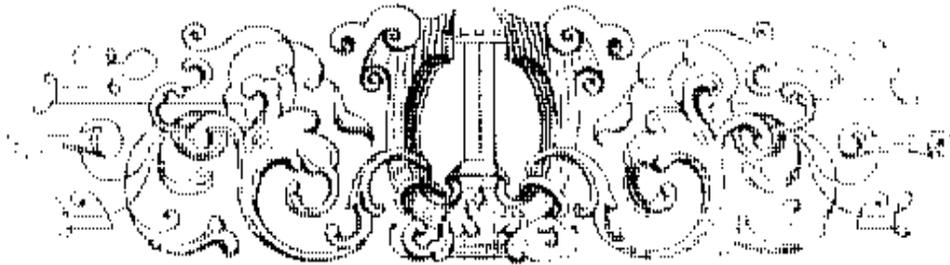


SERBIAN CHANT

# THE SERBIAN OSMOGLASNIK

(BOOK OF EIGHT TONES)

—WITH ENGLISH TEXT—



—ADAPTATION BY—

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## Preface

In recent years there has been a growing need for the use of English in our Orthodox worship services. This need has been felt more greatly in some Serbian Orthodox parishes than in others. It seems improper, however, that while carefully embracing and nurturing a new liturgical language we would discard the rich liturgical music heritage that has been handed down to us through the centuries. The present volume is undertaken with the intent of preserving this musical heritage as an offering of worship. As such, this work is an attempt not simply to adapt, but to unite or wed an English text to the existing Serbian chant. The marriage of text and music is indeed a fitting analogy, but in order to understand this process of ‘wedding’ the words to the chant, we must first consider the structure of our Church music - specifically, that of the *Eight Tones* (*Osmoglasnik* in Serbian; *Oktoechos* in Greek).

The Serbian *Osmoglasnik*, like most Eastern Orthodox sacred chants, has a centonate design; it is built from numerous melodic formulae linked together to form larger musical structures. In its largest structure, each of the *Eight Tones* may have two, three or even four different types of melodies. Some *Tones*, like the 7th or the 3rd, have only variants of the same basic melody. Each of these melody-types is the product of a varied combination of several contrasted melodic phrases. The ordering or even the inclusion or exclusion of certain melodic phrases may vary to some extent with each verse of text. Finally, each phrase may itself be subdivided into several shorter melodic formulae as mentioned above. Most of the melodic formulae are recurrent and therefore motivic in nature. The formulae may recur not only in the same *Tone*, but may also be found both transposed and untransposed in two or more different *Tones*. This is particularly true of certain cadential formulae. Other melodic fragments can be found which are of a more incidental nature and may reflect the demands of the text upon an otherwise prefabricated musical design.

The term ‘prefabricated’ is used here in a very special way; it is not meant to imply that the music necessarily existed before the text. The centonate structure of Serbian chant reflects its propagation from generation to generation as being primarily the result of an oral tradition and not a written one. In spite of the codified variants given to us by Mokranjac, Stankovic, Lastavica and others, Serbian chant still maintains this primarily oral/aural form of transmission. To briefly illustrate this technique which Serbian cantors appropriately termed *krojanje* (knitting or sewing): one first learns the basic melody from a familiar model; one is then presented with a text; one adapts the text to the existing melody in a semi-improvisatory (spontaneous but practiced) manner. It is in this sense that the term ‘prefabricated’ is used.

Serbian chant is therefore a living tradition; it was created for, adapted to, and nurtured by the word or text, and therefore, translation can only be its gain - never its loss! And so we approach the chant not as something rigid and immutable, but as something pliable and flexible; bending and wedding it to each ‘new’ text without fracturing its design or violating its motivic elements. Consequently, it should be our understanding that the musical contents of this volume are but an image or representation of true Serbian chant: an image whose complete manifestation can only be fully realized through the prayerful application thereof - together with any purposeful elaborations, simplifications, or variations - in the divine services of the Holy Orthodox Church.

Nikola Resanovic

## Author's Note

Although the Mokranjac *Osmoglasnik* was the primary source of reference for my work, this volume should not be viewed as simply being an adaptation of the Mokranjac *Osmoglasnik*. Variants from other sources were incorporated including, *Praznichno Pojanje* by Bishop Stevan Lastavica; variants as indicated by the late Bishop Sava (of Sumadija) whose personal annotated copy of the 1922 Mokranjac *Osmoglasnik* I was privileged to use; and lastly, variants known to my own experience of this living tradition within the services of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The more commonly used chant variants which the Mokranjac *Osmoglasnik* includes as footnotes have largely been incorporated into the body of the chant itself. The translations used came primarily from published sources available from the Orthodox Church in America and the Syrian Archdiocese. I have chosen not to make translation the focus of any revision at this juncture as the use of English is clearly still in a significant state of flux.

Finally, in addition to minor revisions in many of the settings, the electronically published files which make up this volume include several features which do not exist in either my original 1986 Serbian *Osmoglasnik* publication or in the Mokranjac *Osmoglasnik*. First, an appendix to each tone has been provided which shows some of the aforementioned chant variants in a more comparative form. Second, the *Theotokion* at the conclusion of the *Aposticha* has been added in each of the eight tones. It should be noted that this latter addition offsets the numbering of subsequent hymns when compared to the publications previously mentioned. Lastly, I have provided settings of the Alleluias in each of the eight tones at the conclusion of the work.

The labor to present this work in its electronic form is offered in loving memory of my brother - Stevan Resanovic, departed this life on February 27, 2003. May his memory be eternal.

Nikola Resanovic  
Bright Tuesday,  
April 29, 2003

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