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Psalter  
In Greek, manuscript on paper  
Eastern Mediterranean, c. 1460-1490

100 ff, on paper folded in quarto, with somewhat indistinct watermarks on bifolia 8-13, 10-11, 18-23, 20-21, 26-31, 27-30, 41-46, 49-52, 56-57, 61-68, 71-72, 76-79, 82-87, 83-86, 90-93, 97-98 (similar Piccard no. 153186, attested in A.D. 1472 [bifolium 10-11] and no. 068653, attested in A.D. 1461 [bifolium 61-68], missing a few folios, probably with headbands or headpieces (collation: 4 (4), 12 (16) [f. 5 was originally the last leaf of quire no. 3 and f. 7 was the first one of quire no. 4; the quire proper thus consists of ff. 7-14, while 5-15 and 6-16 are artificial bifolia, each made by a restorer from two leaves that do not belong together], 2 x 8 (32), 7 (39) [f. 39bis lost], 8 (47), 5 (52) [f. 48bis and two leaves after f. 52 lost], 2 x 8 (68), 2 x 6 (80) [ff. 68bis, 80bis, and two leaves after f. 74 are lost], 8 (88), 2 x 6 (100) [f. 94bis is now misbound as f. 6; ff. 88bis, 100bis, and one leaf before f. 95 are lost]), missing leaves (e.g., before Ps 1, Ps 77 and Ode I [Exodus 15:1-19] to mark, respectively, the beginning and middle of the Psalter and the beginning of the Nine Canticles [regularly appended to Greek Psalters]), signatures in black ink by the scribe in Greek numerals, generally in the middle of the lower margin of the first and last pages of each quire (preserved on ff. 5v, 7r, 24v [in red], 25r, 32v, 60v [in the outer lower corner]), written in black ink (for the text); orange-red ink (for the titles and initials); green ink (for a few initials and some ornamentation on ff. 39v-48r), in a cursive version of the so-called Hodegon style, psalm titles written in red ink, each paragraph beginning with a red initial, initials at the beginning of the Psalms enlarged and ornamented. Binding of uncertain date (modern?), of red cotton cloth sewn over a sheet of white paper; remains of strings in the center of the upper and lower flaps' outer edges. Dimensions 207 x 140 mm.

Good authentic example of a Greek Psalter, whose early provenance indicates that it may have been used in Jerusalem and whose original scribe resembles the hands of three known Greek scribes all active in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Greek Psalters are not rare, because the recitation of the Psalter was considered to be the core of personal devotion in monastic, but this one offers an interesting case study on use and reception.

## PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was probably made in the Eastern Mediterranean as is consistent with the watermarks that secure dates of 1461 and 1476 respectively. Handwritings similar to that of the Psalter's scribe are known from the 1470s and 1480s. The Hodegon style, a type of Greek calligraphic handwriting, originated c. 1300 and remained current as late as the eighteenth century (see Politis, 1958). The most closely similar hands are those of Matthew of Trebizond (attested 1478-79), Callistus (attested 1488), and Gerasimus (active in the late

fifteenth century) (for examples of these scribes, see respectively Gamillsched and Harlfinger, pt. 3, no. 442; pt. 2 no. 296; and pt. 1, no. 52). Interestingly, on a few pages (ff. 29r-v, 38v-39v [line 3]) the scribe of our Psalter abruptly changed his handwriting, perhaps because his pen broke.

2. Includes marks of early and later ownership: (1v, lower margin) Georgian inscription; (5v and 13r, outer margins) Armenian inscriptions; (5v, lower margin; 47v outer margin) Greek inscriptions. In the outer margin of f. 46v, there is an unfinished anathema in badly misspelled Greek: + ετουτο τω βιβληον ηνε του ωι του μοναχου (καὶ) η τις το, sc. Ἐτούτο τὸ βιβλίον εἶναι τοῦ Ἰω(άννου) τοῦ μοναχοῦ καὶ εἴ τις τὸ [πάρη], "This book belongs to the monk John and if someone should [take] it. . . ." The Georgian and Armenian notes that two different hands left on a few of this volume's pages are probably translations of Psalm verses. The inscriptions indicate that for a while the Psalter was used in a milieu where Greek was the principal language but Georgian and Armenian were also spoken--most probably in Jerusalem (ruled by the Ottoman Turks from 1517 to 1918).

## TEXT

[begins incompletely, missing Psalms 1-17:1-45]; ff. 1r-v, Ps 17:45 ἐπήκουσέ (sic) μου etc. to Ps 18:11 αὐτό· ἐ[πιθυμιτὰ; loss;

ff. 2r-3v, Ps 20:3 αὐτῷ, etc. to Ps 21:24 δοξάσατε αὐτὸν; loss;

ff. 4r-5v, Ps 22:5 ὥσεῖ etc. to 24:22 τὸν Ι(σρα)ήλ;

ff. 6r-v, Ps 118:83 ἐν πάχνῃ etc. to Ps 118:102 οὐκ ἐξέκλινα;

ff. 7r-15v, Ps 24:22 ἐκ πασῶν etc. to Ps 33:16 ἐπὶ δι[καίους; loss;

ff. 16r-39v, Ps 37:9 ἕως etc. to Ps 63:6 ἐκραταίωσαν; loss;

ff. 40r-48v, Ps 64:10 ἠτοίμασας etc. to Ps 71:16 ἐξανθή[σουσιν; loss;

ff. 49r-52v, Ps 72:15 εἰ etc. to Ps 76:13 ἐν παῖσι; loss;

ff. 53r-68v, Ps 77:23 καὶ ἐνετείλατο etc. to Ps 90:10 προσε[λεύσεται; loss;

ff. 69r-74v, Ps 91:12 ἐπ' ἐμὲ etc. to Ps 100:8 ἁμαρτω[λούς; loss;

ff. 75r-80v, Ps 102:5 ἀγα[θοῖς etc. to Ps 105:12 τῷ λό[γῳ (sic); loss;

ff. 81r-88v, Ps 105:30 ἐκό]πασεν etc. to Ps 113:12 χειρ(ῶν); loss;

ff. 89r-94v, Ps 114:8 ἐκ etc. to Ps 118:83 ἄσκηδς, the bifolium ff. 91-92 with the text of Ps 118:3-24 is reversed; loss;

ff. 95r-100v, Ps 118:121 ἀδὲ|κοῦσί με to Ps 127, title only; end lost.

In the Christian East, the Psalter is primarily a book for personal prayer. In 1946, for example, a Benedictine visitor to the Jerusalem Lavra of Saint Sabas observed that private prayer consisted primarily of reading the Psalter: "Quant à la prière privée, c'est surtout la lecture du Psautier. Chacun doit ajouter au moins un cathisme par jour aux psaumes lus à l'office. Et c'est une dévotion très recommandée et pratiquée par plusieurs que la récitation intégrale du Psautier chaque jour" (Mercenier, 1947, esp. p. 293).

The 151 Psalms and the accompanying nine Biblical Odes (or Canticles) are read through as a devotional exercise. The rubrics "Glory" and "session" mark the places when a pause may occur in such reading. ("Glory" is shorthand for the exclamation "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now, and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen"). Thus, the text in this Psalter is divided into "Glories" (δόξαι) and "sessions" (καθίσματα). Each session is numbered at its end, e.g. "session 3" [κάθ(σιμα) γ'] after Ps 23 (f. 4v). The text is divided into lengthy paragraphs (shorter Psalms thus form a single paragraph). Each verse ends with a high point (·).

Lengthy devotions like readings of the Psalter are a primarily monastic occupation. Roughly at the same time when the present manuscript was copied, Gennadius (George) II Scholarius (d. ca. 1472), Patriarch of Constantinople [1454-56, 1463, 1464-65], advises the user of a prayer book he composed for solitary monks: "If one recites this book and [practices] only pure prayer every night, the entire Psalter shall be read each day" (see Petit et al., vol. IV, p. 328). Thus, it is not surprising that a certain monk John owned at some point the volume described above.

The Georgian and Armenian notes that two different hands left on a few of this volume's pages are probably translations of Psalm verses.

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#### ONLINE RESOURCES

Watermarks

<http://www.piccard-online.de>

Greek Psalter online

[http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=old\\_testament/contents\\_Psalmoi.asp&main=OldTes](http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=old_testament/contents_Psalmoi.asp&main=OldTes)

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