

Aural Architecture in four ancient capitals

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In the fourth century, as the Church emerged from persecution, two models of Christian community developed, each with its own type of ritual. Monastic communities, made up of people who rejected life in the late antique city, and urban communities which sought to Christianize it. The model urban community was the one in Jerusalem, Christianity's holy city, and its ceremonies were imitated everywhere. In the following centuries, therefore, similar rites developed in the other great cities of the empire. Besides Jerusalem itself, we are best informed about the rites that developed in Rome and in Constantinople, or new Rome, each of which begins with structures built by the Emperor Constantine or members of his family. In the fourth and fifth centuries, there are many ritual and architectural similarities. As we move to the seventh century and later, we can see each city beginning to develop in an independent direction, differentiating itself from the others.

Jerusalem

In Jerusalem, the cult begins with the recovery of the tomb of Jesus. Local tradition held that this had been covered over by the temple of Aphrodite, built under the emperor Hadrian following the Second Jewish War (135 A.D.). It was at this time that all Jews were expelled from the city, and efforts were made to obliterate the memory of its history as a religious capital. But the temple of Aphrodite may, instead, have had the opposite effect of marking the location of the site and thus preserving its significance. According to Eusebius, at any rate, the workers Constantine ordered to dig up the tomb had no trouble identifying what they were looking for: it emerged from the darkness into the light like an image of the savior returning to life. Around it Constantine built a complex of buildings that would also include the site of Golgotha and a large basilica.¹

[slides of the building complex, same site as the current Church of the Holy Sepulchre]

We first learn about the Christian cultic practices from a unique travelogue, written by a woman named Egeria about the year 383.² This work never circulated widely, so we have only two incomplete manuscripts of it, both discovered in modern times.³ Thus we lack the original title of the work, as well as its beginning and ending, and several leaves in between. Only fairly recently have we come to agreement on the author's name. Though she traveled with a group that is not described in the extant text, she seems to have been a celibate monastic, for she mentions no husband or family, and clearly states that she is writing for the "sisters" of her community back home. Indeed her text is written in a peculiar patois/argot, which reads like Latin turning into Spanish, and has therefore attracted much attention from Latin and Romance philologists. It is just the sort of idiolect we might expect in a woman of that time, who had less access to education than an upper class man of her generation. This, in turn, tends to confirm that her travelogue, or Itinerary is almost the only early Christian text that was certainly authored by a woman.

Egeria describes an entire liturgical year in Jerusalem, which must reflect the period 381-84 A.D.⁴ As she tells it, on every day that commemorated an event in the life of Christ, the entire community went out to celebrate in the place where the event (according to local belief) had actually occurred. Thus on January 6 the birth of Jesus was celebrated at Bethlehem; on the last Saturday in Lent the raising of Lazarus was celebrated in Bethany. At every location, the celebration included Bible readings about the commemorated event, and the singing of psalms that were exegetically associated with it, a practice that Egeria greatly appreciated, though it seems to have been new to her.

And what I admire and value most is that all the hymns and antiphons and readings they have, and all the prayers the bishop says, are always relevant to the day which is being observed and to the place in which they are used. They never fail to be appropriate.⁵

The readings and psalms that Egeria heard were collected into a liturgical book, which survives only in Armenian translation, made at a time when the church in Armenia adopted the Jerusalem liturgy as its own. The oldest manuscript of this Armenian lectionary seems to translate a lost Greek original that must have been compiled between 417 and 438-39, thus about two generations after Egeria's visit.⁶ Its provisions are nevertheless very consistent with what Egeria described. By far the most important cult site was a complex of buildings centered on the tomb of Jesus, which had been begun by Constantine.

The later development of the Jerusalem rite was known from manuscripts in the Georgian language, translations of lost Greek books from about the eighth century. With the passage of time and under the pressures of Islamic rule, the Greek community in Jerusalem eventually adopted the Byzantine rite. As a result, very few Greek manuscripts of the Hagiopolite rite have been preserved. Until recently only one Greek manuscript of the Jerusalem rite was known, containing only Holy Week and Easter Week and dating from the year 1122.⁷ A few others have turned up among the new finds on Mount Sinai, but have yet to be published or fully investigated.

Of all the rites described by Egeria, the most important has left a number of descendants, namely the Sunday resurrection vigil celebrated at the Holy Tomb. As Egeria described it, three psalms were sung, each followed by a prayer, then the bishop went into the tomb, where a light burned continually, and read a gospel account of the resurrection. The most dramatic of survival of this is the rite of the Holy Fire, celebrated each Easter. But more important for music history was the weekly celebration, which took place every Sunday morning "as if it was Easter."⁸ The bishop's reading of a resurrection account gradually solidified into a practice of reading all four gospels in regular succession, one per week. But since most gospels preserve more than one account of the Resurrection, by the sixth century each gospel account was split in half, producing an eight-week cycle of resurrection readings.⁹ It was during this period that we find the first evidence of the eight musical modes, one for each week of the cycle. Tenth-century Georgian manuscripts, thought to preserve the eighth-century state of the liturgy, give us lists of the psalms that were sung according to each musical mode.¹⁰ The most developed form is preserved in the Byzantine rite, where there is now a sequence of eleven readings from the four gospels, for which there is a set of eleven troparia heothina attributed to Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos.

Byzantine liturgical books still prescribed two of Egeria's three psalms at the Sunday morning vigil: one with a variable text, the other fixed. But as the vigil is often celebrated today, only the fixed psalm remains. The text is the last verse of the books of Psalms: "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6). One can see this ritual, celebrated by the archbishop of Thessaloniki, in the following video. You can fast forward to 3:30.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ctk6X3LbDJQ>

3:31 Choir: "Amen. Pasa pnoi enesato ton kyrion." "Let every breath praise the Lord" (three times)
3:56 Deacon: "Let us pray to the Lord, our God, that we may be made worthy to hear the holy Gospel."
4:05: Choir: "Kyrie eleison." "Lord, have mercy" (three times).
4:08 Deacon: "Wisdom. Arise. Let us hear the holy Gospel."
4:13 Bishop (off screen): "Peace be to all."
4:16 Choir: "And with your spirit."
4:19 Priest-reader: "The reading is from the holy Gospel according to Matthew."
4:24 Deacon: "Let us be attentive."
4:27 Choir: "Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you."
4:30-6:40 The priest-reader reads the Resurrection Gospel, Matthew 28:16-20, then blesses the assembled worshippers with the gospel book.
6:49 Choir: "Glory to you, Lord, glory to you."

Rome

Chronologically, the next city for which we have evidence is Rome. There, on about half the days of the year, the pope celebrated Mass at one of the churches of the city. This church was known as the *statio*, a word that had a long association with fasting, but also came to mean a stopping place on a procession. It is from this word that we derive the modern term "stational liturgy" for this type of peripatetic liturgical system.

Early evidence of stational churches survives in sermons of Leo and Gregory, but the earliest complete list of stational churches is in the oldest list of epistle readings for the Roman Mass, the early eighth-century Epistolary of Würzburg.¹¹ Within the next few centuries, we also have station lists in gospel lectionaries, sacramentaries containing the Mass prayers, and graduals containing the Mass chants. Variations between the lists are minor.¹²

While Jerusalem's ritual center was at the complex centered on Golgotha and the Holy Tomb, Rome had two central churches that were used for the most important feasts: St. John Lateran, the pope's cathedral, and St. Peter's at the Vatican, where the first of the apostles was buried. On other days, the choice of stational church was determined by the relics that were held there, most of which belonged to early Christian martyrs. Thus the gospel of the raising of Lazarus, whom Jesus called out of his tomb, was read in the fourth week of Lent at the church of St. Eusebius, who was martyred by being locked in a small room. On the Sunday after Easter, the new converts who had just been reborn in

baptism assembled to remove their white robes at the church of St. Pancras, a child martyr. The main Mass on Christmas was celebrated at St. Mary Major, where the relics of the manger were held.

The stational system was built atop an older classification of Roman churches. At the low end of the hierarchy were the deaconries, which had storehouses for distributing food to the poor. Other churches served monastic communities, some of which also hosted pilgrims and cared for the sick. Pope Gregory the Great founded such a monastery in his palatial home on the Caelian hill, overlooking the Circus Maximus. St. Saba is the best known of the Greek-speaking monastic churches. At a more prestigious level were the tituli, which were understood to have been built on the site of house churches from the pre-Constantinian era. The titulus, or title, was the name of the original owner of the home. The churches of St. Clement and St. Cecilia were among this group. Largest and most important were the basilicas, the most prominent of which were the “seven churches” built during or shortly after the Constantinian era: St. Peter on Vatican hill, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, St. Lawrence Outside the Walls, Holy Cross in Jerusalem, Holy Apostles (now St. Sebastian) on the Appian Way. Santa Sabina, though not among the seven, is another large ancient basilica; its mosaic inscriptions say it was built for a community that included both gentile and Jewish converts to Christianity. In each of the great basilicas, the daily liturgy was carried out by monks who lived in nearby monasteries. St. Peter’s had four such monasteries, others had two or three, though we are not always sure how many.¹³ These monasteries could be described as pre-Benedictine, and it is from somewhere in or near this milieu that the Benedictine rule emerged. As Roman Christianity transitioned through the Carolingian era into the Middle Ages, however, only St. Paul Outside the Walls became Benedictine. The clergy of St. Peter’s became canons; those at the Lateran and St. Mary Major became canons regular. However, it is the practices of the pre-Benedictine monks that were eventually enshrined in the medieval and Tridentine Roman rite. That is why the daily office of the Roman Breviary is of the monastic type, structured around the weekly recitation of the 150 psalms.

A particularly interesting part of the Roman stational calendar is the sequence for Easter week, when the stations were held at the seven churches. We can see the beginnings of this arrangement in the sermons of Gregory the Great,¹⁴ but the Roman Missal in its final form is better organized.

Gregory, Sermons 21-26 for 15-21 April 591	Stations in the <i>Missale Romanum</i> , 1570
21 Pascha: St. Mary Major Mark 16:1-7	Dominica Resurrectionis, St. Mary Major
22 Feria II John 20:1-9 St. John Lateran	Feria II: St. Peter
23 Feria III Luke 24:13-35 St. Peter	Feria III: St. Paul
	Feria IV: St. Lawrence
24 Feria V John 21:1-14 St. Lawrence outside the walls	Feria V: SS. Twelve Apostles (=St. Sebastian)
25 Feria VI John 20:11-18 St. John Lateran	Feria VI: St. Mary <i>ad Martyres</i> (=the Pantheon)
26 Sabbato John 20: 19-31 St. John Lateran	Sabbato in Albis: St. John Lateran

At the same time, a few manuscripts preserve a very ancient set of evening services for these days, the only survival in Rome of a non-monastic form of the daily office. Each night of this week, the clergy gathered at the great crucifix in St. John Lateran, singing “Kyrie eleison.” Then they sang some

Vespers psalms with Alleluia refrains, then processed to the baptistry chapels singing melismatic Alleluias with verses in Latin and Greek.¹⁵ The boys choir had a prominent role in this ceremony, alternating with the men.

Examples of surviving music (Old Roman chant) in the Naxos playlist.

1. Two psalms (109, 110) with alleluia antiphons. On this recording the psalms are not sung in full, only two verses (alternating half-choirs of men), the antiphon by the boys, the Gloria patri by the men, then antiphon by the boys again. Then (at 2:58) the Alleluia Dominus regnavit in Latin.
2. Another psalm (112) with alleluia antiphon, the (at 1:36) Alleluia O Kyrios ebasilevsen in Greek. This corresponds to Alleluia Dominus regnavit above.
3. Another Greek alleluia, Epi si Kyrie.

What can we know about the organization of ritual space in the Roman church buildings during the period of stationary liturgy? Though many churches in Rome date, in principle, to very early times, unfortunately no Roman church is in anything like 8th-10th-century state. They have been remodeled multiple times since the early medieval period. By the end of the Middle Ages most were in poor condition, and were lavishly rebuilt by their cardinal patrons of the Renaissance and Baroque era. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a burst of antiquarian revision that tried to return many buildings to what was imagined to have been their early Christian state. Another wave of restructuring occurred after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), to make these building more consistent with the Council's liturgical reforms.

Some things we can know, however, either from archeological and literary research on the history of the great basilicas, or from the study of churches that were closed during the early middle ages and therefore never remodeled. Best known of the closed churches is Santa Maria Antica in the Roman forum. Another is the old basicila of St. Nereus and Acchileus at the entrance to the Catacomb of Domitilla. There are also the old churches beneath the present basilicas of St. Clement and St. Mark in Piazza Venezia.

All of these churches were built in basilica form: rectangular, with two rows of columns, an apse at one end with a raised floor, containing the altar, the episcopal chair and the synthronon where the priests and deacons sat. In front of this area, on the level of the lower floor, was an enclosed area for the choir, which included a raised ambo from which the gospel and other readings were proclaimed.

[slides of early Roman churches, including areas not open to the public]

Constantinople

The stationary cycle of Constantinople is preserved in the tenth-century Typikon,¹⁶ a book comparable to the ordinal of the medieval Western liturgy. It records processions to many places in the

city, especially to shrines of saints on their feasts. But on major feasts like Christmas and Epiphany, we are told that “This synaxis takes places in the Great Church and in the churches in every place.” The Great Church here, as in Jerusalem, was the cathedral and ritual center, the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia. The first building on this site, built by Constantine, was in the form of a basilica, but burned down in 404 during riots that followed the exile of the Patriarch, St. John Chrysostom. Fragments of the second building, built by Emperor Theodosius II the following year, suggest the basilica shape was retained, and reveal iconography that would have been familiar in Rome. These excavated fragments can now be seen in the picnic area next to the present structure. The second church was destroyed during the Nika revolt in 532. The present structure, of course, is the well-known edifice, built by the emperor Justinian and consecrated in 537, but repaired several times following earthquake damage. Its interior, too, is hardly in its original state, as it was converted into a mosque after the city fell to the Turks in 1453, and then into a museum during the rulership of Ataturk in the early 20th century.¹⁷ But the unique design of the building, dominated by a massive dome, marks a step away from the shared antique culture that favored basilica plans in both East and West.

Up to the Latin conquest, the liturgy carried on in Hagia Sophia was not the Byzantine rite used by all the Orthodox churches today, but a non-monastic cathedral rite known as the Asmatiki Akolouthia or Sung Office.¹⁸ The morning office in this rite had a peculiar shape in which the singers gradually approached the altar area, stopping in turn at each of the green lines that can still be seen in the floor.

[slides of Hagia Sophia]

When the Greeks reconquered city of Constantine from the Latins in 1261, worship in Greek was restored, but the task was given to the monks, who followed a monastic rite of Palestinian origin related to the Jerusalem rite. It was this that became the Byzantine rite followed by Orthodox churches today. However the Sung Office continued to be celebrated in other Greek cathedrals, notably at Thessaloniki where it lasted right up to the Turkish conquest of the fifteenth century. For that reason a small number of manuscripts still survive that preserve the repertory of the Sung Office.

The Sung Office did not have a resurrection vigil like that of the Byzantine rite. On Easter morning, a deacon chanted the first chapter of the Gospel of John in Latin. But one of the chants that was sung on Easter morning does survive today, where it is probably the best-known of all Byzantine hymns:

Christos Anesti. Text: Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down death, and bestowing life upon those in the tombs.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zm09Z6aGfPg> Patriarch of Constantinople reads the Resurrection Gospel (Mark 16:1-8), then starts the hymn “Christos anesti” at 3:33.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZSyTUsdpu0> Another rendition of the melody, quite clear with no bells or other distractions.

Alexandria

Rome, New Rome, and Jerusalem were not the only cities in the Roman empire, of course. Alexandria and Antioch were, in fact, the second and third largest cities after Rome. The bishops of these cities still have the title “patriarch” in both the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic hierarchies.

From the documents we have, it is not known that either Antioch or Alexandria had a stational liturgy. In both cities, under Muslim rule, the Greek-speaking Christians gradually adopted the Byzantine rite, and the local liturgical tradition was preserved by non-Chalcedonian or Monophysite Christians, translated into local languages. Thus elements of the Alexandrian rite survive in Coptic and Ethiopic; elements of the Antiochene rite survive in Syriac and Armenian.

For the Alexandrian liturgical tradition, the most abundant early evidence is in the lectionary, which gives us the readings for the entire liturgical year. The oldest accessible manuscript dates from the ninth century, but there are many early fragments whose relationships to the main tradition remain under-investigated. The lectionary is notable for its comprehensive use of scripture: four New Testament readings at every Mass, with additional readings at the morning and evening office. Unlike the Roman epistle and gospel books, however, there are no indications of stational churches.

What about the early church buildings of Alexandria? One problem we face here is that, due to a series of earthquakes, much of ancient Alexandria is now under water. Archeological investigations have, not surprisingly, focused on the Pharaonic and pre-Christian sites,¹⁹ come from an era when, as Philo Judaeus complained, the Egyptians worshipped animals. From literary evidence we know that many early Christian buildings were converted pagan temples. Architectural study of old churches outside of Alexandria confirm that classical styles and basilica plans were used in Egypt too.²⁰ In time, of course, the Coptic style began to diverge, just as Byzantine models did. The Coptic Cathedral of St. Mark in modern Alexandria, a 20th century building, illustrates where Egyptian Christian architecture would go.

[slides of Egyptian churches]

In many ways Coptic chant is different from Byzantine chant. How different can be heard by comparing Coptic melodies for the Christos anesti text, which is still sung in Greek in the Coptic church. T

Coptic versions of Christos Anesti: http://tasbeha.org/hymn_library/view/372

The melodies used in the Coptic church could be compared with the melody sung by Byzantine-rite Arabs (Melkites). This is recognizably related to the Greek melody, while the Coptic melodies really are not.

Melkite version (Byzantine rite in Syriac/Arabic) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epM8SBuDjFk> begins at 0:32, after “Amen” at 0:27.

Conclusion

Architectural history shows a more-or-less common culture at the beginning, centered on the basilica structure, but gradually moving in different directions as we approach the Middle Ages. Musical evidence is not fully available till 11th-12 century in Latin and Greek, till 20th century in Coptic, but there seems to be a similar trend of moving away from an original, shared culture in Greek.

¹ Eusèbe de Césarée, *Vie de Constantin*, ed. F. Winkelmann et al., SC 559 (Paris: Cerf 2013) III.25-40, pp. 384-401, with the excavation of the tomb at III. 28, pp. 388-89.

² The best translation and introduction is John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Aris and Phillips, 1999; repr. with corrections 2006). An international effort to reconstruct her route and identify the monuments she saw can be found at <http://www.egeriaproject.net>.

³ The Arezzo codex VI,3, discovered and edited first by J. F. Gamurrini, and article in *Revue Bénédictine* 2010. The newest edition is *Egérie: Journal de Voyage (Itinéraire)*, ed. Pierre Maraval, Sources Chrétiennes 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982).

⁴ See Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* 169-71, 35-45.d;

⁵ 47.5. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* 163.

⁶ See Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* 175-76.

⁷ See Peter Jeffery, "The Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered: The Georgian Witnesses to Jerusalem Chant." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47 (1994) 1-39. P. Jeffery, "The Lost Chant Tradition of Early Christian Jerusalem: Some Possible Melodic Survivals in the Byzantine and Latin Chant Repertories" *Early Music History* 11 (1992) 151-90.

⁸ 24.8-11, see Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* 144-45.

⁹ Stig Simeon R. Frøyshov, "The early development of the liturgical eight-mode system in Jerusalem," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 51 (2007) 139-178. Peter Jeffery, "The Earliest Oktōēchoi: The Role of Jerusalem and Palestine in the Beginnings of Modal Ordering," *The Study of Medieval Chant, Paths and Bridges, East and West: In Honor of Kenneth Levy*, ed. Peter Jeffery (Woodbridge/Cambridge: Boydell Press, 2000) 144-206.

¹⁰ Peter Jeffery, "The Sunday Office of Seventh-Century Jerusalem in the Georgian Chantbook (Iadgari): A Preliminary Report." *Studia Liturgica* 21 (1991) 52-75.

¹¹ G. Morin, "Le plus ancien Comes ou Lectionnaire de l'Église romaine," *Revue Bénédictine* 27 (1910) 41-74.

¹² Antoine Chavasse, *Les lectionnaires romains de la messe au VII^e et au VIII^e siècle: Sources et dérivés*, 2 vols., Spicilegii Friburgensis Subsidia 22/1-2 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1993).

¹³ Peter Jeffery, "The Roman Liturgical Year and the Early Liturgy of St. Peter's," in *Old Saint Peter's, Rome*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, John Osborne, Carol M. Richardson and Joanna Story, British School at Rome Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 157-76.

¹⁴ Grégoire le Grand, *Homélies sur l'évangile, Livre II: Homélies XII-XL*, ed. Raymond Étaix et al., SC 522 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2008) table p. 17, texts pp. 25-159.

¹⁵ See John K. Brooks-Leonard, *Easter Vespers in Early Medieval Rome: A Critical Edition and Study* (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1988).

¹⁶ Juan Mateos, ed., *Le Typicon de la grande Église*, 2 vols., Orientaliae Christiana Analecta 165-66 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1962-63).

¹⁷ Brief popular history at www.hagiasophia.com.

¹⁸ Alexander Lingas, "Sunday Matins in the Byzantine Cathedral Rite: Music and Liturgy," (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1996).

¹⁹ Discovery Channel skin divers explore Cleopatra's underwater palace in <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBja7TUobVE>.

²⁰ Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt 300 B.C.--A.D. 700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 236-321.