces-verbal [Minute], 1972, June 7, pp. 112-113).

Reviewing the proposal through the lens of Cornelia Ilie's observations (1998), it becomes clear that the strategic use of key words such as "imperative", "fully justified", "necessary" or "absolutely mandatory", noted in the meeting records (pp. 112-113), confirms the existence of a restrictive, coercive factor which required firm justifications for any action that could be interpreted as undermining the regime's prescriptions or as subversive activities. The frequent use of ideologically charged language suggests that the proposed theme was sensitive and demanded careful linguistic framing. The voluntary transfer of control from the project proponents to the management structure, by restricting and regulating access to records, are further indicators of active censorship, which called for absolute control over cultural resources and productions.

10. The problem of the three shortcomings

Despite such tightening grip, in early 1974 Ciobanu proposed raising the number of volumes on Byzantine music in the collection *Izvoare ale muzicii românești* to seven. He was nominated by the Bureau to edit the collection as the coordinator of the editorial team. Ciobanu's strategy to gain complete control over the series was based on portraying the editorial plan as a complex problem. The plan would only work if the solution was adopted to address several interrelated shortcomings. The first was the expectation that the first volume in the collection once launched, the others would have to follow periodically, something which was deemed "of particular importance" (Ciobanu, 1974, f. 92). The second shortcoming highlighted the need to put in a substantial amount of energy in the production of the volumes, especially those on Byzantine music, something which demanded "great effort" (f. 92). Lastly, there was a recurring problem: human resources. These resources were not only

insufficient and aging, but also impossible to expand. It mostly consisted of specialists “whose days were numbered”:

Currently, there are - as it is known - only four specialists in this field in the country: myself, Gr[igore] Pañțiru, Marin Ionescu and Sebastian Barbu Bucur. Of these, three are retired, so people whose days are somewhat numbered. For the time being, I do not foresee the involvement of other people in this work, all the more so since - within the current analytical program - our specialized education cannot train medieval musicologists, nor can this profession be tempting as long as no suitable jobs are provided. This could have been done by the Institute of Art History, where I tried to train a few professionals, but they refused - for reasons difficult to understand - to set up a team of two people to devote themselves to the study of medieval Romanian musical culture (Ciobanu, 1974, f. 92).

Ciobanu’s solution to satisfactorily solve the three shortcomings was to unite under his coordination “experience and skills” (f. 92). The reason behind the representation of the four scholars as the only and last connoisseurs of the methods of analyzing medieval music manuscripts was likely the need to overemphasize their importance and relevance for Romanian musicology in order to regain symbolic capital. Ciobanu lastly played the nationalism card, reminding in passing that Hungarian musicologists had already published a volume on 12th-century sacred music from Romania. The mention of this foreign achievement was probably meant as a way to exploit the anti-Magyar sentiments and attitudes fueled by the constant tensions and dissensions between the two states (Verdery, 1994, p. 210). The concluding sentence was intended to secure the desired result by appealing to the sensitive mechanisms of pride, a nation’s and that of his fellow musicologists: “It would be a pity to give credence to the unjust opinion that Romanian musicology is as good as non-existent” (Ciobanu, 1974, f. 95). While consulting the extracts of the meetings containing Ciobanu’s proposals, Union leader Ion Dumitrescu noted on the margin of a document: “I must have an in-person discussion with the enthusiasts!” (Extras din procesele-verbale [Extract from the minutes], 1974, f. 90). The note could mean one of two things: either that the enormous amount of work would have been a major impediment to the successful achievement of the rather optimistic editorial plan, or, more likely, that the enthusiasm over the possibility of publishing a large number of volumes of church music pushed the proponents to exceed the limits tolerated by the regime.

11. New horizons

In December 1974, a new Byzantine musicologist “in disguise” was welcomed into the Union: Titus Moisescu, director of Editura Muzicală (1957-85), also a Theology graduate, acquainted with Byzantine musicology following the three years he had spent working on Reverend Petrescu’s book (between 1964 and 1967), his prolonged interaction with the author having contributed decisively to his knowledge of the intricacies of old church music (Catrina, 2003, p. 110). Moisescu had edited several volumes of musicology, but had not yet published anything on sacred music, which is why his reorientation towards Byzantine musicology was somehow surprising. Only five days after he had applied for admission as a probationary member, Moisescu was greeted with praise into the Union, his work described as “increasingly laborious and diverse” (Proces-verbal [Minute], 1974, December 18, p. 70). Previously working as an editor, Moisescu had risen above his professional status to the point of being recognized as a competent, passionate and conscientious researcher, thus reflecting the idealized image of the “multilaterally developed” working man. Through his key position at Editura Muzicală, Moisescu was able to support the publication of volumes on Byzantine music and musicology, becoming himself a remarkable Byzantine musicologist and joining what he later called the “group of five” (Moisescu, 1999, p. 8).

The following year, at the first meeting of the Musicology Bureau in March 1975, Sebastian Bucur was unanimously accepted as a full member of the Union, strengthening the position of Byzantine musicologists within the institution (Proces-verbal [Minute], 1975, March 5, p. 92). This inclusion of specialists was significant, especially in light of the measures dictated by the communist regime towards the end of the year to emphasize the importance of the indigenous musical past.

An important discussion on the future of Byzantine musicology took place during the meeting of the Musicology Bureau on May 30, 1975. On the agenda was the approval of a document by musicologist Octavian Lazăr Cosma on the exploitation of the resources of medieval music, of Byzantine chant in particular. The actions to be initiated by the Bureau were part of the measures approved by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. The first measure seemed to be in response to Ciobanu’s proposal for the content of the series *Izvoare ale muzicii românești*. The collection, which was to be called *Fontes musicae daco-romanae*, imitating the nominal model used by fellow

archaeologists about a decade earlier⁷, would have comprised as many as 11 volumes on Byzantine music, organized into two categories, *Documenta* and *Transcripta*. In addition to the publication of the books by Editura Muzicală and Editura Academiei, the collaboration was recommended with prestigious western publishers such as Bärenreiter Verlag, in order to achieve “propagandistic and economic” advantages (Proces-verbal [Minute], 1975, May 30, p. 126). Secondly, record label Electrecord was to support efforts to publish “masterpieces of medieval Romanian music” by producing 14 audio recordings, ten of which had religious content (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, May 30, p. 126). Other measures included organizing public events to promote ancient music, compiling a catalogue of musical manuscripts, facilitating the travel of musicologists for research in Romania and abroad, organizing musicology symposia or encouraging the participation of Romanian specialists in dedicated events abroad. Of major importance was the proposal to train future specialists in Byzantine and Gregorian sacred music at the Conservatory, as well as to offer young researchers with grants to such leading student cities London, Copenhagen or Paris. Equally significant was the idea of making documentary films on medieval religious music, which would feature Byzantine musical manuscripts from the time of Stephen the Great (ruler of Moldavia between 1457 and 1504) or Constantin Brâncoveanu (ruler of Wallachia between 1688 and 1714). The last proposed measures completed what turned out to be an unexpectedly favorable plan for the field of sacred chant, suggesting the publication of studies and articles in various Party-controlled periodicals, to emphasize “the original Romanian contribution to the creation and development of the medieval and classical musical heritage in our fatherland” (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, May 30, p. 129). It was also intended to produce reviews of a Bulgarian musicology book, which were to demonstrate “scientifically the abusive nature of the appropriation of our manuscripts” (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, May 30, p. 129). Additionally, it was recommended that foreign researchers should be prohibited from photographing or studying medieval manuscripts and documents in libraries and other cultural institutions. Exemptions required “very special approvals from the authorities” (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, May 30, p. 129). The prohibition also impacted monasteries and churches, which meant that the subordination of Church bodies to the state was self-evident.

Although the importance of their field was growing, Byzantine musicologists were not allowed to overstep certain limits, especially

when sensitive political matters were at stake. For example, the Institute of Art History in Moscow had invited Sebastian Barbu-Bucur to publish his research on a Byzantine hymn dedicated to Tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725). In reviewing the study for approval, members of the Musicology Bureau noted that Barbu-Bucur's praise of the Russian ruler was exaggerated, criticizing the author for a non-scientifically grounded investigation and his concessions to "praiseful conceptions, inconsistent with historical truth" (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, July 2, p. 139). Barbu-Bucur was consequently asked to leave out the historical part of the study altogether and to discuss only music.

Still, when the cultural heritage of the fatherland had to be defended abroad, Byzantine musicologists were expected to be experts on history and skilled in debate. In October 1975, the Bureau discussed the Bydgoszcz Early Music Festival, noting with satisfaction that the three Romanian presentations on Byzantine chant, which supported the idea of the "personality and originality of Romanian music", had been "of real interest" (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, October 9, p. 144). The Polish festival had become an arena for clashes of ideas and nationalist claims:

The confrontations of ideas prove that musicologists from neighboring states are always using musical documents from our country, which they present as documents specific to their country, trying to discredit Romanian music. (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, October 9, p. 144)

The "neighboring countries" were probably Bulgaria and Hungary, communist states whose cultural agenda also sought to produce symbolic values, even if this meant resorting to appropriating the heritage of other nations. To counteract the effects of such behaviors that would diminish the symbolic capital carefully managed by the regime, the Bureau proposed an increase of Romanian participation in international scientific events and the elaboration of studies, "the Romanian reply to the very tendentious theses of some foreign musicologists" (Proces-verbal [Minutes], 1975, October, 9, p. 144). The need was also emphasized to publish Gheorghe Ciobanu's review of a musicology book by Bulgarian musicologists who had presented Romanian manuscripts as part of their own culture. For maximum visibility, bilingual publication in Romanian and French was recommended. Once again, Byzantine musicology was called to defend national heritage and honor. The regime's aversion to such foreign attempts

as mentioned strengthened the position of Byzantine musicologists as indispensable pawns in the Power's cultural games.

12. Controlling the discourse in the dialogue with the third-party partners

As a comprehensive national strategy was developed for managing cultural assets, multiple institutions were called upon to actively support the Party's. To extensively document Romanian musical manuscripts, both within the country and abroad, an entire apparatus had to be set in motion. One of the intended partners was the Church. To establish a successful dialogue, Union management chose a temporarily moderate tone. This unconventional approach meant changing the direction of censorship via the suppression of ideological language and the amplification of church terminology. The opening phrase of Union president Petre Brâncuși's February 1978 letter to the Patriarch, a mention of how the Union's "concerns [were] aligned with the ideological program of the Party" (Brâncuși, 1978, f. 64), was suppressed. Brâncuși likely realized that suggesting any political involvement when communicating with the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church might have been imprudent, as it could be insulting. Extra precaution was taken to remove the term "secular", as it contrasted with the overall tone of the letter. The goal was to utilize the resources and network of the Church to send Sebastian Barbu-Bucur to abroad to Paris, London, Rome, and especially Mount Athos, to recover the estranged manuscripts in the form of microfilms, photocopies, or xerographs and restore them to the Romanian cultural heritage. It was necessary to properly acknowledge and promote all musical collections created in the country, „taking into account the efforts made to incorporate such values into foreign cultural contexts" (Brâncuși, 1978, f. 64).

Union members, including Byzantine musicologists, had become experienced in managing the discourse on sacred chant and in making various content fit the ideological frame, which proved to be very useful in shaping the outcome of the official meeting on May 1981 with Bydgoszcz Festival director Andrej Szwalbe (1923-2002). On his way back from Bulgaria, Szwalbe stopped in Bucharest to present to Union representatives the next festival's themes related to Byzantine music. The proposed topics however emphasized the Slavic cultural dimension of European music, a perspective likely favored by Bulgarian musicologists but one that

Romanians wanted to distance themselves from. Following discussions with the Union's management and several musicologists, Szwalbe accepted the following changes: instead of "Byzantine Music within the Culture of Slavic Peoples", the title for the festival's first section would be "Byzantine Music within the Culture of Southeastern European Peoples." Similarly, the title of second section was changed from "The Influence of Slavic Folk Music on the West through Byzantine Culture" to "East-West Interaction in the Field of Byzantine Culture." Union representatives managed to avoid the unwanted idea of a possible emanation of Romanian culture from the Slavic, especially since Romanian Byzantine musicologists "had the opportunity to present to musicians from all over the world the results of the work of putting forward our cultural heritage in this field, highlighting the continuity and originality of the musical culture in our homeland" (Tomescu, 1981, pp. 1-2).

13. Censorship and control, between ideological tools and professional duty

Despite the intensification of ideological control, Romanian works on church chant began to gain more support for publication. Moreover, Byzantine musicologists were included starting in 1977 as part of the group appointed to write a treatise on the history of Romanian music, meant to be a propaganda work destined to foreign audiences. By 1978, the first volume had already been drafted in collaboration with the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, and was ready for print in 1985. Seeing that in September 1980 many of the contributors had either not yet turned in their work or had opted out, the layout of the treatise underwent a transformation, incorporating further studies on sacred chant.

The foreword contained substantial passages from Nicolae Ceaușescu, whose reflections on various topics had become aphorisms adorning any scientific publication. Byzantine musicologists' contribution, cleansed of any potentially subversive elements, were fully justified by the unprecedented editorial initiative, as their authors were assimilated to "a large group of specialists" who had dedicated themselves "with exemplary patriotism to the work of bringing to light the eloquent testimonies on the musicality of the Romanian people, on the continuity and originality of their forms of expression" (Prefață [Foreword], 1985, p. 3). Indeed, patriotism and nationalism had been displayed almost ostentatiously in

the studies on sacred music, which followed a standard narrative path, often preceded by the invocation of the historical and linguistic theses endorsed by the Power.

From the papers on sacred music, those by Sebastian Barbu-Bucur and Gheorghe Ciobanu provide valuable insight into ideological control, as they have been preserved in two versions, pre- and post-censorship.

In Sebastian Barbu-Bucur's paper, the word "church" was typically removed, although this measure was inconsistently applied. Thus, the expression "Romanian church music", amputated of its primary feature, became "Romanian music" (Barbu-Bucur, n.d. p. 392). Phrases like "the Orthodox Church" or "the Holy Spirit" (p. 395) did not fare well with the approved discourse and were therefore canceled. Even the term "pravoslavnic" (p. 397) (Orthodox), was forbidden. The phrase "New Testament" was also underlined as a precaution. Hymns such as the Trisagion, „As Many as Have been Baptized into Christ", and „Of Thy Mystical Supper" were conveniently grouped under „and other hymns" (p. 398). Occasionally, the reviewer expressed regret over excluding certain passages that touched on "religious and moral precepts", writing on the margin of the paper: "Sorry!" (p. 410). On the topic of the translation of sacred chants, the more suitable term "Romanianization" rather than "nationalization" (pp. 388, 389) was used. When an attempt was made to reconcile the two terms, the meaning of the concerned phrase changed: the "Romanianization of the chants", initially defined as "the action of translating or adapting the Greek church melodies to the Romanian text, adjusting them to the nature and taste of our people so as to make them easier to understand and accept, that is, *their appropriation*" [italics mine], became "*their integration* [italics mine] into the national culture" (p. 391). By this approach, the reader was assured that the translated church chants, thus "Romanianized," did not harbor subversive elements, as they were integrated into the much-praised national culture.

Ciobanu's studies had gone through a fairly serious revision, too. The nationalist language flourished after each correction, producing doubtful assertions. The reviewer had decided that the term "proto-Romanians" could be replaced with "Romanians" or even with "our people." "Former Dacia" became "old Dacia" to emphasize the age of the Romanian people (Ciobanu, n.d.-a, pp. 305-309). "Christian products" were still "products", but a quote containing references to a "Christ-loving" ruler had been completely removed and its replacement with a facsimile from the manuscript was recommended (Ciobanu, n.d.-b, p. 334). As a

punishment for their audacity of claiming Romanian manuscripts as part of their own culture, references to the works of Bulgarian musicologists were excised. In obeying their colleague's suggestions, Byzantine musicologists had to adapt their papers accordingly. From titles to contents, they were reconfigured to align with the agreed-upon discourse. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur's paper, initially titled „The Process of Romanianization of Chants”, in 1985 version was reformulated with a commendable title: “The Action of ‘Romanianization’ of Worship Chants and its Social-Patriotic Determinations”, while, Gheorghe Ciobanu's study of “The Adoption of Byzantine Music as Worship Music,” became “Byzantine Worship Music, a Way of Expressing National Cultural Values” (Sumar [Summary], 1985, p. 6).

Their articles already heavily censored, the two Byzantine musicologists were also requested to evaluate various works on sacred music by musicologists with no expertise in the field. The respect that Byzantine musicology gained in a few decades had led to an interesting publishing practice which meant that there was hardly any writing on music history that did not at least mention sacred music. To comply with the ideological guidelines of the Party, such outside musicologists showed little regard for scientific facts, sometimes making statements impossible to prove, even ridiculous. As the most suitable experts to recommend research for publication or not, Ciobanu and Barbu-Bucur took their roles very seriously: should distortions and speculations be extreme and therefore likely to discredit their discipline, they would advise against their publishing.

For instance, probably due to the friendship between the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Asian dictatorships, one researcher attempted to establish connections between Byzantine and Chinese music. His work was dismissed as unscientific by Ciobanu (Extras din procesul-verbal [Extract from the Minutes], 1970, p. 89). Another musicologist compiled around 1989 a paper on *Muzică Sacră* [Sacred Music] and translated it into Italian, probably with the aim to make it accessible to foreign readers. The author's statements rigorously met the ideological expectations of the Party. Sacred music “claimed its origins in the Thracian ethos, Thracian-Greek, Thracian-Roman and Thracian-Greek-Roman symbioses, with deep roots extended into the common background of older origins in the Persian-Arabic world up to the Babylonian musical culture and Hebrew psalmody” (Barbu-Bucur, 1990, p. 16). The researcher was also keen to look at the name of a prominent composer of Byzantine music through

a nationalistic lens. Thus, he maintained that late 13th-early 14th century composer and reformer St. John Koukouzeles (Ιωάννης Κουκουζέλης in Greek) lived sometime between the 4th and the 8th century. In his attempt to build him a Romanian identity, he insisted that Koukouzeles' name was a Wallachian one, descended from the ancient lineage of the autochthonous Thracian-Romans, arguing that the etymon *κουκου* corresponds to "a smaller cuckoo bird" in Romanian (Barbu-Bucur, 1990, p. 18). After reviewing the paper, Sebastian Barbu-Bucur advised against its publication. However, the trends of genealogical appropriation of prominent church musicians continued until 1989.

Equally persistent was the censorship, which restricted and shaped the scientific discourse for nearly four decades, promoting surrogates more ideologically suitable. Although times changed, the destiny of Byzantine musicology at the beginning of the third millennium seemed even grimmer for those researchers who survived the regime. A decade after the fall of communism, Titus Moisescu, while highlighting the field's achievements up to 1989, identified new constraints:

In that time of ideological restrictions, while I was working with Editura Muzicală, we printed more works on religion than in the post-communist period, when spiritual and cultural freedom became a reality. If in the first stage we were constrained by a harmful, disgusting ideology, in this second one the oppression has to do with material constraints, in a world where money dominates and determines cultural acts. It is a painful paradox for anyone wanting to do something good in the field of Romanian spirituality. (Catrina, 2003, p. 114)

14. Conclusion

The newly-discovered documents from the archives of the Composers and Musicologists Union reveal how Byzantine musicology-related issues were handled during totalitarianism. Experts joining Reverend I.D. Petrescu in his work were able to continue their research, as brief periods of ideological relaxation after 1964 allowed them greater freedom of action. However, authors of studies on sacred chant were constantly told how to shape their discourse within the boundaries imposed by the communist regime, their writings able to fuel the cultural ideas as endorsed by the authorities. Ideological compliance provided researchers with institutional support, access to hard-to-reach sources, and a respectable

professional status. The quantity of literature by Romanian Byzantine musicologists during communism is extraordinary, with thousands of pages of musicological analyses, musical transcriptions, and facsimile reproductions. In spite of the many documents analysed, I found that, in most cases, one can merely observe the effects of censorship and control on the field, without being able to identify the person actually responsible for the process. Under the protection of institutional anonymity and mandatory unanimous consent, the censors of religious discourse as used by Byzantine musicologists can only very rarely, if ever, be established. Within the Union, censorship appears as a general practice while self-censorship, dictated by the circumstances, cultivated across generations, and extremely difficult to detect, is often equally, if not more effective, in avoiding unwanted attention.

Contemporary readers of works on Byzantine chant elaborated during communism must be aware that behind the excessive patriotic enthusiasm and the obsession over Romanian specificity and originality lies the need to conform to a Procrustean doctrinal template from which it was almost impossible for cultural productions to escape. Only after disregarding the fabricated and politically influenced layers of the discourse will they recognize the actual value of the contributions of sacred music scholars. Leaving aside the ideological distortion of the narrative, and taking into account their effective research methods, extensive critical apparatus, and interdisciplinary approaches, the investigations of these specialists remain unquestionably decisive for the development of Byzantine musicology.

Endnotes

- 1 See <https://www.unmb.ro/cercetare/proiecte/constructii-muzicale-ale-nationalismului-efecte-ale-ideologiei-nationaliste-asupra-educatiei-si-culturii-muzicale-in-romania-comunista/> and <https://www.unmb.ro/cercetare/proiecte/controlul-muzicii-efecte-si-consecinte-ale-institutiei-cenzurii-asupra-educatiei-si-culturii-muzicale-in-romania-celor-trei-dictaturi-din-secolul-xx-carlista-antonesciana-si-comunista/>.
- 2 For almost two decades (1966-1980), Romanian Byzantine musicologists tried to refute the claims of their Bulgarian counterparts, who were constantly appropriating autochthonous composers and locally produced manuscripts.
- 3 Intensely debated in the 1980s and 1990s, protochronism asserted that the most important events in Western Europe and beyond had been anticipated by Romanian achievements (Verdery, 1994).
- 4 At the time, Sebastian Barbu-Bucur was a former monk, expelled from the monastery in 1959 under decree 410. His application for admission to the Union had been discussed twice before, at the meeting of January 17, 1968, and again on June 17, 1970. Gheorghe Ciobanu was in charge of drafting the first admission report. This was supposed to be a simple bureaucratic act, but the report was late in coming. Barbu-Bucur was accepted as a candidate member only two years later, and not during a Bureau meeting, but on the occasion of the meeting of the Union's board in the presence of all the members in Bucharest (Procesul-verbal al ședinței comitetului de conducere [Board Meeting Minutes], 1970).
- 5 Florinela Popa mentions Ciobanu's proposal in her *Muzică și ideologii în secolul 20* [Music and Ideologies in the 20th Century] (Popa, 2022). The plan of the course in Byzantine notation was presented at the meeting of the Musicology Bureau on December 8, 1966.
- 6 The Council of Socialist Culture and Education was a state body established on September 21, 1971 which replaced the State Committee for Culture and Art with the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the "July Theses."
- 7 In 1964, the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of the Romanian People's Republic had published the first of the four volumes of the series *Fontes ad historiam Dacoromaniae Pertinentes*. The book appeared *In Aedibus Academiae Republicae Popularis Dacoromanae*, thus equating "Dacian-Romanian" with "Romanian."

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