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Source: Florence, Biblioteca Marucelliana, MS A. CCXCIV.3., f.<1r>-<2v>

[<f.1r>-] Discourse addressed to Signore Cardinale Barberino on preserving the psalmody of the Greeks transferring it into our tablature.

Most eminent and reverend Signore,

It is something nowadays very well known how much pleasure Vostra Eminenza derives from preserving, with the generosity that is really worthy of an ecclesiastical prince, the ancient sacred records. In fact, apart from the fact that one can see that you derive no greater pleasure than from the studies that concern ecclesiastical matters and antiquity, who does not know how many unique remains and venerable for their antiquity you have had restored and preserved, as far as it is humanly possible, from the damage of time and other calamities that occur in the world? Therefore, I took courage to suggest to Vostra Eminenza an enterprise that, in my opinion, shall be as useful to the public as source of glory to you and easy and prompt to accomplish. Therefore, since the Greek ecclesiastical chant is a very important part of their rite, which You desire intensely that should be preserved and illustrated, as that learned meeting of Saint Basil (which you patronise and honour with your support continually and to the highest to this end) vouchsafes, I believe that you shall not find it unwelcome that I should propose a very simple way to preserve it as long as the world lasts. Nevertheless, we can be very concerned otherwise that the Greek ecclesiastical chant shall be completely destroyed and extinguished within a few decades. In fact, apart from the fact that we can see that the Greek nation is dying out all the time, we are almost arrived to the situation where it is barely possible to find [<f.1v>-] someone who understands their musical notes and is able to sing them. Therefore, one should not find it unusual if, because of the immense ignorance that reigns nowadays in the East, one can find barely one among the young men who come to this Greek College in Rome who has any knowledge of it. However, since they sing only in a particular style it is necessary that their plainchant (which is what it sounds like in practice) should be not very pleasant and melodic. Nevertheless, when years ago I let an expert musicians from Rome listen to one of these Greek singers, whom they call [psaltas], he recognised in that simple and ecclesiastical chant of his many ways to carry the voice and ornaments that are unusual for us but that could enrich and perfect our secular compositions. This is the benefit that such enterprise would produce, although it is mainly aimed at the preservation of this part of the Greek rite. This would be done by translating their notation (namely, their precise melodic turns, rhythmic features and ways to carry the voice – which are not many - that are expressed by their notation) into our notation. It would be useful to add then to this translation, that would fill two pages at the most, some example of sacred melody, for instance one taken from a tropary, as they call it, or from a response set and notated both in their system and in ours, which could then be printed or at least preserved in your most noble Library. [Thus, on the basis of this small example one would be able to understand and sing, if needed, all those books of Greek ecclesiastical chant that are found in the various libraries of Italy, France, Spain etcetera, which otherwise, once the live voice of these Greek singers is lost, would become completely useless. add. in marg.] The opportunity to do this [<f.2r>-] is great because of the presence of Monsignor Arcivescovo of Imbros, who is very versed in their ecclesiastical music and the notation of it. If he were to meet three or four times one of our most expert and intelligent musicians, who is endowed with good judgement and good ear to the highest degree, I believe that all the necessary information could be collected. However, because their way of writing or [semaiographia] and their whole musical method is very different from our own, the understanding of the meaning of their musical terms and of the essence and properties of those melodies that he shall hear sung will produce some difficulty to our musician, since he will not be able to distinguish easily between form and matter, particular and genera, what is appropriate and

what is not, and such things that depend from the intellectual discourse as from the sensual perception of the ears. However, one would be able to remedy this easily by giving the task to someone, who understands music and the Greek language sufficiently and who has enough experience of them, to be of assistance in the meetings by aiding the translation and the interpretation of what might cause some difficulty, as it was said earlier.