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The Use of Ekphonic Notation in Vienna New Testament Manuscripts

Several years ago I was hunting through the shelves of the library of the Institute for Classical Studies in London and came across a book that I was delighted to find because it is not always readily available. It was Carston Høeg's book on ekphonic notation¹. The book was published in 1935 and I noted that the library had received this copy into their collection within a year or two of its publication. As this work is one of, if not the, most important discussions of this topic, I was surprised to discover that the pages of this book were completely uncut. I went to the circulation desk to ask what the library's policy was on uncut books, and the busy librarian in response asked if I would mind taking a letter-opener and cutting the pages open myself — which I did with pleasure. But the evidence of these uncut pages suggests that in well over 60 years, this particular copy of the book had never been used.

I mention this episode because the subject of the book, ekphonic notation, is surely one of the clearest indicators we have in determining whether or not a particular New Testament manuscript has ever been used by the Christian Church. The combination of the various marks of punctuation with the musical-rhetorical symbols that are called ekphonic notation must be considered as clues left on the document itself that suggest its living use in the Church in some liturgical context, and even provide some clues as to its liturgical and even theological interpretation.

The documents that I bring into the discussion are drawn from the Greek New Testament papyri and parchments of the Vienna collection, dating from about the fourth to the tenth centuries, and although only two of these are clearly notated ekphonically, it is instructive to look at the larger collection and make some observations on the general development we can see in the various kinds and levels of markings in these manuscripts².

New Testament scholars unfortunately tend to have little first-hand knowledge of these documents and, as a result, they overlook the significance or are even unaware of the existence of the markings and notations that are an integral part of some of these papyri and parchments, for they can provide various levels of information about these New Testament sources from the first millennium after Christ.

Part of the problem is that punctuation and the more formalized symbols of ekphonic notation are frequently omitted in published editions of these manuscripts. As a result, New Testament scholars — and others — can remain totally unaware of this level of notation in these manuscripts³. The fact that ekphonic symbols may be added by a second or even third hand could suggest that they are peripheral, but this is a clear indication that the document was used — or at the very least, prepared for use — in the developing life of the Christian Church.

Manuscripts that have no punctuation and no ekphonic notation tell us little about how that text was perceived or presented. As punctuation increasingly appears in the original hand, in such things as dots at the ends of phrases or sentences, we get at least a glimpse of how the phrasing and syntax was understood by the scribe who added them or as reflecting an already existing tradition witnessed in the document that he was transcribing. As the manuscripts increasingly move towards the more specific symbols of ekphonic notation and increased punctuation and prosodic marks, so we get a clearer glimpse of how the New Testament passages were understood and presented. Because of these various factors, in our new editions of the Greek New Testament Papyri and Parchments of the Vienna collection, we have tried to represent

¹ C. Høeg, *La notation ekphonétique* (Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae, Subsidia, 1.2), Copenhagen 1935. Cf. also E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Oxford 2nd ed. 1961, repr. 1998 (1948), 284–300, whose system we tend to follow here.

² S. E. Porter and W. J. Porter (eds.), *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments: New Editions* (MPER N. S. 28) Vienna (forthcoming).

³ Yes, one can look at photographs, but these can be difficult to decipher, even for those who know the significance of the notation.

and comment upon these layers of markings in the manuscripts wherever they are decipherable. Sometimes the ink of these marks or symbols has faded more than that of the words of the text, and sometimes the marks are oddly placed. We are pleased that the plates for all of these manuscript pages and fragments have been made available and will appear in the publication. The fact that these New Testament documents of the Vienna collection are gathered together for the first time means that New Testament scholars and others now have an opportunity to freely examine and compare these manuscripts. I think it becomes evident that it is more than the words themselves which are valuable here. Two of the later manuscripts of this collection clearly present the interpretive aspect of ekphonic notation (see discussion below)⁴.

Unfortunately, this shorthand notation cannot provide us with the full aural spectrum of sounds that it represents, but the growth of notation seems to have followed a pattern. At first, there are the markings of breathing, accent, and perhaps intonation, often in the original hand. As these documents are increasingly handled by a second or third person, with markings of breathing, accent or intonation, and punctuation, and then the more specific symbols of ekphonic notation being added, we find the phrases of the text are delineated in smaller and more subordinate units. Pericopes often similar to those we still delineate in the New Testament are articulated by ekphonic markings within these texts.

It is easy for musicologists to dismiss the notion that these markings represent music, or that they are musical indications, and this of course raises the larger question — what is music? Is music only represented by the traditional notation of music as we see it gathered together in the recent Oxford University Publication by Pöhlmann and West⁵? Is it only the formal hymns? Or does it also include these shorthand symbols found in New Testament manuscripts? Professor Edwin Judge observed to me that Denise Jourdan-Hemmerdinger's proposal about 20 years ago has never been adequately responded to — she suggests that various dots written above letters may be musical notation and stem from Semitic influence⁶. Eric Werner also has contributed numerous arguments on possible Semitic influence on later notation, although he relies heavily on quite late Hebrew manuscripts⁷. It is notable that Pöhlmann and West completely pass over Jourdan-Hemmerdinger's proposal but also fail to include any mention of Werner who interprets such documents as P.Oxy. XV 1786⁸, the early Christian hymn, very differently than West⁹. This third-century papyrus, of course, raises many other questions. For instance, why is it that a biblical-sounding text as in P.Oxy. XV 1786 can be notated as a hymn, but strictly biblical text such as we are discussing does not use the specific musical symbols at the level of syllables, but rather, uses ekphonic notation which

⁴ See, e. g., C. Hannick, *Les lectionnaires grecs de l'apostolos avec notation ekphonétique*, in: M. Velimirovic (ed.), *Studies in Eastern Chant*, IV, Crestwood, New York 1979, 76–80.

⁵ E. Pöhlmann and M. L. West (eds.), *Documents of Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford 2001. For background to the discussion of Greek music, see such works as the following: T. Reinach, *La musique grecque*, Paris 1926; T. Georgiades, *Musik und Rhythmus bei den Griechen*, Hamburg, New York 1958; L. Gamberini, *La parola e la musica nell'antichità*, Florence 1962; G. Comotti, *Music in Greek and Roman Culture*, trans. R. V. Munson, Baltimore 1989 (original publication: *La musica nella cultura greca e romana*, Turin 1979); A. Barker (ed.), *Greek Musical Writings*, I. *The Musician and his Art* (Cambridge Readings in the Literature of Music), Cambridge 1984; M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford 1992; J. G. Landels, *Music in Ancient Greece and Rome*, London 1999; see also T. J. Mathiesen, *A Bibliography of Sources for the Study of Ancient Greek Music* (Music Indexes and Bibliographies, 10), Hackensack, NJ 1974.

⁶ D. Jourdan-Hemmerdinger, *Nouveaux fragments musicaux sur papyrus (une notation antique par points)*, in: Velimirovic, *Studies in Eastern Chant* (s. n. 4), 81–111.

⁷ E. Werner, *The Sacred Bridge: The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church during the First Millennium*, vol. 1: London, New York 1959; vol. 2: New York 1984; and E. Werner, *The Oldest Sources of Synagogal Chant*, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 16 (1947) 225–232 (225–226).

⁸ B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *1786: Christian Hymn with Musical Notation*, in: P.Oxy. XV (Egyptian Exploration Society Graeco-Roman Memoirs; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1922) 21–25. See also J. F. Mountford, *Greek Music in the Papyri and Inscriptions*, in: J. U. Powell and E. A. Barber (eds.), *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature, Second Series*, Oxford 1929, 146–183; and J. F. Mountford, *The Cairo Musical Fragment*, in: J. U. Powell (ed.), *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature, Third Series*, Oxford 1933, 260–261.

⁹ See some discussion of this in W. J. Porter, *The Composer of Sacred Music as an Interpreter of the Bible*, in: M. O'Kane (ed.), *Borders, Boundaries and the Bible* (JSOT Supplement Series, 313), Sheffield 2002, 126–153 (131–138); and in W. J. Porter, *Misguided Missals: Is Early Christian Music Jewish or Is It Graeco-Roman?*, in: S. E. Porter and B. W. R. Pearson (eds.), *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries* (Roehampton Institute London Papers, 6), Sheffield 2000, 202–227. On his own translation of the text, see E. Werner, *Music*, in: *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* [IDB], 4 vols.; ed. G. A. Buttrick; Nashville 1962, III, 457–69 (466).

is written at the level of phrases of text. Does this prove that the latter is not music? If so, perhaps our definition needs expanding. Even familiarity with the symbols of figured bass in baroque music, or even the modern-day chord charts of popular music — where the musical chords and structure are presented only as chord and bass-note letter-names above lines of text — should remind us that shorthand in music is a common technique. Even today, without knowledge of what the code represents, it means little; with an understanding of the system, it represents the musical setting of that text.

The paired symbols of *oxeia*, *bareia*, *apostrophos*, *kremaste* and *kentemata*, and the coupling of *oxeia* with *teleia*, to name some of these symbols, are generally found encompassing phrases of text, with one symbol placed at the beginning of the phrase and one at the end. More importantly, they work together to outline larger discourses. In our eighth- or ninth-century parchment page of Matthew 28¹⁰, these ekphonic symbols appear to be somewhat irregular. This may be due to the darkness of the page, which makes the reading a bit difficult, and further fading of these markings. Our 10th-century parchment pages of John 7¹¹, however, are much clearer to read and the system of notation is more obviously consistent. We clearly see such symbols as the *kathiste* encompassing narrative phrases, or *bareia* or *kremaste* on certain sections of emphasis.

Let me briefly trace in the Vienna Greek New Testament manuscripts of the first millennium the development of ekphonic symbols. What we observe is a gradual but progressive inclusion of a larger and more frequent range of markings. Of the fourth-century manuscripts that use some form of punctuation, or other marks, all use the raised dot, some use double dots and the low dot, some use the *spiritus asper* and *diæresis*, as well as *diastrophe* to separate the palatal sounds of two side-by-side *kappas*, and some introduce a few other less distinguishable marks, possibly of accentuation¹². The fifth-century manuscripts use raised dots with frequency, while some use medial, low or double dots; marks for rough breathing and *diæresis* are found; and some diacritical marks are used that may indicate accent or intonation, sometimes in combination with the end of a unit¹³. Eleven of the sixth-century manuscripts have numerous prosodic marks, which may indicate accent, intonation, unit endings, and possibly, in some cases, all of these, especially at the end of a section¹⁴. In the seventh-century manuscripts, we see one that has many

¹⁰ Porter and Porter (eds.), *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*, No. 24 (ANL Supp. Gr. 106; Gregory-Aland 0148). This parchment has not apparently been previously published. Cf. H. Hunger with C. Hannick, *Katalog der Griechischen Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Vienna 1994, Part 4, 181. The biblical text consists of Matthew 28: 5–19.

¹¹ No. 40 (ANL Supp. Gr. 121; 0105). Hunger with Hannick, *Katalog* (s. n. 10), Part 4, 208. The biblical text consists of John 6, 71–7, 46. For some discussion of this manuscript, see W. J. Porter, *Sacred Music at the Turn of the Millennia*, in: S. E. Porter, M. A. Hayes and D. Tombs (eds.), *Faith in the Millennium* (Roehampton Institute London Papers, 7), Sheffield 2001, 423–444 (432–438).

¹² No. 23; P.Vindob. G 39782 (058), Matthew 18: raised dot, double dot, *diple*, *diæresis* on *omega* and *upsilon*;
No. 26; P.Vindob. G 29300 (0214), Mark 8: raised dot, low dot;
No. 27; P.Vindob. G 36112 (0215) (= 059), Mark 15: raised dot, *diastrophe*, *diæresis*;
No. 28; P.Vindob. G 39779 (059 = 0215), Mark 15: raised dot, medial dot, *staurogram*;
No. 31; P.Vindob. G 39778 (0181) (4th–5th c.), Luke 9, 10: raised dot, *diæresis*, few other marks of accentuation;

No. 48; P.Vindob. G 19890 (0221), Romans 5, 6: raised dot, rough breathing, possibly a *circumflex*.

¹³ No. 25; P.Vindob. G 1384 (0213), Mark 3: raised dot;
No. 35; P.Vindob. G 39781 (0182) (5th/6th c.), Luke 19: raised dot, only few other diacriticals, with function difficult to determine other than unit boundaries;
No. 43; P.Vindob. G 3081 (0216), John 8, 9: medial dot, few diacriticals;
No. 44; P.Vindob. G 39212 (0217), John 11, 12: raised dot, low dot, comma (*apostrophe?*), *diæresis*, rough breathing?, accents or intonation marks.

¹⁴ No. 22; P.Vindob. K 8023bis (0237), Matthew 15: raised dots;
No. 29; P.Vindob. K 8662 (0184), Mark 15: raised dots, *diæresis*, *ekthesis*;
No. 32; P.Vindob. K 9007 (0190 = 070), Luke 10: raised dots, many prosodic marks (intonation or breathing); other diacritical marks/grave-like mark, possibly *apostrophe* = completion of a word or unit; possibly more than one hand; includes demarcation of the Hebrew name, ‘*μαρταμ*’.
No. 33; P.Vindob. K 9031 (0191 = 070), Luke 12: *diæresis*, grave mark, *apostrophe*, *circumflex*-like mark (but inconsistent), raised punctuation;
No. 36; P.Vindob. K 2700 (0179 = 070), Luke 21: raised dot, double dot, line, *diæresis*, ‘*apostrophe*’ (this fragment has fewer marks than others belonging to 070);

diacritical marks and the distinctive use of the teleia¹⁵. Of the eighth- and ninth-century manuscripts, the one of greatest significance that I have already mentioned is No. 24 in our collection. This single page of a parchment codex contains Matthew 28, 5–19. The text at the top of the page begins with an angel appearing to the women at Jesus' empty tomb with the message that Jesus is alive. A full range of ekphonic symbols is found in this passage, although many are indistinguishable. It is interesting to note also the strokes that delineate the foreign words *γαλιλαιαν* and *μαθηταις*. However, it is the 10th-century manuscript, No. 40 in our collection, that is both more clearly written and more interesting for its use of ekphonic notation. The manuscript consists of four pages of a parchment codex, each written on both sides. This codex, along with the previously-mentioned one, is continuous biblical text and has been marked for liturgical use. The extant pages contain almost the full text of chapter 7 of the Gospel of John. The text has been divided into pericopes consisting of about 13–16 verses, and thus consists of four nearly complete pericopes or scenarios. It is worth observing that only three of the four pericopes are notated ekphonically — that is, the first two and the final one are, but the third one is not. This manuscript appears to have been used in three liturgical contexts. The third pericope, the un-notated one, is also the least visually depictable of the four. The four scenes consist of (1) Jesus going to the Feast of Tabernacles; (2) Jesus teaching at the Feast until someone tries to seize him; (3) a discussion about whether Jesus was the Christ; and (4) Jesus' declaration that if anyone is thirsty they should come for living water, and the guards' response that they have never heard anyone speak like this.

It is useful to look at one of the pages of this document: folio 3 recto (see plate), which is the fifth of eight pages of text. The first portion and the final words of the pericope are on the previous and following pages, but this gives an example of the levels of notation. Prosodic marks appear throughout this passage. Those that appear in corresponding pairs include¹⁶:

- (1) an oxeia from the previous page combined with the double dots and low teleia that form a unit that includes the first two lines of this page, *την δικαιαν κριειν κρινατε*¹⁷;
- (2) apostrophos at the beginning and ending of *Ελεγον ουν τινεσ*¹⁸;
- (3) apeso hexo, or double apostrophos combined with oxeia, the double apostrophos below the first omicron and the oxeia stroke above the final syllable: *ουχ ουτος εστιν*¹⁹;
- (4) hypokrisis, the three strokes stacked vertically before and after the phrase *ον ζητουειν αποκτειναι*²⁰;

No. 37; ANL Th.Gr. 131 (N 022), Purple Parchment Codex, Luke 24: raised dot, acute, grave, single dot above letter (not indicated by Tischendorf);

No. 41; P.Vindob. K 15 (0180 = 070), John 7: medial dot, double dot, diaresis, short stroke, other diacritical marks = units of division or intonation? (here the number and type is more restricted than some others belonging to 070);

No. 50; P.Vindob. G 29299 (0222); 1 Corinthians 9: raised dot, diaresis, numerous other diacritical marks in a second hand;

No. 51; P.Vindob. G 3073 (0223); 2 Corinthians 1, 2: hand 1: diaresis, double dot, low dot, raised dot; hand 2: imprecise marks, acute, circumflex, grave, linking of *ου ου*, rough breathing, wavy diacritical over *ου*, raised dot;

No. 53; P.Vindob. G 19802 (0225), 2 Corinthians 5, 6, 8: raised dot, low dot, double dot, diaresis over *υ*, spiritus asper / rough breathing.

¹⁵ No. 54, P.Vindob. G 39785 (0183), 1 Thessalonians 3, 4: raised dot, medial stroke, comma (apostrophe?), diaresis, rough breathing, many other diacriticals, some fill spaces, others correct original hand, use of teleia.

Note also, however, No. 20, P.Vindob. G 39784 (P34), 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 5, 10, 11: acute accent, raised dot, mark of accent or breathing (like spiritus asper) but a dot rather than stroke;

No. 38, P.Vindob. G 39780 (0101) (7th–8th c.), John 1: low dot, diaresis, ekthesis, clearly demarcated paragraphs.

¹⁶ See G. Engberg, *Greek Ekphonic Neumes and Masoretic Accents*, in: M. Velimirovic (ed.), *Studies in Eastern Chant*, I, London 1966, 37–49 (38–39), where he describes the 'classical' period of the use of ekphonic notation, in which they are customarily used in pairs.

¹⁷ Wellesz's descriptions are useful here (*History of Byzantine Music* [s. n. 1], 284–300): thought to represent the voice rising to a higher note and remaining there until the end of the phrase.

¹⁸ Thought to be a lower pitch of voice, without emphasis.

¹⁹ The voice rises on this phrase.

²⁰ Probably indicating emphasis with a full stop.

(5) bareia, encompassing the phrase, και ιδε²¹;

(6) kremaste, the swooping stroke above the first letter and the last two letters of the phrase, μηποτε αληθως εγνωσαν²²;

(7) kentemata, in this manuscript, a series of four linear dots above the first two letters of the first word and the two letters of the final word of the phrase, αλλ εστιν αληθινος ο πεμψας με²³.

We can see also, however, the layout of the page, with letters that are ekthetic protruding to the left of the column of text. Some of these correspond with modern verse beginnings and some do not. For instance, verse 25 begins with the word ελεγον, and the beginning epsilon is ekthesis²⁴. The beginning of verse 26 is not marked in this way²⁵, but the beginning of the word μηποτε in the middle of the verse is demarcated in this way²⁶. Again, the beginning of verse 27 is not ekthesis, which begins with the words αλλα τούτων²⁷, but the beginning of the next three verses, that is, 28, 29 and 30, are all ekthesis: v. 28, έκραξεν²⁸, v. 29 εγω οίδα²⁹, and v. 30, εζήτουν³⁰. It is notable that each verse on this page that begins with an epsilon is given pronounced treatment. In all cases on this page, a teleia marks the end of a unit preceding these large decorated letters, although these are not the only uses of teleia in this passage.

Obviously, many questions about both the musical and interpretive qualities of these markings still exist, and a number of issues should be pursued further. One issue is simply whether or not to include these markings in editions of New Testament manuscripts. We have thought it is important to represent these, and therefore we have included them in our new editions, as indications of living use. The question of whether ekphonic notation represents something other than music and whether real music is only indicated by syllabic symbols and traditional musical notation probably merits further discussion. I think the definition of music may need to be expanded. The question of why non-biblical texts, such as P.Oxy. XV 1786, use musical notation and why biblical texts use ekphonic notation might still be pursued. Questions of how the development throughout these New Testament manuscripts in their use of various levels of notation might relate to the development of the early Christian Church also could provide some insights. Certainly the question of Greek versus Semitic or other influence has not been solved³¹. And, finally, it might be instructive to discover why Carston Høeg's book on ekphonic notation sat unread for well over 60 years in the Institute for Classical Studies.

²¹ Probably indicates a lowering of the voice, but with emphasis.

²² Probably indicating a rising of the voice, with accentuation.

²³ Thought to be an ascending third.

²⁴ See the third line in the first column.

²⁵ Verse 26 begins at the beginning of line 10 in the first column.

²⁶ See this in line 14 in the first column.

²⁷ This is in the 20th line of the first column (the fifth line from the bottom).

²⁸ See the fourth line in the second column.

²⁹ See the seventh line from the bottom in the second column.

³⁰ This is in the second from the last (penultimate) line in the second column.

³¹ E. Werner, *The Conflict between Hellenism and Judaism in the Music of the Early Christian Church*, Hebrew Union College Annual 20 (1947) 407–470 (457); A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development*, New York 1948. Various other studies have also called into question the notion of a predominantly Jewish influence, e. g., J. A. Smith, *The Ancient Synagogue, the Early Church and Singing*, *Music & Letters* 65.1 (1984) 1–16; J. McKinnon, *On the Question of Psalmody in the Ancient Synagogue*, in: I. Fenlon (ed.), *Early Music History: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Music*, VI, Cambridge 1986, 159–191; and J. McKinnon (ed.), *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge Studies in the Literature of Music), Cambridge 1987; see also West, *Analecta Musica*, 47–54. See discussion in: W. J. Porter, *Misguided Missals*; and in: W. J. Porter, *Creeds and Hymns*, and *Music*, in: C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Downers Grove 2000, 231–238 and 711–719 respectively.