



# **The Past Is Always Present: The Revival of the Byzantine Musical Tradition at Mount Athos (Europea: Ethnomusicologies and Modernities)**

*Tore Tvarnø Lind*

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In *The Past Is Always Present*, Tore Tvarnø Lind examines the musical revival of Greek Orthodox chant at the monastery of Vatopaidi within the monastic society of Mount Athos, Greece. In particular, Lind focuses on the musical activities at the monastery and the meaning of the past in the monks' efforts at improving their musical performance practice through an emphasis on tradition.

Based on a decade of intense fieldwork and extensive interviews with members of Athos' monastic community, Lind covers a vast array of topics. From musical notation and the Greek oral tradition to CD covers and music production, the tension between tradition and modernity in the musical activity of the Athonite community raises a clear challenge to the quest to bring together Orthodox spirituality and quietude with musical production. *The Past Is Always Present* addresses all of these matters by focusing on the significance and meaning of the local chanting style. As Lind argues, Byzantine chant cannot be fully grasped in musicological terms alone, outside the context of prayer. Yet because chant is fundamentally a way of communicating with God, the sound generated must be exactly right, pushing issues of music notation, theory, and performance practice to the forefront.

Byzantine chant, Lind ultimately argues, is a modern phenomenon as the monastic communities of Mount Athos negotiate with the realities of modern Orthodox identity in Greece. By reporting on the musical revival activities of this remarkable community through the topics of notation, musical theory, drone-singing, and spiritual silence, Lind looks at the ways in which Athonite heritage is shaped, touching upon the Byzantine chant's contemporary relationship with practice of pilgrimage and the phenomenon of religious tourism.

Offering unique insights into the monastic culture at Mount Athos, *The Past Is Always Present* is for those especially interested in sacred music, past and present Greek culture, monastic life, religious tourism, and the fields of ethnomusicology and anthropology.

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