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MULTI-LINGUAL, PLURI-ETHNIC ORTHODOX MONASTICISM IN PALESTINE AND ON SINAI, IN THE LIGHT OF THE LITURGICAL SOURCES WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE LITURGICAL MANUSCRIPT SINAI ARABIC 232 (13TH CENTURY)

Abstract. The multiple similarities between the Greek and Syriac eucharistic liturgies of Antioch and its hinterland on the one hand and the Jerusalem Liturgy of Saint James on the other hand situate Jerusalem within a single cultural area as regards liturgical life. Compared with Antioch, however, we have much more early evidence for the Liturgy of the Hours in Jerusalem. Main sources, which are briefly presented in the paper, are

- a) the *Itinerary* of Egeria, who in the 380s produced extensive liturgical notes on celebrations in the Anastasis cathedral and the related stational sites;
- b) the Armenian Lectionary, 5th century, which gives more specific detail of the services held in Jerusalem;
- c) the Georgian Lectionary, 6th century, which gives a slightly later stage of the material described in the Armenian Lectionary;
- d) the Old *Iadgari*, or first Jerusalem Tropologion, entirely preserved in Georgian.

It is clear from these documents that the Anastasis Cathedral was officiated by monastic communities of different ethnic origins who used their own languages for their liturgical offices. We also have considerable evidence for this period for the Lavra of Saint Sabbas in the Judaeen desert, where several ethnic communities prayed separately in their own languages, coming together only for the Eucharistic synaxis (in Greek).

This multi-ethnic situation continues today on Mount Athos and continued throughout the Middle Ages on Sinai. The vast library of manuscripts at Saint Catherine's monastery is well known. It contains manuscripts in a very wide variety of Christian languages, including numerous liturgical texts.

The Manuscript Sinai Arabic 232 (13th century) contains a complete Psalter, a complete Horologion and other texts. It can be shown to be of Alexandrian Melkite origin, used by Arabic-speaking monks who were part of the Sinai community. There are archaic and specifically Egyptian, and even Coptic, elements that are of special interest.

Keywords: Multi-lingual monasticism, Pluri-lingual monasticism, Jerusalem, Palestine, Anastasis, Horologion, Alexandria, Sinai

Introduction

It is often imagined that the Orthodox Church is a kind of association of independent, fiercely national Churches. This ethnic identity of the individual local Churches is certainly a feature of the nineteenth-century revival of the Balkan states, with the concept of nation strongly inspired by Romantic philosophy. This mentality definitely lingers on in many areas, through the twentieth century until the present day. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church, following the 2nd Oecumenical Council (Constantinople I, 381) professes faith in the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”, and this universal dimension subsists to the present, sometimes in parallel with more local, nationalistic identities of a more or less anachronistic character.

In the first millennium, before the appearance of Romanticism, the Church manifested its unity without eliminating its rich cultural and linguistic diversity. Nowhere was this more evident than in Jerusalem, the centre of Christian pilgrimage *par excellence*, and in the various monastic foundations in Palestine. In particular, the Jerusalem Cathedral of the Anastasis (later called the Holy Sepulchre in the West) was very early on the site of various ethnic monastic communities. This situation continues today. In the fourth century we have evidence of monastic communities at the Anastasis who celebrated in Greek, Armenian and Georgian. In his eighth Baptismal Catechism, saint John Chrysostom mentions in respectful terms the Syriac-speaking Christians from outlying villages who were present at the Greek liturgy in Antioch¹. Today there are resident communities of Greeks, Arabs, Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians and Syriac speakers in and around the Anastasis cathedral, as well as the Latin community.

1. Jerusalem as an international monastic centre

The multiple similarities between the Greek and Syriac eucharistic liturgies of Antioch and its hinterland on the one hand and the Jerusalem Liturgy of Saint James on the other hand² situate Jerusalem within a single cultural area as regards liturgical life. Compared with Antioch, however, we have much more early evidence for the Liturgy of the Hours in Jerusalem. Main sources, which will be briefly presented in this paper, are

¹ JEAN CHRYSOSTOME, *Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, praef., trans., ed. A. WENGER, Paris 1957 [= SC, 50].

² See, for example, the results of Gabriele Winkler’s meticulous philological studies of the eucharistic Liturgies of Basil and of James, often referred to as BAS and JAS: G. WINKLER, *Die Basilius-Anaphora. Edition der beiden armenischen Redaktionen und der relevanten Fragmente, Übersetzung und Zusammenschau aller Versionen im Licht der orientalischen Überlieferungen*, Roma 2005 and EADEM, *Die Jakobus-Liturgie in ihren Überlieferungssträngen: Edition des Cod. arm. 17 von Lyon. Übersetzung und Liturgievergleich*, Roma 2013.

- a) the *Itinerary* of Egeria, who in the 380s produced extensive liturgical notes on celebrations in the Anastasis cathedral and the related stational sites³;
- b) the Armenian Lectionary, 5th century, which gives more specific detail of the services held in Jerusalem⁴;
- c) the Georgian Lectionary, 6th century⁵, which gives a slightly later stage of the material described in the Armenian Lectionary;
- d) the Old *Iadgari*, or first Jerusalem Tropologion, entirely preserved in Georgian⁶.

The *Itinerary* of Egeria

We do not know for certain who exactly was Egeria. She may have been from Spain and she may or not have been a nun, but she was certainly an assiduous pilgrim who visited all the sacred sites of Christianity in Asia Minor, Cappadocia, Edessa, Antioch, Jerusalem, Palestine and Egypt. Her importance is related to the very early date of her pilgrimages, the early 380s, her fascination with liturgical celebrations and the fact that she kept a detailed diary of all she saw and visited, including careful descriptions of the various services without, alas, giving almost any actual texts. Nevertheless, comparison of her accounts with the extensive indications contained in the Armenian and Georgian Lectionaries, dating from the following two centuries and also reflecting the liturgical practice of the Anastasis cathedral, shows that essential liturgical structures were already well in place in the late fourth century.

It should be remembered that the kingdoms of Armenia and Georgia were the very first to convert to Christianity, very early on in the fourth century and even before the establishment, by the emperor Constantine, of Constantinople, the New Rome, as an exclusively Christian capital city of the Roman empire. The presence of the Armenians and Georgians at the Anastasis is supplemented by Egeria's reference to a resident monastic community of Spoudaioi, *all the monks and virgins, as they call them here*, who ensured the highly developed daily liturgical cycle at the cathedral together with the lay people *not they alone, by lay people also, both men and women, who desire to begin their vigil early*, and also accompanied the frequent stational processions to the holy sites in and around the Holy City. *For priests, deacons, and monks in twos or threes take it in turn every day to say prayers after each of the hymns or antiphons. After the night service, forthwith the bishop betakes himself to his house, and from that hour all the monks return to*

³ EGERIA, *Itinerarium*, many editions, e.g., *Itinerarium Egeriae*, ed. E. FRANCESCHINI, R. WEBER, [in:] *Itineraria et alia geographica*, Turnhout 1958 [= CC.SL, 175], p. 29–103.

⁴ *Le codex arménien Jérusalem 121*, vol. I–II, ed. A. RENOUX, Turnhout 1969–1971 [= PO, 35–36].

⁵ M. TARCHNISCHVILI, *Le Grand Lectionnaire de l'Eglise de Jerusalem (V^e–VIII^e s.)*, vol. I–II, Louvain 1959–1960 [= CSCO, 189, 205].

⁶ *Udzvelesi Iadgari*, ed. E. METREVELI, Ts. CHANKIEVI, L. KHEVSURIANI, Tbilisi 1980.

the Anastasis, where psalms and antiphons, with prayer after each psalm or antiphon, are said until daylight; the priests and deacons also keep watch in turn daily at the Anastasis with the people, but of the lay people, whether men or women, those who are so minded, remain in the place until daybreak, and those who are not, return to their houses and betake themselves to sleep. As for the night station at Bethlehem, she says: *And since, for the sake of the monks who go on foot, it is necessary to walk slowly, the arrival in Jerusalem thus takes place at the hour when one man begins to be able to recognize another, that is, close upon but a little before daybreak.* These are only a few mentions by Egeria of the monastic community at Jerusalem. When we take a look at the liturgical texts that have survived from these earliest centuries, we are immediately struck by the fact that they are in a whole series of languages, particularly Armenian, Georgian, Syriac and, to a lesser extent, Greek.

In the composite manuscript Sinai Georgian 34, one section, copied by the indefatigable scribe and liturgical conservative Ioane Zosime, presents an ancient, maybe sixth-century, Horologion⁷ of the Anastasis cathedral comprising 12 day offices and 12 night offices. This was apart from the Eucharistic celebration, which was unlikely to have been daily at such an early date. In the 9th–10th centuries, Ioane Zosime refers to earlier Jerusalem practice as “kartulad” (in the Georgian manner) as opposed to more recent practices, dubbed “berdzulad” (in the Greek manner), which is a further piece of evidence to the effect that the Georgian monastic communities in Jerusalem and in the Laura of Saint Sabbas practised the Jerusalem rite in their own Caucasian language. The main evidence for this is the Georgian lectionary and the vast Old Tropologion of Jerusalem, preserved in its entirety in Georgian.

The Armenian and Georgian Lectionaries of Jerusalem

Even older than the Georgian documents is the remarkable Armenian Lectionary of Jerusalem, which dates back to the 5th century. It is thanks to the Armenian and Georgian manuscripts documenting the Jerusalem rite that we have detailed knowledge of the latter. No Greek lectionaries survive from this early period, and only fragmentary sections of the hymnography of this early period have been preserved in Greek, including important recent discoveries among the New Finds of Sinai, when a wall in the monastery library collapsed in 1975, revealing a considerable stash of early manuscripts, both complete and fragmentary, in a large range of early languages in Greek, Syriac, Georgian, Slavonic and several others⁸.

⁷ M. VAN ESBRÖECK, *Le manuscrit sinaitique géorgien 34 et les publications récentes de liturgie palestinienne*, OCP 46, 1980, p. 125–141; S.R. FRØYSHOV, *L'Horologe 'géorgien' du Sinaiticus ibericus 34. Edition, traduction et commentaire* [unpublished doctoral thesis, submitted 2003, Paris 2004 (corrected edition)].

⁸ On the rediscovery of the so-called ‘New Finds’, see Π.Γ. ΝΙΚΟΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ et al., *Ta νέα ευρήματα του Σινά*, Αθήνα 1998, p. 25–49; and the overview by B. ISAKSSON in his *The Monastery of St Catherine*

A Lectionary in this period was not just a list of readings, nor a collection of pericopes. It was more like a liturgical Typicon, giving a brief account of the order of the services with indications of the readings, psalmody and hymnography appointed for each day. The hymnography is generally indicated only by incipits, but these can be completed by the later manuscripts of the Tropologion which supply many of these hymns *in extenso*. Thanks to the Armenian and Georgian Lectionaries, we can not only follow the early development of the Jerusalem rite, but also establish the precise system of biblical readings at the services throughout the liturgical year. No Greek equivalents of these manuscripts have survived, so the Armenian and Georgian contribution to our knowledge of the early Jerusalem rite is essential. These texts also witness to the multi-lingual and pluri-ethnic character of the Orthodox Christian community in Palestine at that time.

It is clear from these documents that the Anastasis Cathedral was officiated by monastic communities of different ethnic origins who used their own languages for their liturgical offices. We also have considerable evidence for this period for the Lavra of Saint Sabbas in the Judaean desert, where several ethnic communities prayed separately in their own languages, coming together only for the Eucharistic synaxis (in Greek).

This multi-ethnic situation continued on Sinai⁹. *The multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic community [...] characterized St Catherine's through much of the Middle Ages*¹⁰. The vast library of manuscripts at Saint Catherine's monastery is well known. It contains manuscripts in a very wide variety of Christian languages, including numerous liturgical texts. As Nina Glibetić notes¹¹: [...] *extraordinary manuscript evidence [is] connected to St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai, Egypt. This ancient monastic foundation contains the world's oldest continuously operating library and houses some of the most precious liturgical evidence for the history of Orthodox liturgy, copied in a variety of languages and representing a variety of traditions, including Greek, Syriac, Georgian, Arabic, and Slavonic*. As for Southern Slav monks on Sinai, Nina Glibetić also states *the probability that there were monks from medieval Serbian lands who lived and collaborated with other Balkan Slavs at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai in the eleventh century*¹².

and the New Find, [in:] *Built on Solid Rock. Studies in Honour of Professor Ebbe Egede Knudsen on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday, April 11th 1997*, Oslo 1997, p. 128–140.

⁹ For a cursory overview of liturgy at St Catherine's, see *Approaching the Holy Mountain. Art and Liturgy at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai*, ed. S. GERSTEL, R. NELSON, Turnhout 2011 [= CMu, 11], and the article therein: R. TAFT, *Worship on Sinai in the First Christian Millennium: Glimpses of a Lost World*, p. 143–178.

¹⁰ N. GLIBETIĆ, *The 'New Finds' Glagolitic Manuscripts as Sources for Medieval Serbian Liturgical History*, [in:] *Вера и мисао у вртлогу времена. Међународни зборник радова у част митрополита Амфилохија (Радовића) и епископа Атанасија (Јевтића)*, ed. А. ЈЕВТИЋ, М. КНЕЖЕВИЋ, Р. КИСИЋ, Београд–Подгорица–Фоча 2021, p. 188.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 189.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 194.

We should also mention that the later foundation of Mount Athos (just over one thousand years ago) still has thriving monasteries and sketes that are Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian, as well as over twenty Greek monasteries. The Georgian monastery (Iviron) and two Russian sketes (Saint Andrew and Saint Elijah) have since been taken over by Greek monks. The Latin Amalfitan Benedictine foundation on Athos did not last so long, although its ruins can still be seen.

2. The Manuscript Sinai Arabic 232 (13th century)

After this *mise-en-scène*, I shall present this Arabic manuscript, which contains a complete Psalter, a complete Horologion and other texts. I have been studying this codex for several years and have published an English translation of most of the Horologion¹³. It contains archaic and specifically Egyptian, and even Coptic, elements that are of special interest. The evidence I have discovered shows that the Horologion is of Alexandrian Melkite origin, used by Arabic-speaking monks who must have come from Alexandria in Egypt and who were part of the Sinai community.

This manuscript was clearly intended for liturgical use, either individually by a monk in his cell or as an Arabic-speaking linguistic community. Although the liturgical language of Alexandria was originally Greek, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 there was a schism between supporters and opponents of the Council. As a result, the non-Chalcedonian party, the ancestors of to-day's thriving Coptic Orthodox Church, began to favour the Coptic language for liturgical celebration, although Greek never disappeared completely and today's Coptic Orthodox liturgical books contain many expressions and whole phrases in Greek. Even the Egyptian rite absorbed several waves of influence from Jerusalem and later from Constantinople. The Chalcedonian party maintained the Greek liturgy, gradually using Arabic translations in parallel to the Greek as the population in the city tended to speak more Arabic than Greek after the Arab conquest. Nevertheless, many Greek terms and expressions survived in Arabic transliteration, as can be seen as late as the 13th century in Sinai Arabic 232. What is more remarkable is the discovery that this Melkite (i.e. Chalcedonian) Arabic Horologion retains archaic elements

¹³ A. WADE, *L'Horologion du Sinai Arabe 232 (13^{me} s.), témoin d'une fusion pluriculturelle*, [in:] *Traditions recomposées. Liturgie et doctrine en harmonie ou en tension*, 63^e Semaine d'études liturgiques, Paris, Institut Saint-Serge, 21–24 juin 2016, ed. A. LOSSKY, G. SEKULOVSKI, Münster 2017 [= SOF, 80], p. 111–124; IDEM, *Individual Prayer in the Monastic Cell between Alexandria and Mount Sinai in the 13th Century: the Hours in Sin. Ar. 232*, [in:] 64^e Semaine d'études liturgiques, Paris–Münster 2017, p. 353–374; IDEM, *The Enigmatic Horologion contained in Sinai Ar. 232*, [in:] *Let Us Be Attentive! Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy*, ed. M. LÜSTRAETEN, B. BUTCHER, S. HAWKES-TEEPLES, Münster 2020, p. 285–305; IDEM, *Byzantinised or Alexandria-nised – or both? Vespers in the 13th c. Melkite Alexandrian Arabic Horologion Sinai Arabic 232*, MDPI.R 13 (607), 2022.

that show that the Egyptian Melkites originally used a Hierosolymitan type Horologion and that this in due time was both Alexandrianised and Byzantinised. We can therefore say that Sin. Ar. 232 is an Egyptian redaction of a Middle Byzantine Horologion with archaic Hierosolymitan features, one of the most striking of which is the ancient tri-ode system at Matins, which must have come directly from Jerusalem and cannot have been brought from Constantinople, where the daily nine-ode canon had already supplanted the earlier Hagiopolite tri-ode system.

Some of the prayers included near the end of Matins and Vespers are not attested in other manuscripts of the Byzantine Horologion, nor in today's Byzantine Horologion, but are still to be found in the contemporary Coptic Horologion, the *Agpeya*. In addition, several offices commemorate Egyptian saints and also, prominently, saint Mark, patron of Alexandria. These saints are not mentioned in any non-Egyptian Byzantine Horologia. The concluding troparia of Vespers also contain a list of Egyptian monastic saints, followed by an interesting series of six prayers, one of which corresponds to Prayer seven of Byzantine Vespers (of Constantinopolitan origin, from the Asmatikos Vespers¹⁴) and two of which are found in the Coptic *Agpeya*¹⁵.

There are also Syriacisms in the Christian Arabic of the period, which also occur in Sinai Arabic 232, despite its Egyptian origin. These include the title of the Mother of God, *Martmaryam* (from Syriac *martā* [lady]), and "saint" rendered as *māry*, (Lord, saint) with the final -y actually pronounced in Arabic although it is silent in Syriac.

These brief observations show that, as late as the 13th century, an essentially Arabic-speaking community of monks from Alexandria in Egypt could be part of the basically Greek-speaking monastery of Sinai, whose library shows that the multi-lingual and pluri-ethnic tradition of Jerusalem, already witnessed from the 4th century onwards, was still very much present and alive. This witness to the Church's catholicity has much to contribute in the twenty-first century.

¹⁴ M. ARRANZ, *Les prières sacerdotales des vêpres byzantines*, OCP 37, 1971, p. 85–124, especially p. 95–98, cf. IDEM, *Как молились Богу древние византийцы. Суточный круг богослужения по древним спискам византийского евхология*, Ленинград 1979.

¹⁵ In the Coptic *Agpeya*, the first of these prayers corresponds to the prayer at the end of the Eleventh Hour. The prayer is found in English translation in *The Agpeya, being the Coptic Orthodox Book of Hours according to the present-day usage in the Church of Alexandria*, Sts. Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria Orthodox Publications, s.a., p. 66. The Arabic version (a different translation from this manuscript) is found in *الأجبية*, البهنسا, الأجيبة بنى يوسف واليهنسا, s.a., p. 145–146. The second "Coptic" prayer corresponds to the prayer at the end of the Twelfth Hour in the Coptic *Agpeya* (*op. cit.*, p. 80, in English and *الأجبية* *op. cit.*, p. 166–167 in Arabic, but in a different translation). This prayer is found in the Slavonic night-time prayers, see note 71 in my article *Byzantinised or Alexandrianised...* (see note 11 above).

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