



ORTHODOX LITURGICAL CHANT TRADITIONS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT IN LITHUANIA TODAY

MARGARITA MOISEJEVA

moisejevamargarita@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The main aspect related to research on Orthodox chanting in Lithuania is that after the official adoption of Christianity (1387), the country developed a Roman Catholic culture that was orientated towards the West. The future King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Jogaila, chose to accept the proposal to become Catholic and marry Queen Jadwiga of Poland. On these and other terms, on 14 August 1385, at the castle of Kreva, Jogaila agreed to adopt Christianity in Lithuania, signing the Act of Kreva¹. Therefore, the Orthodox faith in the territory of the ethnic Lithuania is and always has been a minority religion. The latest archaeological research shows that already in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, despite some strict conditions regarding Orthodoxy (for example, in the fifteenth century, it became forbidden to build new Orthodox churches or repair old ones in the cities²), the Orthodox community flourished. They had arable fields, a large *Civitas Rutenica* district in the centre of Vilnius.³ That is why we can argue that Orthodox culture in this territory developed already since the fourteenth century. This is supported by the fact that the first Orthodox church was established in the fourteenth century, and the first Orthodox Lithuanian saints emerged – the holy martyrs of Vilnius, Anthony, John and Eustatius;⁴ St Charitina the Lithuanian,⁵ and St Daumantas Timothy.⁶

After the Union of Brest (1596) was signed between the Roman Catholic Church and representatives of the Orthodox Kievan Metropolitanate, the situation for the

1 Stephen C. Rowell, "1386: The Marriage of Jogaila and Jadwiga Embodies the Union of Lithuania and Poland", *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 11, issue 1 (2006): 138. https://brill.com/view/journals/lhs/11/1/article-p137_7.xml.

2 Giedrė Motuzaitė Matuzevičiūtė, Rytis Jonaitis, Irma Kaplūnaitė, *Ūkinio pastato, stovėjusio Civitas Rutenica kvartale, archeobotaniniai tyrimai: kitataučių kasdienybė Vilniaus miesto aplinkoje XIV a. pabaigoje – XV a. I pusėje* in *Lituanistica*, t. 62, Nr. 4 (110), (Vilnius: Lietuvos mokslų akademija, 2017), 222. <https://www.lmaleidykla.lt/ojs/index.php/lituanistica/article/view/3609/2408>

3 Motuzaitė Matuzevičiūtė, *Ūkinio pastato*, 230.

4 Darius Baronas, *Trys Vilniaus kankiniai. Gyvenimas ir istorija* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2000), 150.

5 Algimantas Bučys, *Seniausiosios lietuvių literatūros istorija ir chrestomatija* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2012), 530.

6 Андрей Фомин, *Православные святые в истории Литвы* (Вильнюс: Ciklonas, 2017), 45.

Orthodox Church in Lithuania changed. It is challenging to discuss the appearance of Orthodox chanting tradition at this time on account of a lack of precision about whether these manifestations were Orthodox or Eastern Catholic. Generally speaking, Vilnius was at that time a multicultural and multiconfessional centre, where different church music styles developed, and the art of composition and chanting reached a high professional level. The following stage of development of a specifically Orthodox chanting tradition in Lithuania began with the abolition of the Union of Brest at the beginning of the eighteenth century. At that time, the Lithuanian territories were part of the Russian Empire. The Lithuanian diocese was re-established, and over five decades, the Orthodox Church and its chanting developed quickly, religious schools were established⁷, the teaching of chant was activated⁸, and a generation of competent local singers was raised.⁹ The newly established Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius became the main administrative and educational centre, where the Archdiocesan Choir sang. This productive period in choral activity was superseded by the events of the twentieth century, and only at the end of the twentieth century did Orthodox chanting in Lithuania continue to develop, thanks to one of the most famous choir leaders, Vsevoldas Kubajevskis.¹⁰

The first service in the Lithuanian language took place only in 2005. In 2012, the first Lithuanian Orthodox parish was established at the church of St Paraskevi. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a specifically Lithuanian Orthodox culture began to develop, the translation of liturgical texts began,¹¹ and the established terminology started to change. For example, the term “Orthodox” emerged only at the beginning of the twenty-first century and until now has not been well established or approved among Lithuanians. The established term for the religious community in the Lithuanian language is *stačiatikiai*, literally understood among Lithuanians as “upright” and “believe”. But with more and more ethnic Lithuanian Orthodox, such a term began to appear inaccurate and unacceptable, and this is why they described themselves as Christian Orthodox – *krikščionys ortodoksai*. There is another handful of terms and concepts, which, thanks to young and educated Orthodox, are currently being rethought, adapted or transformed, even though the Lithuanian Orthodox in Lithuania are a minority. According to the state population census in 2011, the Lithuanian Orthodox constitute 6% of all the Orthodox believers in Lithuania)¹²:

7 Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (Lithuanian State Historical Archives), fond 610, doc. 1, number 349, f. 3.

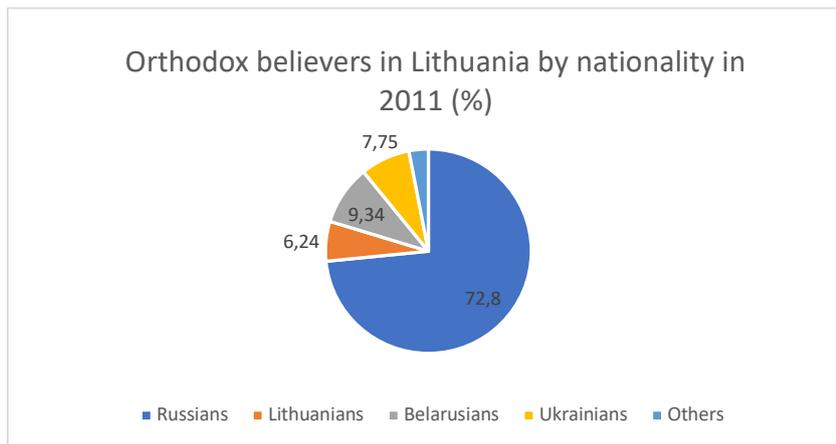
8 Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (Lithuanian State Historical Archives), fond 610, doc. 2, number 405.

9 Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (Lithuanian State Historical Archives), fond 610, doc. 2, number 338, f. 3; Лариса, Густова-Рунцо, *Православная певческая практика Беларуси* (Минск: БГУКИ, 2018), 144.

10 Татьяна Сквородко, “Регент и духовный композитор Всеволод Сергеевич Кубаевский (к 30-летию со дня кончины)” *Вестник* № 4 (15) (Вильнюс, 2015), 52-53.

11 More about translation processes in Lithuania: Гинтарас Сунгайла, *Проблемы переводов Божественной Литургии свт. Иоанна Златоуста на литовский язык* (Варшава, 2019). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zTeehs1eJkgZnTxnu97v_coteqeBwu-3/view?fbclid=IwAR0C2R2HwFM2206HrGjvINpXnycDfOKmuwD51UMek8Khn0yC5z1fG6Y_GOI

12 *Miestų gyventojai pagal tautybę 2011* (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2013), 14. https://osp.stat.gov.lt/documents/10180/217110/Gyv_kalba_tikyba.pdf/1d9dac9a-3d45-4798-93f5-941fed00503f, accessed 14 December 2019.



Yet at the present time (2019), a strong and rising interest can be noticed in Orthodox religion among ethnic Lithuanians, which directly reveals the expansion of the Orthodox religion in the Lithuanian culture.

THE CONCEPT OF THE LITURGICAL CHANTING TRADITION IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS RESEARCH

Orthodox choir chanting in Lithuania can be described as a tradition, a musical phenomenon, which on the one hand is cherished and protected, and on the other hand is transformed according to new circumstances, new people and new ideas. First of all, we need to define what we mean by the concept of Orthodox chanting tradition in the context of this research.

Academics usually position chant tradition as a phenomenon that stands out clearly and musically from others, depending on whether the approach is synchronic (grouped by various local traditions¹³) or diachronic (grouped by various historical traditions¹⁴), and also on the basis of the comparison of various musical styles¹⁵ (liturgical, non-liturgical, composed or concert, monastery, Archdiocesan choir and other chanting traditions). In this paper I intend to discuss Orthodox chanting as a musical tradition that takes place in a corresponding country, corresponding community and corresponding time and place. The research is based on ethnological methods, such as extensive field research, the positioning of the terminology and concept of the community under research, and questioning the positioning of the emic-etic.

The research requires a system that would allow one purposefully to compare the chanting traditions, which could be as identical as possible. The main focus lies on the system which would be most appropriate with regard precisely the Lithuanian chanting traditions. The chosen criterion of classification is that of a canonical locality, in other words, a locality, based on the administrative unit of the Orthodox Church – from the Russian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and their chanting to the smallest unit, separate parish chanting traditions (a classification

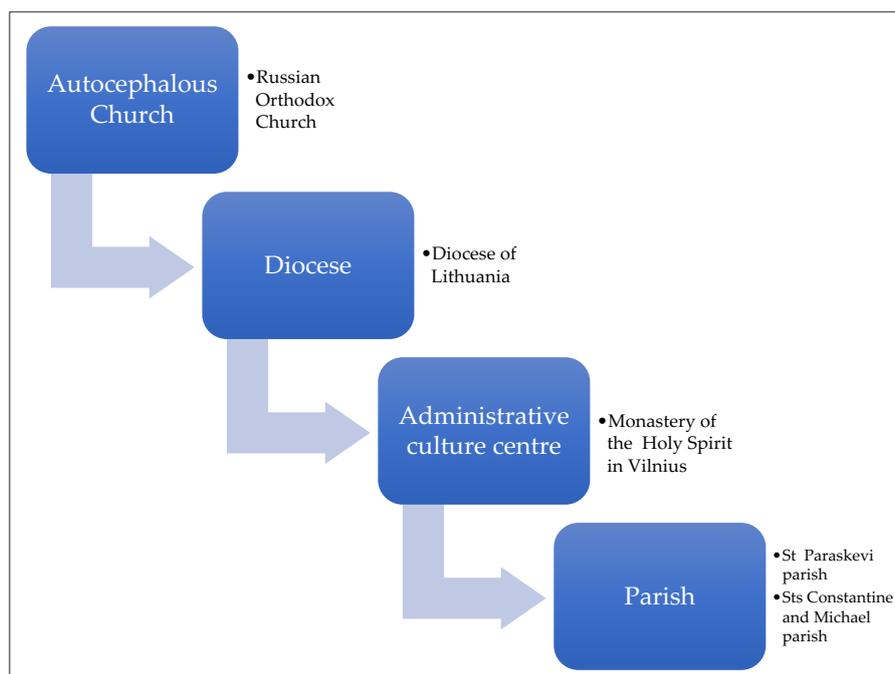
13 Светлана Хватова, "Традиция пения на глас в русской православной церкви новейшего периода," *Вестник Адыгейского государственного университета. Серия 2: Филология и искусствоведение* (Майкоп, 2011), <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/traditsiya-peniya-na-glas-v-russkoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi-noveyshego-perioda>

14 Галина Пожидаева, *Певческие традиции Древней Руси: Очерки теории и стиля* (Москва: Знак, 2007)

15 Густова-Рунцо, *Православная певческая практика Беларуси*, 14–18.

system developed by the author of this article). This criterion is chosen entirely because the research on Lithuanian Orthodox chanting shows that local, rather than functional, criteria most accurately and clearly present the variety of the living traditions in this territory.

The levels of traditions are divided into a hierarchy from the most general to the smallest one. We must emphasize that it is not the positioning of separate chanting traditions, but rather naming the levels of the chanting tradition. Just as we cannot claim that in Russia there is only one established chanting tradition, similarly we cannot claim that in Lithuania there is only one diocesan chanting tradition. However, if we cannot name these traditions, we cannot analyse, compare and systemize them. This classification system was created for the purpose of allowing us purposefully to name the meanings, systemize and compare various chanting traditions, depending on their scale.



Classification of Lithuanian chanting traditions

The Lithuanian Orthodox diocese follows the Russian Orthodox Church chanting tradition. It has an exceptional diocese chanting tradition that is distinguishable by the usage of mixed chanting variations of the eight modes (гласы). At the level of the administrative culture centre, there is a collective choir chanting tradition of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, as well as the Archdiocesan choir. This tradition can be also called historically the earliest tradition, as well as a tradition that has preserved its features the longest (presumably, already since the late nineteenth century), that has already formed the taste of the believers and singers, the central orientation of the Lithuanian chanting tradition not only in the choir of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit choir, but also for many other choirs.

At the level of Lithuanian parishes, there are several specific chanting traditions observable: St Paraskevi Lithuanian parish, Sts Constantine and Michael parish and the Icon of the Iveron Mother of God parish in the Palanga resort. Chanting in the other parishes could also be approached as different

chanting traditions on the basis of the usage of a different repertoire, different choir structure, different choir leaders and singers experience, possibilities and so on. The traditions of some parishes have been kept for decades and in an ethnological sense are also unique.

SPECIFIC ORTHODOX PARISH CHANTING TRADITIONS IN LITHUANIA

The Monastery of the Holy Spirit was established in the sixteenth century. This monastery is the religious, administrative and cultural centre of Vilnius and of the entire Lithuanian diocese. Between 1840 and 1845, the Monastery of the Holy Spirit monastery became the main administrative and educational centre, where the newly established Archdiocesan choir chanted.¹⁶ That leads one to reflect that already since the nineteenth century, the chanting tradition at the Monastery must have been specific and solemn and in its sense belonged more to the cathedral rather than the monastery. A certain notional discrepancy between the purpose of the choir and of the Monastery could also be represented by the space where the choir chanted. The space is very small and was perhaps not orientated towards a large archdiocesan choir. Various written documents and reports testify to the high level of the diocesan chanting at the time.¹⁷ The main documents have been found in historical archives of Lithuania and Belarus. Presumably, singers from Minsk came to be trained in the Archdiocesan Choir of Lithuania.¹⁸ Therefore, up to this day, singers and choir leaders as well as believers are used to this particular tradition and all of the attempts to change it even slightly (for example, to adopt older chanting styles) never meet with success, because the Monastery of the Holy Spirit us has for centuries been known for its harmonized, solemn style of chanting.

Currently there are four choirs at the monastery: the small, the brethren, the youth, and the Archdiocesan Choir. All of them attempt to sustain the common tradition, even though they use different variations of the hymns. The chanting in all the choirs is performed in Church Slavonic. The Archdiocesan choir mainly performs a traditional repertoire, which has endured since the middle of the twentieth century after the choir director Vsevolodas Kubajevskis. He collected the hymns from various sources, rewrote them, adjusted them, and created his own versions of them, forming a large sheet music library which until now is used not only by the Archdiocesan Choir, but also by other Orthodox choirs in Lithuania. After Kubajevskis, the Archdiocesan choir was led by the famous Russian conductor-cantor Aleksej Puzakov and others.

Currently, the Archdiocesan Choir is led by Tatjana Skovorodko, the daughter of the mitred archpriest in Lithuania.¹⁹ She has been raised in the church and has heard Orthodox chanting all her life. Now she represents the Archdiocesan Choir chanting not only in church, but also at public performances.

Another interesting tradition that has been rapidly developing and adapting to the circumstances is the Lithuanian St Paraskevi parish chanting tradition. The church was built in the fourteenth century. It is one of the first Orthodox churches built in Lithuanian territory. At the beginning of the 21st century the deacon and

16 Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (Lithuanian State Historical Archives), fond 610, doc. 1, number 349, ff. 7, 13-14.

17 Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas, fond 610, doc. 2, number 338, f. 3.

18 Густова-Рунцо, *Православная певческая практика Беларуси*, 144.

19 "О хоре", *Архиерейский хор Свято-Духова монастыря г. Вильнюса*, accessed December 14, 2019, <http://orthodoxychor.lt>.

composer Victor Miniotas²⁰ wrote the first Orthodox Lithuanian liturgy (the texts were in Lithuanian, and the composition was original), fragments of which were sung in this parish. On account of the lack of singers, however, this Liturgy could not be performed in full. Because of a small size of the choir, improvisation in various musical scales has been practiced for a long time. In fact, improvisation has been the basis for the chanting tradition of this parish, although the choir also sang various traditional chanting hymns, such as Russian or Georgian hymns in Church Slavonic. The improvisation is based on major, minor and Byzantine second plagal mode scales. The tradition changed only a few years ago with the new choir leader. Currently the choir does not use the Georgian hymns and similar, but the improvisational element during the parish Liturgy is still sometimes noticeable. The choir soloist and leader sometimes chants a hymn cadence based on an improvisation (the improvisation is based on several scales – natural major or minor scale, mixolydian mode, harmonic major, minor with higher sixth tone, and sometimes the scales are combined in one chant. Also, the choir leader suggests that the Byzantine second plagal mode does not fit with the Lithuanian language, so she does not use this mode). Therefore, we can claim that the improvisational chanting tradition is still alive, but it is not so intense as it was. The new choir leaders have also been actively creating their musical material for texts in Lithuanian language. The general chanting atmosphere of this parish could be described as very creative and innovative. For example, they usually have online streaming of services on Facebook.²¹ Currently, all the texts needed for chanting have been translated and are used by other Lithuanian parishes too. Liturgy is already served in the Lithuanian language in Kaunas, Kretinga as well as the St Jekaterina church in the Žvėrynas district.

The Sts Constantine and Michael church is also called the Romanov church. Its chanting tradition is twofold. There is a Sunday choir, from which the professional Orthodox choir *Svetilen* arose.²² It performs in Lithuania as well as abroad, organizes various projects – one of the previous being “The Sounds of Orthodox Churches of Vilnius”²³ performed together with a Lithuanian sound engineer, Tomas Dabašinskas.²⁴ The choir leader is Vadym Mašin. The chanting of the Sunday choir is homophonic. The daily choir is composed of two singers, i.e. the choir leader Vadym Mašin and his wife, the soloist of the *Svetilen* choir, Irina Mašina. For this reason, on weekdays during the Liturgy one can hear the most diverse chanting styles, especially many archaic-style hymns and also musical improvisation.

There is one more specific chanting tradition in Lithuania. It is the Icon of the Iveron Mother of God parish tradition in the Palanga resort. Here, the repertory is based on chants from Moscow, not on the Lithuanian mixed eight modes (гласы) tradition.

20 More information about Victor Miniotas is available here: Eglė, Grigaliūnaitė, *Viktoras Miniotas*, Music Information Centre Lithuania, accessed March 27, 2020, <https://www.mic.lt/en/database/classical/composers/miniotas/>.

21 Šventosios Paraskevės parapija, Facebook, November 18, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/sventosparaskevės.parapija/videos/400645630471877/>.

22 Arian 1232, “Заповеди блаженства Хор Светилен Вильнюс”, YouTube video, June 2, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eunrcQRXHkQ>.

23 Tomas, Dabašinskas, “Acoustics of eleven Orthodox Churches of Vilnius, Lithuania”, official Tomas Dabašinskas website, July 11, 2018, <http://www.tomasdabas.eu/sanctuaries/orthodox/sounds-of-orthodox-churches-of-vilnius/>.

24 Tomas, Dabašinskas, “Christian Orthodox Churches of Vilnius, Lithuania”, YouTube video, June 25, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDYrUqSAFLM>.

THE PROCESSES OF THE CHANGE AND PRESERVATION OF THE CHANTING TRADITION

At the moment, the initiators of the shift in choir chanting tradition are the choir leaders themselves (although sometimes the priests serving in the church and, more rarely, priests of higher rank or the metropolitan express their opinion on chanting). The shift of the parish choir tradition manifests itself in several ways in Lithuania:

- The new director leads the choir and collects the repertoire anew (according to himself, according to the structure of the current choir);
- The new director of the choir keeps a part of the old repertoire, but introduces a large amount of new repertoire;
- The new director of the choir keeps a large part of the old repertoire, and introduces barely anything new;
- The current choir leader searches for new pieces for his choir, depending on the changed choir structure or new tendencies in the field of chanting;
- The current choir leader, after having participated in a specialized course for choir directors, after having received an education of a choir director or otherwise raised his qualification in the area of conducting, changes the entire or a large part of the previous repertoire.

The preservation of the tradition happens most frequently when the choir is led by the same choir leader for a long time, and also if the clergy and the believers are used to the respective chanting tradition. In such a case, introducing a new tradition is rather difficult. For example, the Archdiocesan Choir has a strict basis for its repertoire. It first and foremost depends on the common chanting tradition, cherished for years, and thus preserves and continues this tradition. Learning a completely different repertoire would require a great deal of time for such a group of people, as chanting in church is usually only their hobby.

The reasons for the shift in the tradition are most often related to a new leading choir director or a completely changed choir structure, when the choir is no longer able to perform the old pieces. A strong influence comes from the general tendency of change in Orthodox chanting, such as going back to the old chanting forms such as Znamenny Chant, or becoming familiar with other chanting traditions such as Byzantine or Georgian, the traditions of Moscow or St Petersburg. If the director acquires a choir leader specialization or takes a specialized chanting course, he implements this new knowledge within the context of the choir, and changes its repertoire. We could describe this as the influence of globalization on local Orthodox music. The singers of the Sts Constantine and Michael church are refreshing the old traditions, trying out chanting styles of various countries, because the hymns do not require as much effort and time to learn as for a larger choir. Therefore, it can be claimed that various new chanting ideas often arise precisely in smaller choirs.

Clearly, a new process takes place when the service occurs in the state language in different countries and often in such a case, a separate parish emerges, such as, for example the Lithuanian parish of St Paraskevi in Vilnius. Then the chanting tradition must develop from the very beginning – translating texts, adapting the texts to the new melodies, which are naturally slightly changed, writing something new or even improvising. That is how a distinctive chanting tradition emerges.

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