

Haig Utidjian - Abstract

In this thesis we attempt to establish, in as concrete and tangible a manner as possible, the procedures used by Elia Tntesean (1834–1881) in compiling and redacting his version of the melodies of the Armenian Hymnal, and to place his own endeavour in the context of other attempts to record the melodies of Armenian hymns using the Limōnčean system of musical notation in nineteenth-century Constantinople – at a time when the mediaeval neumatic notation had already become largely intractable. Our approach entails the juxtaposition of Tntesean’s musicological articles and paedagogical publications with his transcriptions in Western notation and with his mature realisations of the hymnal melodies in the Limōnčean system, published posthumously in 1934 – treating these sources as a coherent corpus, of which the diverse components are allowed to shed light on each other.

Comparison with other hymnals from the same period, the investigation of parallels with the neighbouring practice of Ottoman makams, fieldwork with surviving remnants of the oral tradition, and a critical examination of Tntesean’s writings and transcriptions enable us to elucidate aspects of notation and performance practice, and to expose a subtle evolution in aesthetic. Furthermore, a detailed analysis of the Tntesean corpus allows us to address fundamental questions on the very manner in which the mediaeval neumes were interpreted by Armenian musicians in nineteenth-century Constantinople. The procedures described by Tntesean and their theoretical underpinnings are first examined; collating the hymnal melodies with the neumations in their light serves to expose apparent inconsistencies, demonstrating that Tntesean’s avowed procedures were not applied dogmatically, but with flexibility and subtlety – bespeaking of implicit aesthetic criteria (such as sensitivity to the verbal underlay and to the wider musical context) and a frame of mind redolent of the semi-improvisatory approach of live performers, for whom a musically convincing outcome in real time was a higher priority than the maintenance of macro-level consistency with the neumations.

We have demonstrated the usefulness of this research for longer-term objectives such as the onerous yet feasible task of completing the omissions in the Tntesean hymnal (to render it self-sufficient for liturgical use in our own time) and the preparation of a reliable edition of the neumatically-notated hymnal (a vital prerequisite for progress in neumatological research). The present thesis is believed to be the first substantial investigation of the Tntesean hymnal, and the very first attempt to expound and appraise the connections between the procedures professed in his musicological writings and his hymn realisations. We believe it to constitute a major step towards a fuller understanding of the manner in which the extant melodies of the Armenian Hymnal came to be constituted.

Keywords: *Tntesean, neumatology, semi-improvisational practices, modality, Armenian octoechos, Armenian Canonical Hymnal, Limōnčean system of notation, Ottoman makams, Constantinople.*