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Gospel Lectionary (Evangelistarion)

In Greek, manuscript on parchment

[Byzantium: Constantinople? 12th century with additions in the 14th / 15th centuries and ca. 1550]

201 folios, in 25 gatherings of 8 with signatures, with an additional bifolium at the end, ff. 1-2 added in the sixteenth (?) century, missing f. 144, later (eighteenth-century?) Arabic foliation, written in a fine Greek minuscule hand in brown ink, headings in Greek red uncials, on between 20 and 22 blind-scored lines in 2 columns (182 x 148 mm.), Greek signatures in the lower right margins, second set of later binding signatures (e.g., for quire 11, f. 81), pricking preserved, NUMEROUS ORNATE CALLIGRAPHIC CAPITALS, in red, on 2 lines, and occurring on nearly every page, with TWO DECORATED HEADPIECES painted in red and black (ff. 43v and 153), many smaller headpieces (f. 65v, and separating the months in the Menologion, e.g., 159v, 165v, 185v, 189v, 194v, and so forth), many contemporary and slightly later marginal notations, in Greek, modern French rubrics in pencil identifying the texts, in excellent condition, parchment stiff, some holes and tears, signs of wear and soiling but fully intact. Byzantine MEDIEVAL MONASTIC BINDING of goat (?) over thick wooden boards, rosettes stamped on upper and lower covers, blind-tooled with scored lines into panels, traces of clasps now missing, chain stitches on 5 sewing stations, spine raised "alla Grecca" with red and green silk for the head bands. In a blue linen clamshell box. Dimensions c. 250 x 190 mm.

Twelfth-century Greek manuscripts are now exceedingly rare on the market, and this one bound in a beautiful fourteenth-century (or possibly fifteenth?) Byzantine monastic binding, evidently never rebaked and in excellent condition, survives as an intact Byzantine object. It bears normal signs of continued use and manipulation over four centuries. The content of its marginalia, the character of its extensive decoration, and its potential contribution to the history of Byzantine bookmaking (its double sets of signatures, contemporary stitching, intact spine, etc.) merit further study.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Greece (Constantinople?) in the twelfth century based on the character of the script and the decorative headpieces.

2. Rebound in Greece in the fourteenth or fifteenth century in a fine monastic binding that is thoroughly Byzantine in style. The inclusion of paper (ff. 1-2 and rear flyleaf) with watermarks close to 571 (Venice, c. 1563-83) attests to the exportation of Venetian paper throughout the Mediterranean world, because the binding indicates that the manuscript stayed in Greece through the entire Byzantine period.
3. In France by the nineteenth (or twentieth?) century when the manuscript was no. 6536 in an unidentified catalogue or sale, excerpt on the front pastedown, the text incorrectly dated thirteenth or fourteenth century and the binding incorrectly described as Italian. The pencil number 8071 also appears on the front pastedown.

TEXT

The manuscript contains the Gospel readings for the full year in two parts, as is customary in Byzantine Lectionaries after about the ninth century: the first part is called the Synaxarion and the second, the Menologion. The present text, an Evangelistarion contains the Gospel readings only, whereas the Apostolicon contains the readings from the Epistles.

ff. 1-43, Pericopes (lections) excerpted from the four Gospels, beginning Easter Sunday through the first 8 weeks after Easter, following the order of the moveable feasts,

ff. 43v, Pericopes for Pentecost, ;

ff. 44-65; Pericopes for the 16 weeks after Pentecost, including lections for Saturdays and Sundays only, ending with the 17th Sunday;

ff. 66-86, Pericopes for the 16 weeks of the Octoechos, beginning the first Sunday after the Exaltation of the Cross, readings only for Saturdays and Sundays;

ff. 87-101r, Pericopes for the 10 weeks before Easter, beginning with first Sunday of Lent;;

ff. 101v-151v, Pericopes for the Holy Week and Easter;

ff. 153r-201v, the Menologion, beginning September 1, comprising the pericopes from the four Gospels, including citations of saints and events from Church history on the day of their commemoration;

ff. 201, instructions on rebinding;

ff. 201v-202, later texts that describe using the lectionary.

Following the custom of the Synagogue, the Scriptures of the Old Testament were read at the primitive Christian assemblies. As the Canon of the New Testament became fixed, certain extracts from it were included in the readings.

Manuscripts of Lectionaries comprise the second largest group of ancient copies of the New Testament. There are currently 2,193 known lectionary manuscripts, the earliest fragments of which date from the sixth century and the earliest complete manuscripts from the eighth. No

more than one-third of these are Apostolicons; the remainder are Evangelistarions, as is the present manuscript. A small number (75) include the pericopes of both the Gospels and the Epistles. Of all the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, Lectionaries are by far the most neglected (See Greenlee, pp. 35-6). For the text of the present manuscript, compare Duke University, Clark Collection, MS 10.

LITERATURE

unpublished, see for comparisons and further study:

Kurt Aland, ed. *Kurzgefasste Liste der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*, Berlin, 1994.

Jeffrey C. Anderson. *The New York Cruciform Lectionary*, New York, 1992 (College Art Association Monograph XLVIII).

Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Grand Rapids, 1964.

Gary Vikan et al., *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections. An Exhibition in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Clark Collection of Greek Manuscripts at Duke University
<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/codex/>

The Greek New Testament and the Septuagint in the Schoyen Collection
<http://www.nb.no/baser/schoyen/4/4.1/412.html>

The Lectionary of the Greek Orthodox Church
<http://www.bombaxo.com/greek.html>

The Lectionary Homepage
<http://www.lectionary.org>