

# Carpatho-Rusyn Prostopinije

## The Influence of Znamennyj chant

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### Sources of the Prostopinije

The Carpatho-Rusyn Slavonic plainchant (prostopinije) is a typical and distinctive feature of Rusyn culture. Where did it come from?

No single answer can be given, because the prostopinije is a composite chant system, including elements from various sources.

The oldest of these is the znamennyj chant, and it is remarkable that this chant, which has almost disappeared in Great Russian church singing, is preserved in a few still-living traditions: the chant of the Russian Old Believers, the "Ukrainian Chant" of Galicia and other western Ukrainian provinces, and the Carpatho-Rusyn prostopinije.

### The First Slavonic Chants

After the conversion of the rulers of Kievan Rus' to Christianity (late 10th century), the Greek "Byzantine" chant was adapted to Slavonic texts (we do not know to what extent this may have already been done among the Balkan Slavs).

The chant melodies were written with signs called neumes; these were applied to the Slavonic text.

### Two Styles of Neumes, Two Styles of Chant

The Greeks had two styles of neumes at that time, and these produced two styles also among the Slavs of Kievan Rus'.

The "kondakarion" notation was applied to melodies used for kondaks (short hymnic stanzas that vary according to the day, sung at Matins and at the Liturgy) and to several other categories of hymns, mostly sung at Matins.

The "stolp" notation was applied to the melodies used for stichiry (hymns accompanying psalm verses, sung at Vespers and Matins), for irmosy and stepenny (based on canticles or psalms from the Bible and sung at Matins), and so on.

Manuscripts containing these two forms of chant have survived from the end of the 11th century.

### The Spread of Znamennyj Chant

In the 13th century, the Tatars (Mongols) destroyed Kiev and most of the other important centers of Kievan Rus'.

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The kondakarian chant vanished from use entirely, but the stolp notation and the znamennyj chant to which it was applied flourished, particularly in Belorussia and in Novgorod and the Russian northwest, and were further developed in the 15th century.

After the Muscovite takeover of Novgorod and Pskov (late 15th century), the North Russian (Novogorod region) chant tradition was adopted throughout the Grand Duchy of Moscow, developing separately from what we may call the "Ruthenian" chant tradition, that is, the chant employed in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland, and the Kingdom of Hungary.

But the znamennyj chant remained basic to both, and remained essentially the same in both traditions despite some differences in interpretation.

### **Development of the Irmologia**

The Ruthenian chant was collected in a single volume, the Irmologion, in which the znamennyj chant was the dominant element.

Carpatho-Rusyn cantors continued to write manuscript Irmologia until the second half of the 19th century; in western Ukraine, printed editions of the Irmologion began to appear in 1700.

The chant remained essentially the same; the biggest change was that beginning around 1600 the neumatic notation was abandoned for notation with a 5-line staff and square note heads.

Bokšaj's *Cerkovnoje prostopinie* (Church plainchant), first published in 1906, employs modern notation with round note heads; most of the irmosy, and a number of other chants, are still sung to the traditional znamennyj melodies in this collection, although Bokšaj does not refer to them by that name.

So the Carpatho-Rusyns have preserved the old znamennyj chant down to the present as the oldest element in their traditional prostopinije.

## **Znamennyj Chant: Its Structure and Character**

### **Hlasy and Phrases**

The melodies of the znamennyj chant are organized into 8 tones or modes (hlasy). Each chant text is assigned to one of these hlasy, and must be sung to a melody of that tone.

The melodies are composed by the same method used by Byzantine chant; they are built up out of standardized melodic phrases. Each hlas contains a large number (up to several hundred) of these phrases.

The melody applied to a given text is composed by applying to each phrase of the text a melodic phrase, chosen from the total number of melodic phrases of the prescribed hlas. The melodic phrase can be shortened or expanded, depending on the number of syllables in the text.

## **Rhythm**

The rhythm of the melodic phrase is free, in the sense that it cannot be divided into bars or measures; there is no time-signature.

Nevertheless, there is a definite rhythmic structure; long notes are balanced by groups of two short notes, or some multiple of two, so that there is a definite tactus&em; unlike the usual interpretation of Gregorian chant, in which all notes are given an equal rhythmic value.

## **The Cantor's Job**

A skillful cantor, even in the 20th century, will know many znamennyj melodic phrases.

When the chant books were written in neumes, every cantor had to know many hundreds by heart.

## **The Character of Znamennyj Chant**

The impression made by the znamennyj chant upon the hearer is often described in terms of great nobility, objectivity, and dignity, combined with an ability to express and enhance the emotions evoked by the text.

This is no doubt a major reason why so many people find the prostopinije both movingly beautiful and profoundly peaceful.

Hlas I, P'isn' t. Imos

Chris-tós raž—dá-jet-sja, slá—vi—te; Chris-tós  
so ne-be—se, svjá—ščaj-te; Chris-tós na zem-lí,  
voz-no-sí—te—sja; pój-te Hos-po-dé-vi, vsja  
zem-l'á, i ve-sé-li-je[m] vos-pój-te, l'ú-di-je,  
já-ko pro-slá—vi—sja.

A znamennyj chant melody from a Carpatho-Rusyn manuscript Irmologion of the late 18th century.

Bars have been added to mark off the musical phrases; these same phrases are found in many other melodies of Hlas I.

## The "Kiev" Chant and the Prokimen Tones

### Two Traditions of Chant

In our previous article, we discussed the znamennyj chant, the oldest element in the system of eight hlasy ("tones" or "modes") of the Carpatho-Rusyn prostopinije.

We also observed that from the late fifteenth century on, the church singing of the Eastern Slavs split into two traditions, the "Muscovite" tradition (followed in the Grand Duchy of Moscow, and based on Novgorod church singing) and the "Ruthenian" tradition (followed in the Lithuanian-Polish state and in the Hungarian-ruled Carpathians).

Both were originally based on the znamennyj chant, but some melodies, especially those sung from memory rather than from books, developed rather differently in the two traditions, and the distinctive Ruthenian forms of these melodies are called in Russian terminology "Kiev chant."

## **Kiev Chant**

This name is not applied to melodies of the eight-hlas system in chant books of the Ruthenian traditions; it arose only when the Muscovites came into contact once again with the Ruthenian chant, in the 1650s, when the city of Kiev passed from Polish-Lithuanian to Muscovite rule.

Cantors from Kiev were brought to Moscow, where they introduced a number of Ruthenian chant melodies, introducing distinctive variants of melodies based on znamennyj tradition, especially those commonly sung from memory.

These are an important element in the Carpatho-Rusyn prostopinije, where, of course, they are not designated "Kiev chant". The most important of these are the melodies for prokimny and for the stichiry samohlasnyja.

## **Prokimny**

The prokimen is an ancient way of singing psalms. One selected verse from a psalm is sung; then one or more other verses from the same psalm are "read" in the liturgical recitative (intoned on a single note), the sung verse being repeated after each of the read verses. Prokimny are sung at various services. In most cases, the text and the melody are governed by the cycle of eight hlasy.

There are also prokimny in which the text does not change, and only the melody is governed by the cycle of hlasy; these are not called prokimny, but are referred to by the first words of the text: Boh Hospod', Vsjakoe dychanije, and Svjat Hospod' at Matins, and Alliluja at the liturgy.

## **Prokimny, Troparia, and Kontakia**

Formerly, when the troparia appointed for each day had no proper melodies, they were read as far as the last phrase of the text, and that phrase was sung to the appropriate prokimen tone. This method is still used for some special troparia at Christmas and Epiphany, and was also applied to the kondak of Matins at St. Nicholas Monastery, Mukachevo.

More elaborate versions of the prokimen tones, to which Boh Hospod' and the end of the tropar' were sung at Matins, are still known in both Muscovite "znamennyj" and Ruthenian "Kiev" versions, although they are no longer used much. The "Kiev" prokimen tones usually repeat the last half of the text of the psalm verse (called okonĖanije), in contrast to the Muscovite versions.

## **Local variations**

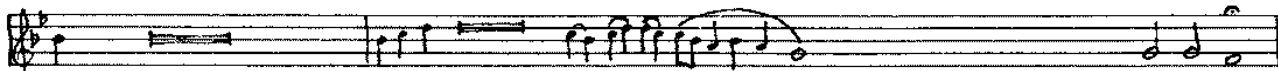
The oral transmission of these melodies has led to the development of local variants, whose connection with one another is not always obvious.

The short text of the prokimen makes it convenient to compare a number of variants.

The relationship between the Carpatho-Rusyn prostopinije and other representatives of the znamennyj-"Kiev" chant family can be clearly seen in such a comparison.

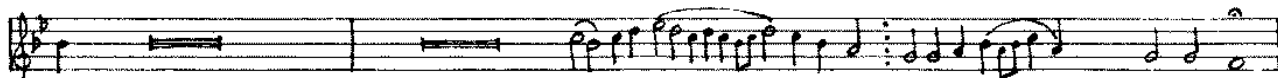
## The prokimen of Matins, hlas 1.

A: The znamennyj chant according to the Russian Obichods.



Ný-ñi voskresnú, hlahólet Hospód', položúsja vo spaseníje, ne o-bi-nú- sja o nem.

B: The "Kiev" chant according to the Russian Obichods.



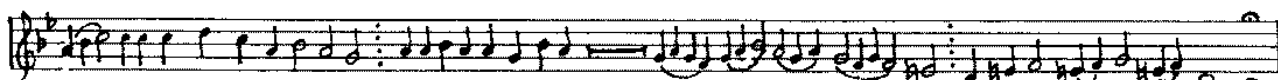
Ný-ñi voskresnú, hlahólet Hospód', položúsja vo spaseníje, ne o-bi-nú- sja o nem, ne o-bi-nú- sja o nem.

C: The chant of the Kijevo-pečers'ka Lavra (the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev), from the Obichod of 1910.



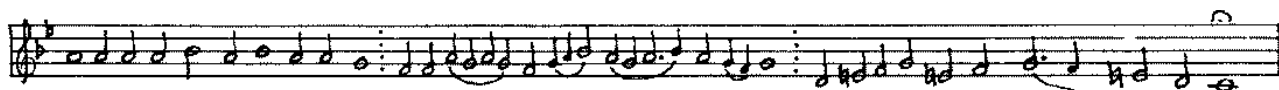
Ný-ñi voskresnú, hla- položúsja vo spa- ní- sja o nem, položúsja vo spa-se- ni-je, ne o-bi-nú- sja o nem. -hólet Hospód', -senije. ne obi-

D: From the printed Irmologion, L'viv, 1709.



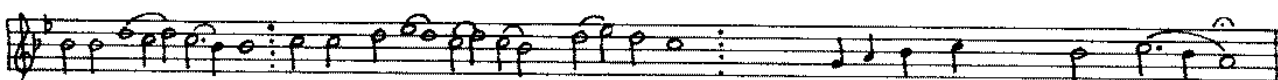
Ný-ñi voskre-snú hla-hó-let Ho-spod', položúsja vo spaseníje i ne obi-nú- ja- sja o nem, ne o-bi-nú- ja- sja o nem.

E: From the printed Irmologion, Počajev, 1794, and L'viv, 1904.



Ný-ñi voskre-snú, hla-hó-let Ho-spod', položú- sja vo spa- sé-ni-je, ne o-bi-nú- sja o nem.

F: The prokimen of the Liturgy, from Dolnyc'kij's Hlasopisnec, L'viv, 1894.



Búdi Ho- spo-di \* mí-lost' tvo-ja na nas,\* já-ko že \*\* u-po-vá-chom na t'a.

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G: From Vasylijans'ki cerkovni napivy, Rome, 1961.



Nýňi voskre-snú, hlahólet Ho-spod' položusja vo spasenije, ne o-bi-nú — sja o nem —————, ne obinúsja o nem.

H: From Polotn'uk's Napivnyk, Przemysl', 1902.



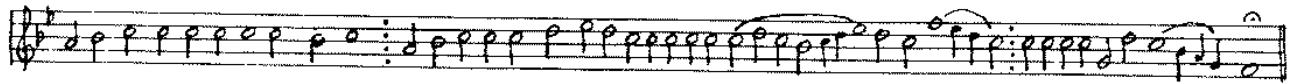
Nýňi voskre-snu,\* hlahólet Hospód' \* polo-žú — sja\* vo spa-sé — ni-je,\* ne o-bi-nú-sja o nem —————.

I: From Bokzaj's Cerkovnoje prostopinije, Užhorod, 1906.




Ný-ňi voskrésnu, hlahólet Hó-spod' —————, položúsja vo spasenije i ne obinúsja o nem i ne obinúsja o nem.

J: From Choma's Prostopinije, Mukačevo, 1930.



Nýňi voskresnú hlahólet Hospod': položúsja vo spásénije i ne obinú sja o nem i ne obinúsja o nem.

K: The extended tone for Boh Hospod' in the znamennyj version of the Russian Obichods.

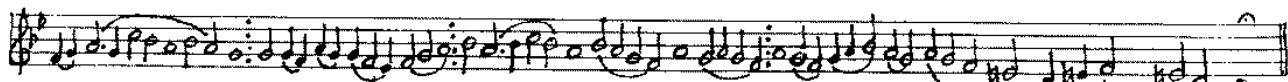


Boh Hos-pod', i ja-ví — sja nam, blahoslo-vén hrjadyj vo i — mja Hos-pod ————— ne.

L: The extended tone for Boh Hospod' in the version of the Western Ukrainian Irmologia.

The Carpatho-Rusyn versions (I and J) are closest to the Irmologion of 1709 and to Polotn'uk's version.

The opening melodic phrase is the same as that of the samohlasen tone of hlas 1.



Boh Ho ————— spod' i ja-vi- sja nam blaho — sloven hrjadyj vo i — mja Ho-spod ————— ne

## **The Samohlasen Tones**

### **The Stichiry Samohlasnyja**

The stichiry samohlasnyja, sung at Vespers and, on some days, in the last part of Matins, are hymnic stanzas accompanying psalm verses.

The chant for the psalm verses is similar in style to the prokimen tones, described in an earlier article.

In the old Greater znamennyj chant, the stichiry for feast days have melodies that are sometimes long and rather difficult, but those for weekdays have no melodies at all.

### **Simpler Melodies Are Developed**

At some unknown time (the 15th century?), a set of eight melodies, one for each hlas, was devised for use on weekdays, in a kind of simplified znamennyj chant.

Each tone consisted of a small number (two to five) of melodic phrases employing recitative to permit lengthening and shortening to fit any phrase of the text. These phrases are repeated in a fixed sequence until the singer reaches the last phrase of the text, which is sung to a special concluding melodic phrase.

### **Singing From Memory**

These simple melodies could be applied to any text; they could be learned quickly by memory; and they made congregational singing easy.

They became quite popular, and soon replaced the older znamennyj melodies on Sundays and often even on feast days.

### **The Written Record**

The Ruthenian version of these tones, as adopted in Moscow in the seventeenth century, was designated "Kiev chant".

Some manuscript chant books included these melodies; others gave only their beginning; but most books omitted them entirely, since they were simple enough to sing from memory.

They were included in the *Irmologia* printed in L'viv and Pochaev, beginning with the edition of 1709. Characteristic regional variants developed and were included in printed chant books of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### **The Influence of Folk Singing**

As with the prokimen tones, Carpatho-Rusyns developed their own distinctive variety of these samohlasen tones, incorporating features drawn from local folk singing practices (most notably, a final cadence on a downward leap of a fourth, which occurs in several hlasy.)

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Only in hlas III have the alterations been drastic; here, the tonality, contour, and melodic structure have been modified by some as yet unknown influence.

### Distinctiveness of the Prostopinije

The "ordinary chant" (obyčnyj napiv) melodies employed for similar texts in Russian choir singing are also based on the same "Kiev chant" melodies.

The prostopinije tones differ from those of the "ordinary chant" in accepting influences from folk singing, and in retaining more successfully the live and tuneful character of the original version.

## **Samohlasen Yesterday And Today**

The samohlasen tone, hlas V, from two sources.

The upper staff presents the version found in a Carpatho-Rusyn manuscript Irmologion written around 1700.

The lower gives the tone as sung nowadays. It was supplied to the author by the late Michael P. Hilko (+ 1974), a well-known cantor, choir director, and composer.

ГО-СПО-ДИ ВОЗ-ВЫХ КТЕ-БѢ ОУ-СЛЫ-ШИ МА ОУ-СЛЫ-  
 ГО-СПО-ДИ ВОЗ-ЗВАХ КТЕ-БѢ У-СЛЫ-ШИ МА. У-СЛЫ-  
 ШИ МА ГО-СПО-ДИ ГО-СПО-ДИ ВОЗ-ВЫХ КТЕ-БѢ  
 ШИ МА ГОС-ПО-ДИ. ГОС-ПО-ДИ ВОЗ-ЗВАХ КТЕ-БѢ  
 ОУ-СЛЫ-ШИ МА ВОИ-МИ ГЛАС... ОУ-СЛЫ-ШИ  
 У-СЛЫ-ШИ МА. ВОИ-МИ ГЛАСУ... У-СЛЫ-ШИ  
 НАС ГО-СПО-ДИ. И НИ-ГДЕ И ВСЕ-ГДА И ВО ВѢ-  
 МА ГОС-ПО-ДИ. И НИ-ГДЕ И ПРИС-НО И ВО ВѢ-  
 КИ ВѢ-КОМЪ А-МИНЬ.  
 КИ ВѢ-КОВ. А-МИНЬ

The tone consists of three repeating phrases (marked A, B, and C), a special concluding

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phrase (marked x), and the melody for the psalm verses (marked Ps).

The final note of Ps in the earlier version is probably a scribal mistake; it should be G rather than A, in agreement with Hilko's version.

### **Source:**

These originally appeared as a series of articles in the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* published by the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Society:

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