THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM AND ST SOPHIA OF CONSTANTINOPLE: AN ATTEMPT AT DISCOVERING A HAGIOGRAPHIC EXPRESSION OF THE BYZANTINE ENCAENIA FEAST

Constantine the Great and the Foundation of the Holy Sepulchre

For a student of Late Antiquity and Byzantine civilization, Constantine the Great is known, first and foremost, as the ruler who introduced Christianity as an official religion of the Roman Empire. Apart from that, his name is firmly associated with the foundation of the eponymous city of Constantinople, which was to become a centre of the Eastern Christian civilization. A closer look at the contemporary sources, however, suggests that the first Christian Emperor did not give the newly-founded city of Constantinople priority in his policies and building projects. During his reign, Constantine the Great displayed extraordinary interest in Jerusalem, leaving Constantinople rather overshadowed.

One may puzzle why Eusebius, who is the main contemporary source for the reign of Constantine the Great, gave but cursory treatment to the foundation and dedication of Constantinople while dwelling upon the subject of Palestinian church-building — and especially the foundation and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre church in Jerusalem\(^1\) — so exten-

\(^{1}\) The Holy Sepulchre is a later name for the complex erected by Constantine at the allegedly historical places of Golgotha and the tomb where Christ was buried. In the early sources the two buildings were differentiated: the church of Anastasis, built over the Christ’s tomb to commemorate it rather as a scene of his resurrection, and the Martyrium Basilica, which was a construction incorporating the rock of Calvary. Besides the rotunda and basilica, there was an inner atrium where the huge gemmed cross was erected in remembrance of Jesus’ crucifixion. The literary and archaeological evidence suggests that the first building at the site was the Basilica. Apparently, it was already at the place when the pilgrim from Bordeaux was passing through
sively. Yet, the correct perspective on the prominence of Jerusalem in the Constantinian policy of building the Christian empire clarifies why, in his *Vita Constantini*, Eusebius described imperial foundations in Jerusalem and the Holy Land at length but accorded only marginal attention to the staple historical event (or at least viewed as such by later Byzantine historians as well as modern Byzantinists) of the foundation of Constantinople and the construction of churches in Jerusalem in 333: “...a sinistra autem parte est monticulus Golgotha, ubi dominus crucifixus est. Inde quasi ad lapidem missum est cripta, ubi corpus eius positum fuit et tertia die resurrexit; ibidem modo iusso Constantini imperatoris basilica facta est, id est dominicum, mirae pulchritudinis...” (P. Geyer and O. Cuntz (eds.), *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, in: *Idem., Itineraria et alia geographica* (Turnhout: Brepols: 1965) (CCSL, 175) 593.4–594.5, p. 17).


(2) This rather striking omission of specific treatment of the foundation and inauguration of Constantinople as opposed to a lengthy account of the building projects in the Holy Land is noted in the commentary on the *Vita Constantini* by Av. Cameron and S. G. Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 274. The most recent edition of the *Life of Constantine*, which is used in the present study, was produced by F. Winkelmann, *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975) (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Eusebius I/I). All the following references to the *Vita Constantini* will be made in the form of an abbreviated title (*VC*) with indication of chapters and sections according to Winkelmann’s edition, which is also preserved in the translation by Cameron and Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine*...

(3) *VC* III, 25–47. 3.
constantine’s new city. For, as accurately noted by Dagron, the “Christian capital” of Constantine’s creation was not so much Constantinople as Jerusalem.

Prior to being raised to the position of prominence in the reign of Constantine the Great, Jerusalem had little importance in Christian eyes, as a historical site of biblical events. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, the city of Jerusalem or, rather, Aelia Capitoline, as it was better known after having been rebuilt by Hadrian in the second century, had a humble status in the Christian world. Before it attracted the attention of the first Christian ruler, Jerusalem was merely an insignificant city in the Roman province of Palestine. Largely due to Constantine’s efforts and investment in the physical re-building and construction of Jerusalem as a Christian city and to the enthusiasm of its bishops to establish symbolical and theological pre-eminence, it became a place of major significance for all Christendom. It took less than a century to transform a negligible city into the Christian centre and one of the most important Christian holy places, attracting pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire.

The extraordinary grandeur and imperial munificence displayed in the building works and embellishments of the city conveyed the transparent message of Jerusalem’s official pre-eminence. In fact, the Jerusalem so eagerly promoted by Constantine was not an old historical city but a new, Christian Jerusalem, created through an intensive church-building program in general, and particularly by the construction of the central monument at the place of Christ’s resurrection. As Eusebius explicitly stated in his account of Constantine’s life,

New Jerusalem was built at the very Testimony to the Saviour, facing the famous Jerusalem of old, which after the bloody murder of the Lord had been overthrown in utter devastation, and paid the penalty of its wicked inhabitants. Opposite this then the Emperor erected the victory of the Saviour over the death with rich and abundant munificence, this being perhaps that fresh new Jerusalem

(4) VC III, 47. 4–49.


(6) Eusebius’ attempts to vest the Holy Sepulchre with the biblical and eschatological significance of a New Jerusalem are discussed by R. C. Wilken, The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1992) 93–100.
proclaimed in prophetic oracles, about which long speeches recite innumerable praises as they utter words of divine inspiration.7

The earthly physical Jerusalem was crowned with the greatest of Constantine’s building achievements — the Holy Sepulchre, designed by its architecture and embellishments to surpass not only all other basilicas but indeed any sort of beautiful foundation ever built.8 It was this complex — and more specifically the inner atrium of the Holy Sepulchre — that came to be identified with the omphalos, that is the navel of the world.9

The most evident sign of Jerusalem’s superiority over Constantinople, manifested particularly clearly towards the end of Constantine’s reign, was the celebration of the tricennalia event. Jerusalem was chosen as the venue for the main celebration in September 335, whereas Constantinople had to rest content with the second stage of the ceremonies, which took place in July of the following year.10 The celebration of the third decade of the imperial reign, which was undisputedly of great political importance, acquired an increasingly Christian character. In addition to being marked by the assembly of bishops, similarly to the preceding anniversary at Nicaea a decade earlier, the tricennalia festivities included the inauguration of the Christian buildings at the Golgotha site.

The date of the tricennalia, as Fraser reasonably argued, was carefully chosen and planned by Constantine to correspond with important

---

(7) “…καὶ δὴ κατ’ αὐτὸ τὸ σωτήριον μαρτύριον ἡ νέα κατασκευάζετο Ἱερουσαλήμ, ἀντιπρόσωπος τῇ πάλαι βωμένῃ, ἢ μετὰ τὴν κυριοκτόνον μμαψφονιαν ἔρημίας ἐπὶ ἐσχάτα περιτραπεῖσα δίκην ἔτσις δυσσεβῶν οἰκίστροσεν. Ταύτης δ’ οὖν ἀντίκως βασιλεύς τῆς κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου σωτήριον νίκην πλουσίας καὶ δαψιλέσιν ἀνύψου φιλοτιμίαις, τάχα που ταύτην οὖσαν τὴν διὰ προφητικῶν τέσσεραν μαρτυριών κατασκευής νέαν Ἱερουσαλήμ, ἢς περὶ μακροί λόγοι μωρία δὲ ἐνθέου πνεύματος τεστικοποιοῦσαν ἀνυμνοῦσι.” (VC III, 33.1–3; trans. by Cameron and Hall, Eusebius. Life of Constantine…, 135).

(8) VC III, 31.1.

(9) Already in the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in his Catechetical lectures, XIII, 28: “…for this Golgotha is the very centre of the earth. This is not my saying; it is the prophet who has said: ‘You wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.’” (L. P. McCauley and A. A. Stephenson (trans.), The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, vol. 2 (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1970) (The Fathers of the Church, 64) 22).

(10) H. A. Drake, When was the De laudibus Constantini delivered? Historia 24 (1975) 345–356.
Roman and Jewish feasts. The dedication of the Holy Sepulchre was introduced into the festivities of the *tricennalia* and was meant essentially for glorification of Constantine’s rule. However, this occasion of state gained a special religious significance and was destined to firmly enter the liturgy of the Jerusalem church as an annual anniversary of the Encaenia, which is the festival of the church dedication.

One might wonder how much of the interest in the promotion of the Holy Land, and particularly of Jerusalem, as a Christian holy place arose from Constantine’s own intentions and desires. A famous legendary tradition attributed a leading role behind the building achievements in the Holy Land to Constantine’s mother, Helena, who was long considered to be responsible for construction of a series of churches in Jerusalem and Palestine. Her historical part, however, has been deemed more modest than depicted in the legendary cycle and her involvement into building projects in the Holy Land quite insignificant.12

As a matter of fact, it is Eusebius of Caesarea who has come to be credited with radical transformations of the Christian Empire under Constantine.13 If Eusebius was indeed an inspiration and, often, a driving force of Constantinian religious policies, might he have exerted some influence on Constantine in his development of the building programme in the Holy Land and, particularly, in Jerusalem? Close

---

(11) Fraser pointed out that the celebration of the Encaenia in 335 was connected with the cult of Jupiter, Roman non-Christian celebrations of the *Ludi Romani* and *Ludi Triumphales*, and Jewish day of Atonement and the feast of Tabernacles (M. Fraser, Constantine and the Encaenia, SP 39 (1997) 25–28).


(13) This traditional view has been challenged by Barnes, who cast doubts on the fact that Eusebius was a close adviser of Constantine (T. D. Barnes, *Eusebius and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981) 266–267).
study of the personal attitudes of Eusebius to the Biblical sites of the Holy Land and, particularly, the city of Jerusalem revealed that the bishop of Caesarea could hardly have been involved in the enormous transformations that started to take place during his time. Thus, it is very unlikely that Eusebius somehow initiated or eagerly supported Constantinian efforts to construct a Christian Holy Land, since his views and convictions concerning these places were significantly different from Constantine’s.¹⁴

Important in this regard is a monograph of Walker.¹⁵ He showed that Eusebius’ attitude towards the issue of loca sancta was far from positive, especially in the earlier stage of his life. The negative approach to Jerusalem and other Christian holy places, as scholars argued, stem from Eusebius’ theological convictions and from the tensed relations between the sees of Caesarea and Jerusalem.¹⁶ His restrained stance on the significance of the Holy Land underwent little change even as Eusebius faced a strongly emerging interest in Christian Jerusalem and holy places during the later stage of his career (after 325).

Eusebius did not attribute any prominent status to the city of Jerusalem; rather, it was the whole land of Palestine that attracted his attention. He recognized that several places connected with the earthly life of Christ had some special distinction. Eusebius demonstrated considerable concern for just a few particular places, which are known as the “triad” of churches built over the ‘mystic caves,’ that is the churches constructed at Bethlehem, on the Mount of Olives, and over the cave of Christ’s resurrection.¹⁷ Walker’s meticulous analysis, therefore, substantiated a view that it was not Eusebius but Constantine himself who promoted the city of Jerusalem with convinced devotion.

**Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini* on the Building and Dedication of the Holy Sepulchre**

Despite the fact that Eusebius had a somewhat cool attitude towards Jerusalem, he was enthusiastic about the discovery of Christ’s tomb and positively disposed to the foundation of the church of Holy

---


¹⁵ Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places*…


Sepulchre. The amount of space and emphasis given by Eusebius to the discovery and foundation of the Holy Sepulchre in the *Vita Constantini* has struck modern scholars. Eusebius’ meticulous description testifies, at the very least, to his great excitement about the revelation of the Saviour’s cave and subsequent construction of the church, which was destined to become one of the major shrines of the whole Christendom.

The excavation of the site around the rock of Golgotha, building of the church of the Holy Sepulchre and especially, the finding of the True Cross, have all been connected with Constantine’s mother, Helena, in later hagiographical traditions and accounts. Yet, it is only in the later tradition that she would gain fame as the founder of many edifices of the new Christian Jerusalem. Eusebius does not introduce Helena into his description of the building scheme of the churches in Jerusalem; apparently, she had no significant role to play in Constantine’s principal building programme at the Golgotha site. Eusebius, while crediting Helena with the initiative to build churches at Bethlehem and on the Mount of Olives, attributes the excavations, discovery of Christ’s tomb and the subsequent construction of the Basilica solely to Constantine. Eusebius takes care to ensure that Constantine receives all the credit for this building achievement.

According to Eusebius, it is the emperor who was divinely inspired to start the excavations at the place of the Tomb. Eusebius regards it as a demonstration of God’s favour that Constantine was moved to discover the site of Christ’s Tomb which, it is worth noting, he refers to not as a place of burial but of resurrection:

> He decided that he ought to make universally famous and revered the most blessed site in Jerusalem of the Saviour’s resurrection. So at once he gave orders for a place of worship to be constructed,


(19) *VC III*, 43.
conceiving this idea not without God, but with his spirit moved by the Saviour himself.  

At the divine incentive, Eusebius continues, the emperor engaged in clearing the spot. The divine monument had lain hidden under a heap of soil and all sorts of rubbish. What is more, the holy place was polluted by an idolatrous temple that had been constructed over Christ's tomb — the sanctuary to Aphrodite — where pagan sacrifices were offered. The pious efforts of the emperor did not end with the total demolition of Aphrodite's shrine and “houses of error.” Constantine ordered all the rubble of stones and timbers remaining after the demolition to be carried away and dumped far from the site and the area to be excavated to a great depth, so that even the pavement and soil stained by the bloodshed of idol-worship would be cleared and removed. Eusebius’ description of the clearing process, which is loaded with sacred vocabulary, culminates in the revelation of the cave of Christ’s resurrection.

As stage by stage the underground site was exposed, at last against all expectation the revered and all-hallowed Testimony (μαρτύριον) of the Saviour’s resurrection was itself revealed, and the cave, the holy of holies, took on the appearance of a representation of the Saviour’s return to life.


(22) VC III, 27.

(23) “Ὡς δ’ ἐτεσον ἀνθ’ ἐτέσοις στοιχείον ὁ κατὰ βάθους τῆς γῆς ἀνε-φάνη χώρος, αὐτὸ δὴ λοιπὸν τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ πανάγιον τῆς σωτηρίου ἀνα-στάσεως μαρτύριον παρ’ ἐλπίδα πάσαν ἀνεφαίνετο, καὶ τὸ γε ἀγίον τῶν ἀγίων ἀντρον τὴν ὁμοίαν τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἀναβίωσες ἀπελάμβανεν.
Further on, Eusebius attributes the building of the Holy Sepulchre wholly to the initiative and efforts of Constantine himself. Following imperial orders, various supplies and materials were collected and the basilica was built. Eusebius underlines the emperor’s munificence in building and embellishing works at the tomb, which he decorated “with superb columns and full ornamentation, brightening the solemn cave with all kinds of artwork.” The emperor adorned the entire shrine erected at the place of Christ’s resurrection with rich craftsmanship skillfully wrought of gold, silver and precious stones. Eusebius has recourse to a conventional rhetorical formula to express his fascination with the exceeding beauties of the newly-built complex — he claims the magnificence of the church is beyond any description.

A full literary treatment of the extraordinary ceremonies surrounding the celebration of the inauguration of the Holy Sepulchre follows, somewhat separated from the account of the revelation of the site and the church’s foundation. A gap in the narrative apparently reflects the chronological distance between the two events: several years elapsed after the foundation of the Holy Sepulchre until it was dedicated.

The splendour of the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre was enhanced by the assembly of bishops, who were urged by Constantine to come hastily to Jerusalem after the Council of Tyre. The vast body of ecclesiastical dignitaries attending the festival of the Encaenia was honoured with “a friendly reception, with brilliant banquets and merry parties.” The person appointed by Constantine to be in charge of the celebration did not leave the less dignified participants unattended either: on behalf of the emperor, who was actually absent at the Jerusalem celebration, he made lavish distributions of clothing, money and food to the multitudes of the poor and destitute.
The feast was enriched with various prayers, sermons, readings and expositions of the Scriptures. Eusebius himself made a number of addresses to those assembled for the Encaenia and, according to his own witness, delivered a speech where he set down “a description of the Saviour’s church, of the salvific cave, of the Emperor’s works of art and large number of offerings made of gold, silver and precious stones.”

Eusebius closes his report of the Encaenia festival with a traditional comparison of Constantine’s accomplishing and consecrating the church to a pleasant peace-time offering to God.

The Feast of the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre in the Christian East

Besides the main witness of Eusebius on the historical foundation and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre, there are a few other sources shedding light on further development of the festival — its institution and celebration within the annual liturgical cycle.

One of the best surviving witnesses describing the celebration of the Encaenia shortly after its institution is the diary left by Egeria.

This late fourth-century record shows that soon after the actual dedication feast of the Constantinian buildings at the Golgotha site, this magnificent occasion of the State celebrating imperial achievements entered the purely ecclesiastical realm and was incorporated into the Byzantine liturgical cycle. Already by the end of the fourth century, festivities connected with the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre were regarded as one of the most important celebrations in the liturgical year of Jerusalem. The commemoration of Jerusalem Encaenia devel-

(30) “Οἷος δ’ ὁ τοῦ σωτῆρος νεώς, οἷον τὸ σωτήριον ἀντρόν, οἶα τε αὐτοῦ βασιλείας φιλοκαλίαν ἀναθημάτων τε πλήθη ἐν χρυσῷ τε καὶ ἀργυρῷ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ πεποιημένων, κατὰ δύναμιν ἐν οἰκείῳ συγγράμματι παραδόντες αὐτῷ βασιλεία προσεφωνήσαμεν.” (VC IV, 46; trans. by Cameron and Hall, Eusebius. Life of Constantine..., 171). This reference of Eusebius to a certain speech which he promised to append to his Vita Constantini does not seem to be reconcilable with the surviving oration on the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre. The known work on the Holy Sepulchre does not really give any physical description of the church but contains a rather sophisticated theological exposition. Was it indeed this speech that Eusebius meant here in the Vita Constantini? For an exhaustive treatise of this problem, see H. A. Drake, In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius’ Tricennial Orations (Berkeley—Los Angeles—London: University of California Press, 1975) (University of California Publications in Classical Studies, 15).

oped into a major festival on a par with Easter and Epiphany, these three being the only feasts marked with the eight-day festivities at the early Byzantine liturgy.  

By the time the Jerusalem feast of dedication is first witnessed as an annual celebration, it has acquired a new element — the motif of the finding of the True Cross. The extant sources suggest that the liturgical celebration of the Discovery of the Cross was already integrated into the octave of the Encaenia in the second half of the fourth century. The appearance and development of the feast of the Cross — first as an integral part of the liturgical celebration of Encaenia and later as an independent feast — is a rather intricate issue and has been the focus of a lively discussion for quite some time. The majority of scholarly interest in this area, however, has been sparked by the legend connected with the feast of the Cross, the story of the *inventio crucis* that allegedly happened during Helena’s visit to the Holy Land. The discovery of the True Cross, which was presented in the context of the building programme in Jerusalem with, often, a cursory glance onto the Encaenia, deserves a more detailed treatment and will be discussed in the next section.

---

(32) “His ergo diebus enceniarum ipse ornatus omnium ecclesiarum est, qui et per pascha uel per epiphania, et ita per singulos dies diversis locis sanctis proceditur ut per pascha uel epiphania.” (Egeria, *Journal de voyage*, 318). That the feast of the Cross, having originated from the Encaenia, was of the major importance is explicitly pointed out in Pseudo-Cyril’s discourse on the Cross: “Now the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Make a feast to Me three times each year.’ Which then of your festivals is the greatest today, O my beloved? [Is it not] this which taketh place in the first month of each year, that is to say, the festival of the Manifestation of the Cross?” (trans. E. A. Wallis-Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialects of Upper Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915) 780).

(33) The pilgrim Egeria, writing at the end of the fourth century, is the first one to note the celebration of the invention of the Cross within the framework of the Encaenia festival (Egeria, *Journal de voyage*, 316).


First, however, it is necessary to look at the formation, early development and nature of the liturgical feast of the Encaenia in Jerusalem which was instituted, first and foremost, as a commemoration of the dedication of the churches at the Golgotha site.

The earliest stage of the Byzantine liturgy, that is its Jerusalemite epoch, has been a subject of numerous studies and reconstructions. Since most of the original Greek works from that period have been lost, our knowledge of the early Byzantine liturgy is derived, as a rule, from later Oriental translations. In this respect, Old Georgian and Armenian literature is invaluable. It has preserved a considerable number of translations of the early Byzantine sources the significance of which is generally recognized, especially with regard to those falling into the sphere of liturgy and homiletics. It has been possible to reconstruct the liturgy of the Jerusalemite Encaenia quite accurately based on the Georgian and Armenian lectionaries and a partial record in the diary of the fourth-century pilgrim from Gaul Egeria.

The liturgical celebration of the Encaenia in Jerusalem, starting on 13 September, lasted for eight days and was a major pilgrims’ festival. These particular details invited modern scholars to compare it with the Jewish feast of Tabernacles which, arguably, was one of the models that influenced the dedication festival.


(37) *Egeria, Journal de voyage*, 318. Egeria indicates the stations for each day of the Encaenia. Her description of the Octave, unfortunately, is cut off in the surviving manuscripts of the diary. The record is interrupted on the fourth day of the festivities.

(38) For a detailed discussion of the Jewish influences on the formation of the early Christian Jerusalemite rite and of the resemblance of the Encaenia.
According to the journal of a fourth-century pilgrim, great numbers of monks and *apotactites* from all the provinces and regions drew to Jerusalem for the festival of the Encaenia.

At the time of Encaenia they keep festival for eight days, and for many days beforehand the crowds begin to assemble. Monks and apotactites come not only from the provinces having large numbers of them, such as Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, and the Thebaid, but from every region and province. Not one of them fails to make for Jerusalem to share the celebrations of this solemn feast. There are also lay men and women from every province gathering in Jerusalem at this time for the holy day. And although bishops are few and far between, they never have less than forty or fifty in Jerusalem at this time, accompanied by many of their clergy. In fact I should say that people regard it as a grave sin to miss taking part in this solemn feast, unless anyone had been prevented from coming by an emergency.

Egeria emphasizes the significance of the Encaenia by indicating that missing the festival, unless somebody was prevented by an emergency, was reputed as a grave sin.

---

The name *apotactites*, meaning literally “people set apart,” was used to refer to both monks and nuns. Cf. Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels...*, 35.

(39) “Hi ergo dies enceniarum cum uenerint, octo diebus attenduntur. Nam ante plurimos dies incipiunt se undique colligere turbae, non solum monachorum uel aputactitum de diuersis prouinciis, id est tam de Mesopotamia uel Syria uel de Egypto aut Thebaida, ubi plurimi monazontes sunt, sed et de diuersis omnibus locis uel prouinciis; nullus est enim, qui non se eadem die in Ierusolima tendat ad tantam laetitiam et tam honorabiles dies; seculares autem tam uiri quam feminae fideli animo propter diem sanctum similiter se de omnibus prouinciis isdem diebus Ierusolima colligunt. Episcopi autem, quando parui fuerint, hisdem diebus Ierusolima plus quadraginta aut quinquaginta sunt; et cum illis ueniunt multi clerici sui. Et quid plura? Putat se maximum peccatum incurrisse, qui in hisdem diebus tante sollemnitati inter non fuerit, si tamen nulla necessitas contraria fuerit, quae hominem a bono proposito retinet.” (Egeria, *Journal de voyage*, 316–318; trans. Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels...*, 146–147).
The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomenus presents the best available historical record of the institution of the annual feast of the Encaenia. After describing the inauguration of the church at the Golgotha site which he calls the “great martyrion,” Sozomenus writes that since that period the anniversary of the consecration has been celebrated with great pomp by the church of Jerusalem; the festival continues eight days, initiation by baptism is administered, and the people from every region under the sun resort to Jerusalem during this festival, and visit the sacred places.41

The eighth-century Syriac chronicle conventionally attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre makes mention of the feast of the Encaenia as well. In the lemma for the year 516/517, a chronicler recounts a certain extraordinary incident that happened during the celebration of the Jerusalem Encaenia. This brief reference to the Encaenia shows that in the sixth century the feast continued to be a significant pilgrims’ festival attracting many people from different provinces. It was also an occasion when the setting of the Cross was celebrated.42

Medieval homiletic and hagiographic literature usually discussed the theme of the building and consecration of the Holy Sepulchre in association with the famous legendary episode of the finding of the True Cross, but there are also some occasional references to the festival of Encaenia in Jerusalem scattered in saints’ Vitae. For example, the enduring importance of the Jerusalemite Encaenia in the sixth century can be gleaned from the Vita Sabae.43 The hagiographer Cyril of Scythopolis relates that the approaching Encaenia was faced with sad-


(43) CPG 7536; BHC 1608.
ness; because of the lasting draught in Palestine there was no water left and secular officials of the province of Palestine feared a revolt of the people. After an unsuccessful attempt to reach water by digging ditches, the officials recurred to the help of St. Sabas and implored him to pray for rain. In response to the prayer of the Holy Man, the abundant rain poured down and the feast of the Encaenia was celebrated with great joy. The beginning of September is mentioned as the time of the draught. Although no precise date is given, this chronological detail would allow placing the approaching Encaenia at the mid-September, which is entirely consistent with other sources. The same text also corroborates evidence that the Jerusalemite feast attracted many visitors, since St. Sabas is said to have attended the feast “as was customary for superiors,” and to have been accompanied by some brothers from the monastery near Nicopolis.

In his homily on the Cross, most likely composed in the sixth or seventh century, Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem relates a few episodes from the legends of the Constantinian cycle and the stories of the Cross. A substantial part of the homily is devoted to the events that took place under Constantine the Great, his foundations in Jerusalem and the invention of the Cross. It is interesting to note that the Coptic homily makes a clear distinction between the two events: the discovery of the Cross and the excavations of the Tomb.


(46) In sanctam crucem, CPG 3602.


(48) Remarkably, it is only in Coptic literature that a unique legend of the discovery of the Tomb, as opposed to the discovery of the Cross, is preserved.
to Pseudo-Cyril, when Constantine started his search for the spots of Christ’s crucifixion and burial, he questioned the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem for both of them, contrary to the mainstream tradition of the *inventio crucis* legend, wherein Helena is told to enquire for the place of the crucifixion only. Since his whole exposition was aimed to give an explanation of the feast of the Holy Cross, which was the occasion when the homily was delivered, Pseudo-Cyril stresses the two-fold subject of the feast: “And the day whereon they consecrated the holy church was the seventeenth day of the month of Thoth [14 September], which is the day of the manifestation of the Holy Cross and the Holy Tomb.” At the end of his homily, Pseudo-Cyril makes his point all the more clear; the feast they are celebrating commemorates both the Holy Cross and the foundation of the churches (referred to as the “new city” and implying, doubtless, the foundation of the Holy Sepulchre as a New Jerusalem).

Io ho detto tutto ciò alla vostra benevolenza volendo spiegare questo, cioè quale sia la ragione per cui facciamo festa per la santa croce oggi. Eccò dunque, la cosa è chiara: questa è la santa croce, ed è anche il giorno della consacrazione dei santi templi e della nuova città che il pio imperatore Costantino fondò.

This legend will be given more detailed analysis below in the part dealing with the hagiographical expression of the feast of the Encaenia.

(49) “And Constantine rose up quickly, and he took with him his mother, and his sister, who was a virgin, and a large quantity of baggage, and a large escort of soldiers and slaves, and many holy bishops, and he departed with them to Jerusalem. And he caused to be brought before him the chief Jews, and he asked them questions, saying, ‘I wish you to show me the place where [stood] the Cross whereon Jesus was hung, and the tomb wherein His Divine Body was laid, for the glorification of my kingdom’ (trans. Wallis-Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts…*, 794).


(51) Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo de Gerusalemme. Omelie copte…*, 145. Wallis-Budge, however, gives a somewhat different version in his English translation: “I have related all these things to your beloved persons, and I have revealed them unto you, for it is right so to do, so that we may keep the feast of the manifestation of the Cross, that is to say, the seventeenth of the month Thoth. Behold now the matter is manifest to us, through all the proofs [which we have adduced concerning] the manifestation of the Cross, and the dedication of the Holy Church of the Resurrection, which is [commemorated] on the seventeenth day of the month Thoth, according to the [reckoning of the] Egyptians” (trans. Wallis-Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts…*, 805).
According to the explanation of Ps.-Cyril of Jerusalem, the feast of the Cross was tightly connected with the dedication of the churches — the key association that was there nearly from the beginning of the Encaenia but, with time, loosened and gradually disappeared.

One of the earliest Byzantine accounts recreating hagiographical history behind the festival of the Invention of the Cross\textsuperscript{52} — and touching marginally upon the festival of the Encaenia — was produced by the sixth-century author, Alexander the Monk.\textsuperscript{53} Although the author was primary commissioned to compose an historical narrative of the discovery of the life-bringing Wood,\textsuperscript{54} he could not avoid relating in some detail the Constantinian foundations and subsequent celebration of the dedication at the Golgotha site, since it constituted a relevant

\textsuperscript{(52)} De inventione sanctae crucis, PG 87/3:4016–4076. CPG 7398; BHG 410–410c, 411. A diplomatic edition of Alexander the Monk's Inventio Crucis discourse was made by C. Pennacchini, Discorso storico dell'invenzione della croce (Grottaferrata: Tipografia Italo-Orientale “S. Nilo,” 1913). At present, J. W. Nesbitt is preparing a critical edition of the De inventione crucis for the CSG.

\textsuperscript{(53)} Kazhdan doubted the early dating of Alexander’s tract (conventionally placed in the sixth century) and denied the possibility of any dating more precise than the period between the sixth and the ninth centuries (A. P. Kazhdan, “Constantine imaginaire.” Byzantine Legends of the Ninth Century about Constantine the Great, Byz 57 (1987) 199–200; idem, s.v. Alexander the Monk, in: Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 60). The arguments of van Esbroeck, placing the text between 543 and 553, seem to be more convincing (cf. M. van Esbroeck, L’opuscule “sur la Croix” d’Alexandre de Chypre et sa version géorgienne, Bedi Kartlisa 37 (1979) 102–132. See the section on the authorship and dating of the Encomium of the Apostle Barnabas, which came from the pen of Alexander the Monk too: P. Van Deun (ed.), Hagiographica Cypria. Sancti Barnabae laudatio auctore Alexandro Monacho (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993) (CCSG, 26) 15–21. The discussion of dating is resumed by J. W. Nesbitt, Alexander the Monk's Text of Helena's Discovery of the Cross (BHG 410), in: Idem (ed.), Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations. Texts and Translations Dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides (Leiden—Boston: Brill, 2003) (Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, 40) 29–33, who also argues for the sixth century as a date of the composition of the treatise. Seeing the work of Alexander as a coherent example of pilgrim propaganda, he assumes that it was written before the reign of Heraclius which witnessed the disruption of pilgrimage traffic (Ibid., 39).

\textsuperscript{(54)} “Εκελεύσατε γὰρ τῇ ἐμῇ οὐδενείᾳ, ἵστορικόν τινα λόγον ποιήσασθαι περὶ τῆς εὑρέσεως τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ ξύλου, τοῦ πανσέπτου καὶ σεβασμίου σταυροῦ” (PG 87/3: 4016A3–5).
context of the *inventio*. Very likely, Alexander composed the narrative specifically to be read at the liturgical celebration of the discovery of the Cross, as his own reference to the feast as “the famous day of our festival” would suggest.\(^5\) A later Georgian translation of Alexander’s story was inserted into the liturgical collection and meant as *lectio hagiographica* for the celebration of the feast of the Cross on 14 September further suggesting that this was the text’s originally intended purpose.\(^5\)

In his exposition of the discovery of the Cross, Alexander makes a specific comment on the establishment of the liturgical feast.

After receiving her [Helena] with joy and placing the piece of the honoured Cross in a golden chest he [Constantine] handed it over to the bishop for safe-keeping, commanding that the discovery of the Cross be celebrated at commemorations annually.\(^5\)

Similarly, at the end of his narrative, Alexander indicates the precise date of the newly established feast of the Cross: “By imperial command the Fathers determined to celebrate the revered day of the exaltation of the honoured Cross and of the consecration [τῶν ἐγκαινίων], annually on the fourteenth of the month of September...”\(^5\) In this way, Alexander reveals the history of the appearance of the Encaenia feast, meant to commemorate both the Cross and the church dedications.

The ceremony of the dedication of the holy sites — which the narrative calls a New Jerusalem, undoubtedly referring to the Holy Sepulchre — is discussed merely as a background episode for the discovery of the Cross. It seems that at the time of account’s composition the

\(^{(55)}\) “Ἐπειδὴ δὲ χάριτι Θεοῦ κατηντήσαμεν τῷ λόγῳ εἰς τὴν εὐσήμην ἡμέραν τῆς ἔσορφης ἡμῶν ἦτε ἐστὶν ἀνάδειξις τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ, φέρε καθὼς οίνον τέ ἐστιν, μικρὰ τι χαιρετήσαντες τὸν σταυρὸν, καταπαύσωμεν τὸν λόγον” (*PG* 87/3: 4072B3–7).

\(^{(56)}\) Van Esbroeck, *L’opusculle “sur la Croix”...*, 106.


event of the Encaenia was not accorded much significance. This lack of interest in the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre could imply that the narrative was written at the stage when the commemoration of the Encaenia, while still lingering in the religious memory, was being superseded by the celebration of the Invention of the Cross. Thus, in Alexander’s times the celebration of the discovery of the Cross may have been the main element of the feast, the dedication of the churches having already only the secondary role.

Therefore, it is possible to observe that through time the connection between the two feasts was obliterated and the feast of the Cross became entirely detached from the Encaenia, having lost its original association with the foundations at the Golgotha site. This process of detachment of the Feast of the Cross from the Encaenia, the latter apparently falling into complete disuse, can be well observed in the writings of Sophronius, the seventh-century patriarch of Jerusalem, who exhibits surprising ignorance of the historical relation between the Encaenia and the feast of the Cross. In his homily on the dedication of the Anastasis church and the Exaltation of the Cross, Sophronius expressed his astonishment at the order of the two feasts. He wondered why the feast of the Anastasis, having its roots in the historical dedication of the church of the Resurrection, preceded the feast of the Cross. Sophronius searched in vain for a reasonable explanation in the Biblical narrative of the Christ’s passion and resurrection.

In the Vita S. Mariae Aegyptiae, spuriously ascribed to a pen of the same Sophronius, the dedication festival is passed in silence altogether in the narrative of Mary’s journey to Jerusalem: she is told to travel to Jerusalem solely for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, not the Encaenia. As it is already known from other sources, in the forth century, the alleged life time of Mary, the Encaenia was a major pilgrim festival, the feast of the Cross being only a secondary element of it. Another apparent chronological incongruity lies in the fact that the feast

(59) Oratio in exaltationem venerandae crucis, et in sanctam resurrectionem PG 87/3: 3301–3309; CPG 7639; BHG 444.
(60) PG 87/3: 3304D–3305B.
(61) The Vita S. Mariae Aegyptiae (CPG 7675; BHG 1042) is considered to be wrongly attributed to Sophronius of Jerusalem and claimed unreliable as a historical source (Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross, 36, n. 89; M. B. Von Strzyzky, Maria v. Ägypten, in: W. Kasper (hrsg.), Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, vol. 6. (Freiburg: Herder, 1997) Cols. 1343–1344).
of the Cross was enhanced with the motif of exaltation only in the sixth century. Although Mary is alleged to have lived in the fourth century, however, the evidence of the Vita cannot be taken at face value to present an historical picture of fourth-century society; rather, it reflects the state of knowledge and perceptions of the contemporary milieu of the hagiographer. One may conclude that the celebration of the Encaenia as a pilgrim festival, so significant in the time of Egeria’s pilgrimage, lost its importance by the time the Vita was composed. The author of the Vita may have simply retrojected the contemporary liturgical practices onto his exposition of remote events. It appears that at the time of composition of St Mary of Egypt’s Vita, the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre had already been separated from the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross; the work reflects the period when the relationship between the Encaenia and the feast of the Cross became reversed, and the latter was considered as the central celebration, with the Encaenia assuming a subordinate position.

(63) The feast of the Invention of the Cross is referred to as that of the “elevation/exaltation” (ὕψωσις) only from the sixth century onward. Alexander the Monk is considered to be the first to mention the title of the feast as the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (PG 87/3: 4072A11–15). This is reputedly the first reference to the feast of the Cross as the Exaltation. Nevertheless, the rite of the elevation or the showing of the Cross to the multitudes had been an element of the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Cross before it was transformed into the exaltatio crucis. The ritual showing of the Cross in the Holy Sepulchre is first attested, also in the sixth century, by Theodore of Petra in the Life of Theodosius (BHG 1776): “...ἐν τῷ ἱερατείῳ ἅμα καθιζομένων τῷ ὑπὸ Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ μεγάλου κατασκευασθέντι βασιλέως ἐν ὤ εἰς ὕψως αἰφνισθαι κατ’ ἐτος ὁ τίμιος εἰώθει σταυρός...” (H. Usener (ed.), Der Heilige Theodosios. Schriften des Theodoros und Kyrillos (Leipzig: Teubner, 1890) 71; cf. A. Stylianou and J. Stylianou, By This Conquer (Nicosia: Zavallis Press, 1971) 14–17; P. Bernardakis, Le culte de la croix chez les Grecs, Echos d’Orient 5 (1902) 195–198). Despite the change of the name of the feast of the Cross from εὕρεσις to ὕψωσις the readings for the feast remained the same and were applicable to both the Finding of the Cross and its Exaltation (Fraser, Feast of the Encaenia..., 203).

(64) “If the central focus in the celebration [Encaenia] was originally the annual commemoration of the dedication of Jerusalem basilica, in which the ὕψωσις or σταυροφάνεια was a subordinate part recalling the discovery of the Cross, in the course of time this subordinate part developed into central, and ultimately only element of the celebration” (Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross..., 35).
On the Encaenia of the precious and life-giving Cross (CPG 4270), a spurious homily attributed to Severian, bishop of Gabala (died before 430), reports an interesting instance that witnesses to the process of amalgamation of the Dedication and the Feast of the Cross. The title and some allusions in the text of the homily show how the two conceptually different feasts were blended into one. The homily expressly confirms that the Encaenia festival lost its historical association with the buildings and regained a new function of the renovation of life and human souls through the Cross, the encaenia of which was being celebrated. If the homily were written by Severian of Gabala, it must have been produced at the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century. Yet, the conflation of the two separate feasts into one, the loss of the double commemoration implied in the Encaenia, and the reference to the feast as the Exaltation of the Cross, point to a considerably later date of composition. Thus, the homily cannot have been composed before the mid-sixth century, when the theme of the elevation of the Cross pushed to the background the earlier inventio motif, and the feast was transformed into the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The text reflects the tradition that celebrated the Encaenia as the Exaltation of the Cross, a tradition that gained new vigour after the restoration of the Cross by the emperor Heraclius (631).

Apparently, a tight association of the feast of the Encaenia of churches with the feast of the Cross remained a source of recurrent confusion of the two feasts, especially, when the Dedication proper went out of use. The title of the Encaenia continued to be attached to the feast of the Cross, which sprang some new avenues of theological

(65) J. Zellinger (ed.), Studien zu Severian von Gabala (Münster: Aschendorff, 1926) 129–137. This homily is placed among the Incerta by Zellinger.

(66) Σευηριανοῦ ἐπισκόπου Γαβάλων εἰς τὰ ἐγκαίνια τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ (Ibid., 129, l. 5–6).

(67) “Σήμερον τὴν τῶν ἐγκαινίων τοῦ ζωηφόρου σταυροῦ ἑορτάζομεν πανήγυριν...” (Ibid., 129, l. 8–9).

(68) “Δεῦτε τοίνυν ἑορτάζομεν κοινὴ τὴν τοῦ σταυροῦ ύψωσιν” (Ibid., 136, l. 7).

(69) The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross received a new impetus with the triumphant restoration of the Cross to Jerusalem that followed the victory of Heraclius over the Persians. On the date of the restoration of the Cross by the emperor Heraclius, see V. Grumel, La reposition de la Vraie Croix à Jérusalem par Héraclius. Le jour et l’année, Byzantinische Forschungen 1 (1966) 139–149.
interpretation of the latter. Besides the discourse ascribed to Severian of Gabala, there is another early Byzantine homily, edited among the *pseudochrysostomica*, that is a vivid example of similar confusion.\(^{70}\) In this case, however, the confusion did not go further than the title of the homily (εἰς τὰ ἐγκαίνια τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ), the content being untouched and clearly dealing only with the theme of *encaenia* viewed in a broader perspective of the holy places. The Latin rendering of the title, *Ita dicta oratio in exaltationem crucis revera*, which obviously departs from the Greek, misleadingly implies the homily is composed for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The Greek title, however, suggests that the homily must have been originally composed for the feast of the Encaenia, as its content explicitly shows. The addition of the τοῦ σταυροῦ to the εἰς τὰ ἐγκαίνια might have happened due to a gradual disappearance of the feast of the Encaenia, as it became overshadowed by the Exaltation of the Cross.

Later on, the Encaenia was apparently revived with its initial significance of a church dedication feast; some surviving homilies from the mid-Byzantine period celebrate the Encaenia as the dedication of the Anastasis rotunda. For example, there is a Georgian translation of the homily of John of Damascus on the Dedication of the Anastasis church.\(^{71}\) The Greek homily was rendered into Georgian by Ep'rem Mcire, who worked on his numerous translations in the second half of the eleventh century. The Georgian version of the homily is preserved in eleven codices and, in some of these, it is inserted into Georgian metaphrastic collections under the date of 13 September. This liturgical arrangement points to the fact that the homily was meant precisely for the feast of the Encaenia in Jerusalem. The original homily was delivered by John of Damascus for the feast of the dedication of churches at the end of the seventh century, when he was already a priest of the Anastasis church.\(^{72}\) However, it dwells upon both the Encaenia and the Exaltation of the Cross. The main themes of the homily are framed


\(^{72}\) M. van Esbroeck suggests that the composition of the homily on the Dedication of the Anastasis church should be situated between 690 and 692 (Van Esbroeck, *Le Discours de Jean Damascène...*, 68–70).
within a historical discourse on the preceding pagan rites and Jewish foundations and with an explanation of the feast’s theological significance with reference to cosmological and eschatological fulfilment of the Exaltation and Renovation.

The Medieval Georgian literature’s value for filling gaps in the Byzantine liturgical tradition is commonly recognised. Besides the Byzantine homily for the feast of the Encaenia that survives only in Georgian translation, there is also an example of the original Georgian homiletics. It is the homily on the Encaenia of the churches in Jerusalem attributed to the seventh-century Georgian bishop John of Bolnisi. The beginning of this homily is another rare record of the liturgical order of the octave of the Encaenia; it notes, however, only the first three days of the octave. The first and second days mark the dedication of the Anastasis church and the Holy Catholic Church (Katholike), that is Martyrium, respectively. The second day, in addition, was the day celebrating the “vision and adoration of the Cross,” and the third day is said to commemorate the dedication of the church of Holy Sion, called also “the mother of all churches,” built under John II of Jerusalem (387–417).

After the subject of the celebration is introduced, the author delves into a discussion of the feast’s theological significance. The chain of

(73) The description of the inedited homily was made by M. van Esbroeck, Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens. Étude descriptive et historique (Louvain-la-Neuve: UCL. Institut orientaliste, 1975) (UCL. Publications de l’Institut orientaliste de Louvain, 10) 314–315. The beginning of the homily has been also discussed in some of his articles, see M. van Esbroeck, Jean II de Jérusalem et les cultes de S. Étienne, de la Sainte-Sion et la Croix, AB 102 (1984) 107–108; Iadem, Le Discours de Jean Damascène..., 56–57. The homily on the Encaenia in Jerusalem has been recently published in the collection M. Maisuradze et al. (eds.), The Athos Polycephalon: Homilies of John of Bolnisi (Tbilisi: Georgian Academy of Sciences, K. Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts, 1999) 250–257.

(74) Garitte, Le calendrier palestino-géorgien..., 230.

(75) The dedications of the first two days, 13 and 14 September, agree with the evidence of the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries (Renoux, Le codex Arménien Jérusalem 121. I. Introduction, in: PO 35/1, 171–175; Iadem, Le codex Arménien Jérusalem 121. II. Édition..., 360–363; Tarchnischvili, Le Grand Lectionnaire..., 36–38; Garitte, Le calendrier palestino-géorgien..., 328–331. The commemoration of the dedication of Holy Sion, mentioned in the homily as being celebrated on 15 September, is placed on 16 September in some of Georgian documents (van Esbroeck, Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens..., 314–315).
quotations from the New Testament is woven into interpretation of the “new consecration,” which is taken to refer to the Church which Christ promised to build on the rock, meaning his disciple, the Apostle Peter. John of Bolnisi does not fail to mention the dedication of the Temple, although considered through the prism of the New Testament. The conventional passage in the liturgy of church dedication was John 10:22, which John of Bolnisi, rather ignorantly, associates with the dedication of the Temple by King Solomon. The winter, which was the season of the dedication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus and not the dedication by Solomon, which was conducted in autumn, is inferred to mean the “winter of the great disbelief.” John of Bolnisi concludes his exegetical exposition of the feast of the Encaenia with an emphasis on the momentousness of the new dedication as opposed to the dedication of the Old Testament Temple.

In addition to these sermons transmitted in Greek and Georgian, there seems to be but one homily associated with the dedication of churches in Jerusalem. The Greek title of this homily, listed among the spuria of John Chrysostom, declares the sermon is for the Pentecost, and its content does not show much relevance to the feast of the church dedication. However, the Georgian translation, entitled “On the Encaenia,” makes it clear that the homily was meant for the celebration of the dedication of the churches in Jerusalem on 13 September.

The commemoration of the Encaenia eventually found its way into the Byzantine Heortologion; yet, it is reduced to a very insignificant position of less than the festa minora. In the Byzantine calendar the Encaenia is limited to the commemoration of the dedication of the Anastasis rotunda; no reference to the consecration of the Martyrion basilica or the whole complex is ever made. The Constantinopolitan Synaxarium


(77) The translation of the Georgian homily “On the Encaenia” by Levan Gigineishvili follows this article.

(78) Eἰς τὴν Πεντηκοστὴν. PG 52: 803–808; CPG 4536.


(80) N. Nilles, Kalendarium Manuale utriusque ecclesiae orientalis et occidentalis, vol. 1 (Oeniponte: Rauch, 1897) 18, 274.
Ekaterina Kovalchuk

(S) merely mentions the commemoration of the dedication of the Anastasis church on 13 September, attaching no explanatory article. The μνήμη τῶν ἐγκαινίων τῆς ἀναστάσεως is the last of several commemorations on that day, which displays its relative unimportance. The main manuscripts of the Typicon of the Great Church (H and P) entirely replace the celebration of the Encaenia with the preparation for the feast of the Cross. The dedication of the Anastasis church, however, is mentioned in some provincial copies of the Typicon, especially those of the Palestinian provenance. Another instance of divergent practices in the Palestinian monastic rite can be found in the twelfth-century manuscript from the monastery of St Sabba, where the feast of the Encaenia of the Anastasis church is celebrated along with the commemoration of the martyr Cornelius and the preparations for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Therefore, diminished significance of the Encaenia is traced predominantly to the liturgical collections that transmit the Constantinopolitan tradition, while the provincial variants show persistence in retaining the feast and according it considerable weight.

This difference suggests the suppression of the feast in the Byzantine capital and its continual thriving in the liturgy of Palestine, where the celebration was more at home, apparently, because of the physical closeness of the monuments commemorated. One reason for this obvious abandonment of the celebration of the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre in Constantinople may be that the Jerusalemite shrine was viewed as a rival in the Byzantine capital. The Constantinopolitan church promoted its own feast of the encaenia, the dedication of the Great Church of St Sophia, which by its topicality and significance was meant to replace and eclipse the Jerusalemite counterpart. The suppression of the Jerusalem Encaenia in the Constantinopolitan cal-


(83) For different traditions see the variant readings in the edition of Mateos, Typicon..., I, 27.

(84) “Τὰ ἐγκαίνια τῆς ἁγίας Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν Ἀναστάσεως καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου ἱερομάρτυρος Κορνηλίου τοῦ ἐκατοντάρχου προεόρτια τῆς ύψώσεως τοῦ τιμίου Σταυροῦ” (A. A. Дмитриевский, Описание литургических рукописей, хранимыхся в библиотеках Православного Востока, Т. 3: Типика (Кiev, 1917) 29).
endar must be placed in the context of a deliberate process of *translatio* of Jerusalem and its Temple aimed at the establishment of Constantinople and its Great Church as a place of primary significance for the Christians, the centre of religious pilgrimage, and a New Jerusalem. It is unlikely that the complete abandonment of the celebration of the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre in the office of the Great Church was due to a mere lack of interest in mid-Byzantine Constantinople. I believe that the Encaenia fell into disuse as a result of conscious ideological propaganda that endowed Constantinople and St Sophia with the eschatological significance of a New Jerusalem and a New Temple, which were to be viewed as the place of God’s abode, thus according Constantinople special status in the divine plan of salvation. Consequently, the Holy Sepulchre outshone by St Sophia, did not need to be longer remembered. Hence the feast of its dedication must have been discarded as unnecessary to the liturgy of Constantinople.

The printed *Menaia*, however, contain an extensive office for the celebration of the Encaenia, which, similarly to provincial variations of mid-Byzantine liturgy, is mixed with the offices of the preparation for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and commemoration of the martyr, Cornelius the Centurion. The office of the Encaenia in the *Menaia*, however, shows that the feast has been given a new spiritual dimension: “thus we celebrate spiritually the present Encaenia.” It is no longer the celebration of the physical inauguration of the churches but a metaphor of the renewal of both the Church and the individual through Christ.

Byzantine hymnographic compositions for the feast of the Encaenia clearly show the celebration of the Dedication of the Anastasis church was conflated with that of the Exaltation of the Cross and, as other Byzantine liturgical collections bear out as well, consequently lost its significance as an independent feast. Although the name of the
Encaenia feast is mentioned in the titles of the canons, the content of
the hymns develops the theme of the Cross instead. The Byzantine
hymns for the Feast of the Dedication do not commemorate the Con-
stantinian foundations at all but rather serve to mark the introduc-
tion (προεόρτιον) of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Having
evolved from a secondary element of the Encaenia, the celebration of
the discovery of the Cross was destined to play the central role at the
festival. Ultimately, it became an autonomous celebration and lost any
original association with the celebration of the dedication of the Mar-
tyrium and Anastasis churches in Jerusalem.

It is worthwhile to note that existing Medieval Oriental calendars
strongly evidence that the celebration of the feast of the Encaenia, the
name of which was often somewhat modified, was a common practice
in the churches of the Christian East. Nearly every liturgical collec-
tion of the Christian Orient indicates the commemoration of the dedi-
cation in Jerusalem, sometimes conflated with the feast of the Cross.

Thus, for instance, a Syriac calendar, transmitted in British Library
manuscript Add. 14504 and dated to the ninth century, mentions the
dedication of the holy Catholic Church, i.e. Martyrium, on 12 Septem-
ber. The eleventh-twelfth century manuscript of the British Library

(88) See the canons for the feast of dedication and the commentary in
I. Schirot (ed.), Analecta Hymnica Graeca e codicibus eruta Italie inferioris. I. Ca-

(89) Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross, 15–39.

(90) A rather complex development of the Encaenia feast in some tradi-
tions of the Eastern Christianity is discussed by Black, The Festival of Encae-
nia Ecclesiae.

(91) Majority of these collections appeared in the series of the Patrologia
Orientalis. Many of these editions, although with numerous imperfections, are
the only publications of the manuscript material so far available.

(92) The collections containing lists of martyrs, saints and events com-
memorated on successive days of the liturgical year that are usually referred
to as “menologes” by the editors, in fact are equivalents to calendars by their
nature (R. Agrain, L’hagiographie: Ses sources — Ses méthodes — Son histoire,
with a complementary bibliography by R. Godding (Brussels: Société des Bol-
landistes, 2000) (SH, 80), 85. For clarification of the terminology, see J. Noret,
Ménologes, synaxaires, ménées, Essai de clarification d’une terminologie, AB

(93) F. Nau (ed.), Un Martyrologe et douze ménologes syriaques, in: PO
10/1, 46.
Add. 14519, in the caption for 14 September, conflates the feast of the dedication with the feast of the Cross — the Encaenia is transformed into “Anâbânîa” (according to the transliteration given by F. Neu) and explained as “that is the dedication of the Cross.”\(^9^4\) The Copto-Arabic calendar attached at the end to the Coptic Gospel of the Catholic Institute of Paris, which constitutes the basis for Nau’s edition of Copto-Arabic menologies, indicates the commemoration of the dedication of Anastasis on 16 Tout (13 September), as do the majority of other manuscripts.\(^9^5\) Furthermore, the variety of Arab calendars show that the feast of the church dedication of Anastasis was kept on 13 Eiloul (13 September) in Melkite and Maronite traditions of the Eastern Christianity.\(^9^6\)

The list need not be continued — for, several adduced examples verify that there was a strong tradition of keeping the feast of the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre, mentioned specifically as the Anastasis church, in the Christian East. Although the calendars demonstrate that the practice of celebration of the feast was widespread, they give no explanation of the event. Such is discovered in other types of Oriental collections, the Synaxaria and Menologia, to be considered later on.

It is possible to notice that the development of the feast of the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre is tightly connected with the history of the building. The disappearance or revival of the Encaenia feast can often be explained by historical events that influenced the fate of the monument. Thus, the capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 led to the decline of the celebration of the Encaenia feast, which later was further suppressed by the thriving of its twin-feast, the Exaltation of the Cross. Numerous restorations undertaken to partially repair or rebuild the Holy Sepulchre on a larger scale would sprout renewed interest in the Encaenia as celebration of church renovation. The available evidence is too scant to fill all the gaps in the history of the Encaenia feast and to trace continual development of the feast, yet, a few elements treated thus far provide some insight into the nature and significance of the feast of the Encaenia in Jerusalem which, doubtless, was the most significant dedication feast in all of Byzantine history.

---

\(^{94}\) Nau, Un Martyrologe et douze ménologies syriaques..., 52.


The later *encaenia* of the churches in Byzantine culture were profoundly influenced by the Jerusalemite feast. The Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre remained a model dedication for other church dedications, often on a par with, or even exceeding in significance, because of its Christian character, the classical example of the Dedication of the Temple by King Solomon. The liturgical and hagiographical expression of the Encaenia often served as a prototype for Byzantine church dedication feasts. Falling within the Byzantine tradition of church dedication, the *encaenia* of St Sophia also inherited some features of the Encaenia of Jerusalem churches, manifested especially in the realm of the liturgical celebration. In terms of the legendary (as viewed by modern readers, but certainly not by the Byzantines themselves) history of the church as described in the *Diegesis*, to which we shall return later, the dedication of St Sophia was indebted to accounts of the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre no less than to the Old Testament pattern of the dedication of Solomon’s Temple.

**The Feast of the Encaenia and the Invention of the Cross**

The commemoration of the invention of the Holy Cross that allegedly happened during the foundation of the Holy Sepulchre was celebrated as an integral part of the festival of the Encaenia on the second day of the octave, 14 September. With time, it became an independent feast and, in some Christian traditions, entirely overshadowed and replaced the Encaenia. The finding of the True Cross, in its turn, was

---


(98) The importance of the Old Testament narrative of the foundation and dedication of the Temple as a model for the description of the building and *encaenia* of St Sophia in the *Diegesis* has been emphasised and elaborated by G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le recueil des Patria* (Paris, 1984) 293–309.

(99) Only some Eastern Christian traditions have preserved the feast of the Encaenia, as testified by liturgical books. The Roman calendar, which had instituted the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross on 14 September, had no commemoration of the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre: the church played only incidental role in the feast of the Cross (Fraser, *Feast of the Encaenia*...
transformed into the feast of the Elevation or Exaltation of the Cross and was destined to become one of the greatest feasts throughout all the Christendom.100

It should be noted that the discovery of the Cross has only marginal importance for the present investigation, which focuses primarily on the feast of the Encaenia as the celebration of the consecration of the Constantinian buildings. However significant for the modern scholarship the issues of authenticity of the discovery and the emergence and development of the legend of the inventio crucis may be, a solution of these problems has little repercussion on the flow of the main line of the present argument. Yet, because the alleged discovery, which sprouted a lasting and widespread commemoration, was originally firmly associated with the feast of the Jerusalem Encaenia, both in liturgy and hagiography, it is accorded rather close attention in the present study.

Several liturgical sources reflecting the pre-Byzantine office of Jerusalem attest that the finding of the Cross was celebrated on the second day of the Encaenia.101 It is not, however, altogether clear when exactly the feast commemorating the discovery of the Cross emerged.


(100) It should be mentioned, that the feast of the Cross that developed from the Jerusalem Encaenia and was celebrated on 14 September was actually just one of a few feasts devoted to the Cross. Throughout the Middle Ages and well into our own days there have been other feasts commemorating different events connected with the Cross. For instance, Eastern traditions also commemorated the return of the relic from the Persian captivity (6 March), the appearance of the Cross in the sky over Jerusalem (7 May), whereas the Roman rite celebrated another feast of the finding of the Cross (3 May) which probably is older than the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September) that was introduced in the West only in the seventh century. For an exhaustive discussion of history and liturgy of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in the West, with an excursus into the Eastern origins of the feast, see Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross; also, Baert, A Heritage of the Holy Wood...

(101) Fraser, Feast of the Encaenia..., 206–208; Renoux, Le codex Arménien Jérusalem 121. II. Édition..., 362–363; Tarchnischvili, Le Grand Lectionnaire..., 39, (the readings for the feast of the Cross are found only in the manuscript of Lathal); Garitte, Le calendrier palestino-géorgien..., 90; A. Wade, The Oldest Iadgari: The Jerusalem Tropologion, V–VIII c., OCP 50 (1984) 452.
The conviction that the finding of the Cross is related to the feast of the Encaenia is found at the end of the fourth century. A pilgrim from Gaul, Egeria, is the first person known to connect the feast of the Cross with the Encaenia. This pious lady, who visited Jerusalem around 380, recorded in her diary:

The Encaenia of these holy churches is a feast of special magnificence, since it is on the very date when the cross of the Lord was discovered. So they arranged that this day should be observed with all possible joy by making the original dedication of these holy churches coincide with the very day when the cross had been found.\(^\text{102}\)

In scholarly circles there is an ongoing debate as to the historical validity of the discovery of the Cross: did the event indeed happen in the reign of Constantine, or was it a later fabrication aimed at the promotion of Jerusalem and its Holy Places? Scholars have puzzled over the fact that the finding of the Cross, already connected with the Constantinian building activities in the Holy Land by the end of the fourth century, finds no reflection in the ecclesiastical authors contemporary with the alleged discovery. It has been observed that there is a strange silence as to the discovery of the Cross in the notes of a pilgrim from Bordeaux and in all writings of Eusebius. The Bordeaux pilgrim who visited Jerusalem in 333 lists in his travel report several sights connected with the life and Passion of Christ.\(^\text{103}\) However, he does not make any mention of the Cross having been discovered in any of the locations. Some scholars did not consider this surprising: they have explained the traveller’s silence by his lack of interest in relics and miracles. His failure to refer to the Cross is therefore taken rather lightly and is not given much value in scholarly discussions of the historicity of the invention of the Cross.\(^\text{104}\)

\(^{102}\) “Harum ergo ecclesiarum sanctorum encenia cum summo honore celebrantur, quoniam crux Domini inventa est ipsa die. Et ideo propter hoc ita ordinatum est, ut quando primum sanctae ecclesiae suprascriptae consecrabantur, ea dies esset qua crux Domini fuerat inuenta, ut simul omni laetitia eadem die celebrarentur” (Egeria, Journal de voyage, 316; trans. Wilkinson, Egeria’s Travels..., 146–147).

\(^{103}\) Itinerarium Burdigalense, 588.2–599.6.

\(^{104}\) Borghammer, How the Holy Cross was Found..., 92; Drijvers, Helena Augusta..., 84. Hunt, however, accords more significance to the silence of the Bordeaux pilgrim (cf. E. D. Hunt, Constantine and Jerusalem, Journal of Ecclesiastical History 48/3 (1997) 415).
The omission of any reference to the finding of the Cross in Eusebius, on the other hand, is more inexplicable and enigmatic. Eusebius, who took such care to describe the discovery of the Tomb and the foundation and subsequent dedication of the Holy Sepulchre in detail, has been mysteriously reticent about the allegedly contemporary discovery of the True Cross. His silence has often been questioned; however, for some scholars, it was never sufficiently persuading. They put forward the arguments aimed to show that Eusebius’ silence does not necessarily mean he was unaware of the Cross’ discovery and managed to interpret it in such a way, that the event could be read into the context of the foundation and building of the Holy Sepulchre. Those wishing to find historical evidence for the discovery of the Cross centred much of their scholarly discussion on the word gnorisma used in Constantine’s letter to bishop Macarius of Jerusalem, which was fully cited by Eusebius.

So great is our Saviour’s grace, that no words seem enough to match the present miracle. For the evidence of his most sacred passion, long since hidden under the ground, to have remained unknown for such a long period of years, until through the removal of the enemy of the whole republic it was ready to be revealed, once they were set free, to his servants, truly surpasses all marvels.

This passage came to be interpreted as an oblique reference to the relic of the Cross. Yet, some scholars persuasively demonstrated that such an interpretation of this passage as if speaking of the discovery of the cross is invalid. The whole discourse of Eusebius focuses on

(105) Some scholars believe that Eusebius, for some theological and political reasons, intentionally omitted the story of the finding of the Cross. Most recently, Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross..., 24–25, reiterates this argument, following the opinion of Rubin, The Church of the Holy Sepulchre..., 79–105; Drijvers, Helena Augusta..., 83–87; Borgéhmar, How the Holy Cross was Found..., 93–122. The opposite view is expressed by Cameron and Hall, Eusebius. Life of Constantine..., 282–283, who refute that there would be political reasons for such an omission.

(106) The letter is quoted by Eusebius in the Life of Constantine: “Τοσαύτη τού σωτήρος ἡμῶν ἐστιν η τί χάρις, ως μηδεμίαν λόγων χορηγίαν τού παρόντος θαύματος αξίων εἶναι δοκεῖν· τὸ γὰρ γνώρισμα τοῦ ἄγιωτάτου ἐκείνου πάθους ύπό τῇ γῇ πάλαι κρυπτόμενον τοσαύτας ἐτῶν περιόδοις λαθεῖν, ἀμιχος οὗ διὰ τῆς τοῦ κοινοῦ πάντων ἐκθροῦ ἀναιρέσεως ἔλευθερωθείσι τοῖς ἐαυτοῦ θεράπουσιν ἀναλάμπειν ἐμελλε, πᾶσαν ἐκπληξίν ως ἀληθῶς ὑπερβαίνει” (VC III 30.1; trans. Cameron and Hall, Eusebius. Life of Constantine..., 134).
the site and meaning of Christ’s resurrection. In this context, it would have been out of place to insert a reference to the Cross so subtle that it could hardly have been grasped by his audience. The term gnorisma, therefore, should be taken to refer to the tomb rather than to the relics of the True Cross.\(^\text{107}\) Thus, I agree with those who believe that Eusebius’ silence should be taken to point to his ignorance of the inventio, for had he known of the discovery he was quite capable of referring to it and would have mentioned it at least in some of his writings.\(^\text{108}\)

The silence of Eusebius and the Bordeaux pilgrim clearly shows they did not know anything about the finding of the Cross, and this ignorance can only be explained if the event did not actually take place. If the Cross had been found in their time, they would certainly have been aware of such a significant event and would have referred to it. Therefore, the conclusion drawn from their silence is that the finding of the Cross did not occur in the Constantinian times but is a legendary motif that appeared later, after the actual foundation and dedication of the Martyrion and Anastasis churches.

Significantly, shortly after the composition of Eusebius’ Vita Constantini, Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechetical Lectures (c. 350), thrice refers to the presence of the Holy Wood in Jerusalem and the spread of its relics all over the world.\(^\text{109}\) He also was familiar with the finding

\(^{107}\) Hunt, Constantine and Jerusalem..., 415; Wilken, The Land Called Holy..., 90; Cameron and Hall, Eusebius. Life of Constantine..., 282–283. In another work, Laus Constantini, Eusebius refers to the basilica in Jerusalem as dedicated to the saving sign, apparently meaning the Cross (Cf. H. A. Drake, Eusebius on the True Cross, Journal of Ecclesiastical History 36/1 (1985) 14; Rubin, The Church of the Holy Sepulchre..., 83; Drijvers, Helena Augusta..., 84–86). Frequent references to the symbolism of the Cross as the “saving sign” in Eusebius’ writings, however, cannot be interpreted to mean the actual relics of the True Cross.

\(^{108}\) Cameron and Hall, Eusebius. Life of Constantine..., 283. Yet, in some of the most recent studies, the probability of Eusebius’ deliberate silence about the Cross is still upheld: Drijvers, Cyril of Jerusalem..., 19–20.

\(^{109}\) W. K. Reischl and J. Rupp (eds.), Cyrrilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia, 2 vols. (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967). “And already the whole world is filled with fragments of the wood of the Cross” (Catechesis 4. 10); “The holy wood of the Cross gives witness: it is here to be seen in the very day, and through those who take [pieces] from it in faith, it has from here already filled almost the whole world” (Catechesis 10. 19); “…the wood of the Cross which from this place is spread all over the world.” (Catechesis 13. 4; trans. Drijvers and Drijvers, The Finding of the True Cross..., 17).
of the Cross that allegedly happened in Jerusalem during the reign of Constantine the Great, which he mentions in a letter to the emperor Constantius II (351). Yet, he does not seem to be aware of any other details of the finding of the Cross. If he had known of any, it is hardly possible he would have missed the chance to relate them. Until recently, Cyril’s writings were taken to indicate the terminus post quem the legend of the finding of the Cross originated.

Although not yet known in the first half of the fourth century, the story of the invention of the Cross spread widely in a very short time. From the end of the fourth century onwards, the inventio crucis was frequently brought up in various historical works, letters and accounts of pilgrims, homilies and orations. Many hagiographers attempted to describe in detail the imaginative version of how the discovery must have happened. The written sources vividly reflect the process by which the miraculous finding of the Cross rapidly came to overshadow that of the discovery of the Christ’s Tomb. Sometimes a few short pas-

(110) Critical edition of the Greek version (CPG 3587; BHG3 413) by E. Bihain, L’Épître de Cyrille de Jérusalem à Constance sur la vision de la Croix (BHG 413), Byz 43 (1973) 264–296.

(111) “Since Cyril’s Letter to Constantius does not mention how the Cross was found, the terminus post quem for the legend must be 351. A precise terminus ante quem is harder to establish but the year 390 is very likely. This means that the legend had its origin during the episcopate of Cyril.” (Drijvers, Cyril of Jerusalem…, 172).

(112) It first appeared in the Church History of Gelasius of Caesarea, whose work is known to have been written around 390 at the behest of his uncle, Cyril of Jerusalem. The relation of the inventio crucis legend in Gelasius’ work was reconstructed by Borgehammar, How the Holy Cross was Found…, 31–55, on the basis of some surviving fragments of Gelasius history. The story of Helena’s discovery of the Cross can be found in the book III 6, 1–8 of the recent critical edition of the Church History by Pseudo-Gelasius: G. Ch. Hansen (ed.), Anonym Kirchengeschichte (Gelasius Cyzicenus, CPG 6034) (Berlin—New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002) 118–121.

(113) The elements of the inventio crucis legend appear in 395 in the funerary oration delivered by Ambrose of Milan on the occasion of the death of the emperor Theodosius (O. Faller (ed.), Ambrose of Milan, De obitu Theodosii (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1955) (CSEL, 73) 394–397). It is likely that John Chrysostom also knew some details of the legend, as his commentary on the Gospel of John, written around 390, would suggest (John Chrysostom, In Iohannem, hom. 85. PG 59: 461). A little later, the legend is attested in the writings of Rufinus, Jerome, and Paulinus of Nola. For an extensive treatment of the sources see Borgehammar, How the Holy Cross was Found…, 7–76.
sages dwelling upon the revelation of the burial site were incorporated into accounts of the finding of the Cross. Besides that, there seems to be no narrative, save for Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini*, which dwelt at length upon the discovery of the Holy Sepulchre and the subsequent foundation and inauguration of the church at that site. The events that were, doubtless, of major significance to contemporaries, apparently ceased to intrigue subsequent generations. Despite giving rise to a momentous feast, the occasions of the building and the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre were usually merely touched upon in the context of the discovery of the Cross, and they functioned as a background rather than a primary element in the hagiographical narratives.

The fact that there were a great many versions of the legend of the *inventio crucis* demonstrates the immense interest in the finding of the Cross. The survival of versions in many different languages suggests the legend circulated in all parts of Christendom. Modern scholars have tried to disentangle the legend’s complex origins and development. Despite disagreements about the reasons the legends sprang to life and the time of composition, the majority of scholars agree concerning its provenance. The conventional view is that the legend of the finding of the Cross originated in Jerusalem during Cyril’s episcopate. Hunt was the first scholar to argue for the connection between several almost contemporaneous factors — the Constantinian buildings in Jerusalem, the remembrance of Helena’s presence in Jerusalem c. 327, the attestation of the relics of the Cross in Jerusalem around the same time, the growing numbers of pilgrims to the Holy Land, and especially Jerusalem, and the formation of the legend of how the Holy Cross was found. The connection between the buildings of Constantine on Golgotha and the discovery of the Cross has been generally recognised by scholars researching the *inventio crucis* legend. As to the questions of how and why the legend appeared, opinions differ.

Most recently, Jan Willem Drijvers revisited the question of the legendary discovery of the Cross in his study on Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem. He contends that the origin of the legend should be located in the context of Cyril’s efforts to gain prominence for Jerusalem not

---

(114) There are versions of the legend of the finding of the Cross in Syriac, Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Hebrew.


only in the province of Palestine, but in the Christian world in general. According to the opinion of J. W. Drijvers, the relic of the Cross was a major symbol employed by Cyril to establish the supremacy of Jerusalem. He emphasises the fact that various martyr cults and religious symbols could lend great prestige and authority, if cleverly exploited, to the city and its bishop. Thus, bishops resorted to cults and symbols as means to consolidate and enlarge their influence in an endeavour to anchor their see or city in a “power network.”

The emergence of the legends connected with the Cross and its miraculous discovery, therefore, is considered as a powerful device for the promotion of Cyril’s bishopric, the city of Jerusalem. J. W. Drijvers further suggests Cyril may have been directly involved in composing the legend of the invention of the True Cross.

While J. W. Drijvers believes the legend of the True Cross was initially designed during Cyril’s episcopacy to promote the supremacy of the see of Jerusalem, Heid supposes its origin is connected with the pilgrims’ devotion for the True Cross. He assumes the legend of the Cross was initially meant to be read during the liturgical celebration of the Cross on 14 September and that this liturgical version of the Helena legend was later incorporated by Gelasius into his Church History. Although H. J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Drijvers dismiss Heid’s assumption that the legend was part of the Jerusalem liturgy, in his recent study on Cyril of Jerusalem, J. W. Drijvers is open to viewing the legend of the Cross in context of the liturgical celebration of the Encaenia in fourth-century Jerusalem. He suggests Rufinus’ familiarity with the story of the discovery of the Cross, which he included in

(117) Drijvers, Cyril of Jerusalem..., 159.

(118) “It is not improbable that Cyril was responsible for the origin and composition of the legend of the Cross and that he suggested to Gelasius that he include the story in his Church History. The aim of the legend is obviously to sustain the authenticity of the Cross present in Jerusalem but also, and perhaps primarily, to establish a relationship between Jerusalem, its bishop and the imperial rule of Rome. In this respect the purpose of the legend is remarkably consistent and comparable with that of Cyril’s Letter to Constantius. It was the perfect myth to promote Jerusalem” (J. W. Drijvers, “Promoting Jerusalem: Cyril and the True Cross, in: J. W. Drijvers and W. Watt (eds.), Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 91–92).


(120) Drijvers and Drijvers, The Finding of the True Cross..., 18.
his *Church History*, might not have necessarily come from Gelasius, as is commonly held in modern scholarship, but from another oral or written source of Jerusalem origin.

[Rufinus] may very well have become acquainted with the legend of *inventio crucis*, either in written or oral form, while he was living in Jerusalem between 381 and 397. The story undoubtedly was popular there and may have had a connection with the veneration of the Cross during the liturgical celebrations, in particular the Encaenia, in Jerusalem.\(^{121}\)

In my opinion, the legend of the Cross, very likely in a more primitive form than known nowadays, indeed functioned in the liturgy of the Encaenia, even if not designed specifically for that purpose. It may already have been featured in the festive liturgy on the second day of the octave (14 September) by the end of the fourth century. I believe there was a need for such a legendary (or rather historical, for early communities of the Christians) narrative explaining the meaning of the celebration of the Encaenia to the visitors who swarmed into Jerusalem for the festival. The initial, probably rather unsophisticated, story could be aimed to satisfy the curiosity of the multitudes of pilgrims and the local faithful, who, as time passed by, lost a clear grasp of the original significance and background story of the festival. At first, this hypothetical narrative may have dealt with the two main and intrinsically associated themes of the festival, foundation of churches and the discovery of the Cross. Towards the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century, however, the motif of the foundation and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre must have been reduced and was gradually replaced by the increasingly dominant story of the finding of the Cross.

Another factor in favour of the view that the legend of the Cross was connected with the liturgical celebration of the Encaenia from the very beginning of its creation may be inferred from the legend’s later tradition. The revised version of the *inventio crucis*, that is the “Judas Kyriakos” legend (named for the main character of the story), became a historical account of the finding of the Cross, and in the Middle Ages it functioned, though it was probably never intended as such, as a “liturgical legend” for the feast of the Cross.\(^{122}\)

\(^{121}\) *Drijvers, Cyril of Jerusalem...,* 171–172.

\(^{122}\) *Borgehammar, How the Holy Cross was Found...,* 181.
Even if there was no clear-cut hagiographic narrative used at the pre-Byzantine stage of Jerusalem liturgy (it is known that the lectio hagiographica was introduced at the later stage) the legendary episodes connected with the feasts celebrated could be made known to the wide audience of local Christians and the multitudes of pilgrims through homiletic discourses delivered on specific days of the Encaenia octave. Such examples of the inventio crucis legend incorporated into homiletic discourse survive from a period somewhat later than the assumed introduction of the ecclesiastical feast, which is known to have been commemorated at the end of the fourth century. For instance, the homily of Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Cross, treated above, was composed specifically for the feast of the Cross. It contains a significant portion of the legendary material connected with the inventio crucis, as well as the discovery of the Tomb. Since the Encaenia was naturally associated with the feast of the Cross, the homily also recounts numerous details of the dedication story. It is possible that this discourse is not an exception and there were other similar homiletic compositions dealing with the legendary history of the discovery of the True Cross, the story of Constantinian foundations and the Encaenia at Golgotha, along with theological expositions and moral exhortations. 

(123) It is only my assumption that early homilies could contain some legendary material on the discovery of the Cross as well as, quite possibly, relating details of the building and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre. For various examples of texts used in the liturgical context of the feast of the Cross, see the summary by Borgehammar, How the Holy Cross was Found…, 185–194. The practice of delivering various orations, exegetical speeches and homilies on such festive occasions as the celebration of the Encaenia is recorded by Eusebius, VC IV, 45. Though this particular passage refers to the main event of the church dedication, and not its annual liturgical commemoration, there is evidence suggesting that the practice of delivering speeches on the commemorative feasts of encaenia existed in Byzantium. Whether or not it was a regular annual custom is impossible to establish from the scarce texts that came down to us; yet, we can state that it was a rather common practice (cf. C. Mango and J. Parker, A Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia, DOP 14 (1960) 234). Leo the Wise is known to have composed some homilies for church dedications (see Th. Antonopoulou, The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI (Leiden—New York: Brill, 1997) (The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, 14); A. Frolov, Deux églises byzantines d’après des sermons peu connus de Léon VI le Sage, Études Byzantines 3 (1945) 43–91).
Hagiography of the Encaenia

Whereas the liturgical aspect of the Encaenia is relatively well attested in the sources and the system of festive lections can be reconstructed with a great degree of reliability, its hagiographical expression has been lurking in darkness. It seems rather startling that the main part of the Encaenia feast, the actual foundation and dedication of the Anastasis rotunda and the Martyrium basilica, escaped the attention of Byzantine hagiographers, while the element that was initially secondary, the legendary event of the discovery of the Cross, was extensively developed in hagiographical literature. These extremely popular accounts of the inventio crucis accord a marginal role to the foundation and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre, which is usually given disproportionately little attention. Yet, it would be logical to expect that such a widely celebrated feast as the festival of the Encaenia would receive an appropriate hagiographical expression, similarly to a number of other liturgical celebrations traditionally furnished with relevant accounts. Particularly if we consider the tight liturgical association of the dedication of the churches in Jerusalem with the discovery of the True Cross, it could be expected that the two events would have been given equal attention in literary records, at least at the early stages when the Encaenia was still considerably important.

In general practice, from the mid-Byzantine period, hagiographic legends that had been composed as larger independent accounts were abridged for public reading in the festive liturgy. These shortened versions were incorporated into hagiographical collections of Synaxaria while longer accounts were reserved for the Menologia. Besides festive hagiographical readings, however, some legendary details could be utilised in homiletic compositions to be delivered on particular occasions; legends were woven into the context of homiletic discourse and enriched with some edificatory elements.

It has been already shown that some authors touched upon the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre, often integrated into a larger canvas of the legend of the finding of the True Cross, in their homilies. Some homilies on the Cross contain nothing more than scattered details about the grand dedication in Jerusalem, apparently intended to serve as background material for the account of Helena’s discovery of the Cross. A few surviving homilies on the Encaenia of the Anastasis church, however, deal with the theme of the renovation in theological terms, rarely being interested in the historico-hagiographical basis of the feast. It is also a curious fact that the Byzantine Synaxaria and
Menologia do not offer anything more than a simple caption referring to the date and name of the Encaenia, and there is no known independent narrative suitable for the celebration. Thus, there is no significant Byzantine source of hagiographical material meant for the Encaenia.

On the other hand, the lectio hagiographica for the Encaenia did find its way into some of the Eastern Christian collections. A few liturgical collections of Christian Orient include relevant hagiographical articles commemorating the foundation and dedication of the churches in Jerusalem. These brief summaries explaining the topographical and historical context of the feast play an invaluable role for reconstruction of a possible hagiographical account for the Jerusalemite Encaenia.

Out of the range of Eastern versions of Synaxarium, published mainly in the series of Patrologia Orientalis but also in some other editions, a few collections contain a separate brief account of the commemoration of the Encaenia. Thus, the story of the Encaenia is found in Copto-Arabic, Ethiopian and Armenian Synaxaria. A longer narrative for the feast was also included into Armenian Menologium, which remains unpublished.¹²⁴

When dealing with these textual sources, however, one is greatly inhibited by the lack of reliable critical editions or, as in the case of the Armenian Menologium article, the lack of any edition at all. The existing editions and translations of the Copto-Arabic, Ethiopian and Armenian Synaxaria are notorious for their imperfections, confusion of different versions, and often poor rendering into European languages.¹²⁵ Being aware of all the problems connected with the existing editions of this

---

(124) This is a legend briefly mentioned by Conybeare in his reference to the manuscript of the Bodleian Library Arm. c. 3 (F. C. Conybeare, Rituale Armenorum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905) 76). This text remains ignored by scholars thus far — it is unedited and, probably that is why, totally overlooked in the scholarship of the legends of the Constantinian cycle, where it clearly belongs. There is another manuscript (University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh. 438) that contains a somewhat modified and, likely, later version of the text than the one indicated by Conybeare.

Oriental material, lack of relevant comparative scholarly study of the versions, and numerous ambiguities as to their original composition and sources, I recognize that I am greatly limited in my argument. Yet, with the above reservations in mind, I accord considerable importance to the parallels the *Synaxaria* entries exhibit when compared with the *Diegesis*, even though any conclusion based on such a comparison has only limited plausibility.

The Copto-Arabic *Synaxarium* and the Ethiopic *Synaxarium*, also derived from the Arabic Synaxarium of the Coptic Church, have a number of commonalities. The accounts for the feast of the Encaenia in the Coptic and Ethiopian *Synaxaria* clearly reflect some common source. All of them, as a matter of fact, are related versions springing from the same branch of *Synaxaria*, which must have been initially inherited from the Greek church of Alexandria.

The short entry for the commemoration of the dedication of Anastasis in the Coptic *Synaxarium* introduces the familiar legend of Helena setting out to Jerusalem with the intention of looking for the Holy Cross. According to the text, her journey to Jerusalem ended with the successful invention of the Cross, which was followed by the foundation of the churches in Palestine and dedication festivities. The version in the Ethiopic *Synaxarium* closely resembles the Coptic summary, and the text for the Encaenia in the Armenian *Synaxarium* abridges essentially the same legend. The version in the unpublished Armenian *Menologium* highlights dedication of the churches in Jerusalem in a manner slightly different from other *Synaxaria* versions. Yet, all of the stories recreate the same basic *inventio crucis* legend. Some textual details and points of deviations, though not significant for the general rendering of the story, have important implications for a subsequent investigation of the sources and models of the *Diegesis* of St Sophia. These are given due attention in the section focusing on literary parallels of the “foundation-dedication stories” that follows.

The presence of related texts for the Jerusalemite feast of the dedication in the Armenian, Coptic and its later derivative Ethiopic *Synaxaria* and Armenian *Menologium* strongly suggests that they originated from a Greek source, or possibly, different redactions of the same Greek text. The survival of parallel Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopic narratives leads to the conclusion that there was once a Byzantine text, which has

---

since been lost. In comparing these Oriental texts with the Byzantine Diegesis, it is my assumption that they are the translations of an earlier Byzantine account of the feast of the Encaenia, most likely produced in Byzantine Jerusalem. The original locale where the legend of the Cross originated, which was arguably the urban milieu of early Byzantine Jerusalem, points at the same direction. It may well be that the inventio crucis story and other legendary episodes connected with the discovery, building and dedication of the Jerusalemite churches were but parts of a larger cycle originally connected with the octave feast of the Encaenia.

After all, the texts for the feast of the Encaenia could hardly be more relevant elsewhere than in Jerusalem: it was in Jerusalem that the feast sprouted and was celebrated, although with some interruptions, with great festivities. Thus, Jerusalem was the most appropriate milieu for production, even if initially in oral form, of relevant accounts recording the history and meaning of local traditions. Therefore, the texts for the feast of the Encaenia transmitted in Oriental collections, although completely lacking in extant Byzantine Greek literature, must be traces of the archaic literary stratum originally present in the early Byzantine tradition of Jerusalem.

There must have been important reasons why no comparable legend survived in the Greek language. The rapid development of the cult of the True Cross that supplanted the Encaenia may have contributed to the disappearance of further interest in the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre. That is one of the reasons why, the most likely, the Encaenia feast of the Holy Sepulchre is not reflected in the later Byzantine literary tradition. Besides that, Byzantine attempts to accord to Constantinople the dominant position in the Christian world may also have been a significant factor leading to the suppression and eventual disappearance of Greek texts relating to the Jerusalem Encaenia. The celebration of the great Jerusalemite feast may have been seen to undermine the prestige of the Capital. It was Constantinople itself that was promoted, especially in the middle Byzantine period, as a New Jerusalem. There was no need, therefore, to look back to the glorious past of Jerusalem as a centre of the Christian religion; Constantinople was gradually establishing itself as a new centre of Christianity and the reinvention of its own glorious past became a popular trend in the mid-Byzantine epoch.

The Greek legend of the foundation of the Holy Sepulchre, if we assume such an account existed, could have been intentionally suppressed due to the increasing importance of another Byzantine shrine,
the Great Church of St Sophia in Constantinople. From the time of Justinian, the image of St Sophia was recurrently constructed as the most important church in Christendom, a successor to the Temple of Solomon. In this way, the Holy Sepulchre was viewed as a rival, and a text recording its glories and describing the exceptional significance of the monument would create an unwanted threat for the Justinianic Great Church, which was promoted to the key position in the Christian Ecumene and meant to overshadow even the Temple of Solomon (as can be concluded from Justinian’s famous exclamation, “Solomon, I have outdone you!” — his great achievement was also viewed as surpassing that of Solomon). For the church of St Sophia of Justinian to be embued with the eschatological significance of a New Jerusalem, the importance of the Holy Sepulchre had to be consciously downplayed in Medieval Byzantium.

In this way, a complex paradigm of both politically and theologically coloured imitations and appropriations was constructed on the basis of intricate symbolism and significance of the major religious monuments: the Temple, the Holy Sepulchre, and St Sophia. Literary compositions played a significant role in promulgating and establishing this system of ideologically connoted comparisons. The Diegesis, through its parallels with the accounts of the Holy Sepulchre, may be argued to represent a text with a subtle reflection of the ideological trends that sought to establish the church of St Sophia in its status of the New Temple and New Jerusalem — a status formerly enjoyed by the Holy Sepulchre.

In anticipation of uncovering a deeper significance in any literary resemblance between the church foundation accounts, let us now turn to the detailed study of those few, yet noteworthy, common motifs found in the Diegesis and the accounts recording both historical and hagiographical versions of the building and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre.

**Building and Dedication of the Holy Sepulchre and St Sophia: Comparison of Literary Accounts**

The literary version of the construction of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the subsequent dedication of the complex, recounted in the Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini*, differs considerably from episodes found in later hagiographical legends of the *inventio crucis* and, especially, from the short accounts transmitted in the Oriental *Synaxaria* and *Menologia*. Yet, despite contextual and stylistic variations that are
easily noticed, all the stories of the building and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre manifest close affinities with the narrative of the building of the Great Church in Constantinople.

Surprisingly, the Diegesis shows almost no resemblance to other known literary works describing the same church, St Sophia in Constantinople. Neither historical descriptions of Justinian’s building project by Procopius, Agathias, Evagrius nor the rhetorical composition of Paul the Silentiary, written for the dedication of St Sophia, can be rewardingly compared with the Diegesis. Indeed, the legendary account of St Sophia demonstrates no trace of relationship to the given sources. Instead, striking similarity is found between the accounts of the foundations of St Sophia and the Holy Sepulchre. The following detailed comparison of the Byzantine Diegesis and narratives concerning the foundation and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre is intended to demonstrate how surprisingly close and evident are the parallels between these stories.

The Vita Constantini and the Diegesis

The account of the church of St Sophia recalls in several places the description of the building and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre as given by Eusebius in his Vita Constantini. First of all, the idea to construct the church is presented as divinely inspired. Both Constantine and Justinian set out to build their church because of supernatural incentive.

Furthermore, both emperors undertook to build their eminent creation on a site previously occupied by another sacred shrine, which, on


their orders, was entirely demolished. Justinian’s demolition and subsequent refusal to utilise any material from the demolished church\textsuperscript{131} parallel the efforts of Constantine who, after having destroyed the pagan temple, carefully cleared the site and dumped the remaining rubble far from the place of his foundation.\textsuperscript{132} While Eusebius’ account of the demolition of the pagan temple of Aphrodite that had been built at the site of Christ’s tomb has some historical value, the actions of Justinian as presented by the author of the \textit{Diegesis}, have virtually no historical background. There is no independent record suggesting that Justinian levelled to the ground the Constantinian church that stood at the site of his future foundation, as it is related in the \textit{Diegesis}. We may only surmise that the author of the \textit{Diegesis} did not have to invent this scene of demolition and following foundation of a new church without any use of the materials from the previous building, but probably derived the motif from available Byzantine models; Eusebius’ \textit{Vita Constantini} may well have been his primary source.

Further correspondence between the two narratives is found in the aspiration of both emperors to build extraordinary churches on a magnificent scale. Justinian, according to the \textit{Diegesis}, similarly to Constantine, as depicted by Eusebius, aimed at an unsurpassable construction that would be more beautiful than any religious foundation ever constructed. Thus, Constantine wrote to Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem:

\begin{quote}
It is thus for your own Good Sense to make such order and provision of what is needed that not only a basilica superior to those in all other places, but the other arrangements also, may be such that all the excellences of every city are surpassed by this foundation.\textsuperscript{133}
\end{quote}

(131) “Τῷ δὲ δωδέκατῳ ἔτει τῆς βασιλείας Ἰουστινιανὸς τὸν προειρημένον ναὸν τὸν παρὰ τοῦ Μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου κτισθέντα εκ θεμελίων κατέστρεψε, τὴν δὲ ύλιν ἰδίως ἀπέθετο οὐδὲ γὰρ χρείαν αὐτῆς εἶχε διὰ τὸ πολλὴν καὶ ἄπειρον ύλῆν ἐτοιμάσαι” (\textit{Vitti, Die Erzählung}, 438, l. 9–13).

(132) “Ἀμα δὲ προστάγματι τὰ τῆς ἀπάτης μηχανήματα εἰς ἐδαφὸς ἀνωθὲν ἄφῃν ὡς ὕψηλου κατερρίπτετο, ἐλυετο τε καὶ καθῃρεῖτο αὐτοῖς ξοάνοις καὶ δαίμοσι τὰ τῆς πλάνης οἰκοδομήματα. Οὐ μὴν δὲν τούτοις τὰ τῆς σπουδῆς ἱστατο, ἀλλὰ πάλιν βασιλεὺς αἰφεῖσθαι καὶ πορφωτάτω τῆς χώρας ἀποφριστεσθαι τῶν καθαιρομένων τὴν εν λίθοις καὶ ξύλοις ύλην προστάττει. Ἐργον δὲ καὶ τάδε παρηκολούθει τῷ λόγῳ” (\textit{VC III}, 26.6–27).

(133) “Προσήκει τοιοῦν τὴν σὴν ἀγχίνοιαν οὕτω διατάξαι τε καὶ ἐκάστου τῶν ἀναγκαίων ποιήσασθαι πρόνοιαν, ὡς ὡς μόνον βασιλικήν τῶν ἀπανταχοῦ βελτίωνα ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τοιαῦτα γίνεσθαι, ὡς πάν-
The author of the Diegesis, similarly to Eusebius, speaks of Justinian’s divine inspiration to construct an extraordinary building: Justinian was prompted “to build the church which has not been built from the times of Adam.”

To prepare for their enormous projects, both emperors sought the assistance of local governors and high officials; letters were dispatched to people in authoritative positions instructing them to collaborate in the provision of grants and materials for the future foundation.

Then, the beauties of the imperial foundations were so astonishing that the authors of both narratives purport to be lost for words to describe them. The dazzling splendour of the newly-built churches of the Holy Sepulchre and St Sophia, richly decorated with precious metals and stones and adorned with munificent dedications bestowed by the building emperors, is said to be so incredible that no literary description could adequately express it.

A concluding account of the inauguration ceremonies that traditionally marked the completion of churches displays some correspondence between the two narratives as well. The celebration of the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre is said to have been accompanied by lavish banquets and distribution of money, goods and food to the destitute, arranged by a trustee of the emperor.

---

(134) “... τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι ναὸν, οἵος οὐκ ἐκτίσθη ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀδάμ” (VITTI, Die Erzählung..., 436, l. 12–14).
(135) VC III, 29.2–32; VITTI, Die Erzählung..., 436, l. 15 – 437, l. 3.
(136) “Τόνδε μὲν οὖν τὸν νεών σωτηρίου ἀναστάσεως ἐναργὲς ἁίστημα μαρτυρεῖ τοῦ πολεμικοῦ βασιλέα, πλουσία καὶ βασιλικὴ κατασκευὴ τὸν σύμπαντα καταφαιδρύνας, ἐκόσμει δ᾿ αὐτὸν ἀδιηγήτοις κάλλεσι πλείστων ὁσῶν ἀναθημάτων, χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργυροῦ καὶ λίθων πολυτελῶν ἐν διαλλαττούσαις ὑλαῖς, ὅπλης ἑτοῖμα ἐνδείξας, ποικιλίᾳ τοῦ ναοῦ, ὅτι πάντιν ἔναν καὶ πολυτελεῖ συνήθει τῷ λόγῳ” (VC III, 40).
(137) “... πτωχοῖς δ᾿ ἀνείμοσι πενήτων τῷ ἀνδρὸν καὶ γυναῖκαν μυρίων πλήθες, τροφῆς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν χρεῶν ἐν ἐνδείξασθαι, πολυτελεῖσ
food supplies were distributed among the poor during the festivities of the dedication of St Sophia.\textsuperscript{138}

Thus, the comparison of the two accounts shows a number of textual correspondences. Furthermore, the \textit{Diegesis} follows the same basic structural outline as the description given by Eusebius. The nature and order of parallel details discussed above suggest the resemblance of the \textit{Diegesis} with Eusebius' account could hardly be accidental. It is quite possible the similarities are the result of a familiarity of the author of the \textit{Diegesis} with Eusebius' presentation of the story of the foundation and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre.

Such a hypothetical acquaintance is all the more reasonable in light of the following chronological correspondence. While very little knowledge of the \textit{Vita Constantini} is displayed in Byzantine sources, as it was greatly overshadowed by hagiographical legends about Constantine, it has been argued that Eusebius' work was actually rediscovered in the period after the ending of the Iconoclasm in 843.\textsuperscript{139} Photius discussed it in his \textit{Bibliotheca} (cod. 127),\textsuperscript{140} and the earliest surviving manuscript was produced in the tenth century, which points to a renewed interest in the work in the post-Iconoclastic times. This rediscovery of the \textit{Vita Constantini} corresponds to the chronology of the composition of the \textit{Diegesis} (arguably written in the ninth century). Thus, it is all the more likely that the author of the \textit{Diegesis} knew and used Eusebius' \textit{Vita Constantini} as his model.

\textit{διαδόσεις χρημάτων καὶ περιβλημάτων ἐποιείτο, ἣδη δὲ καὶ τὸν πάντα νεὼν πλουσίως καὶ βασιλικοῖς ἀναθήμασι κατεποίκιλλεν” (VC IV, 44. 2).}

\textit{(138) “Ομως τελεώσας τὸν ναὸν καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ ἀναθήματα τῇ κβ´ τοῦ Δεκεμβρίου μηνὸς εἰσῆλθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Παλατίου μετὰ προελεύσεως ἐως τῶν πύλων τοῦ Ἁγιουστίωνος, τῶν ἔξεχοχεῖν ὑπὸ τὸ Ὠρολογείον, καθεξόμενος ἐφ’ ἄρα ἀναθηματίτων καὶ ἐθυσε βόας χιλίους, πρόβατα ἐξαισχύλια καὶ ἐλάφους ἕκαστος καὶ τὰς χιλίους, ὅρνες καὶ ἀλεκτρυόνας ἀνὰ δέκα χιλίας καὶ δέδωκε πένησι καὶ τοῖς δειμένοις. Δέδωκε δὲ καὶ σίτου μόδια τρισμύρια. Ταῦτα δέδωκε τοῖς πένησι τῇ ἡμέρᾳ εἰσελθείς μέχρι τῶν βοσκημάτων… Καὶ τῇ ἐπαύριον ἐποίησε τὰ ἐνδυματα τῶν ἰδιοκτησίων καὶ μέχρι τῶν ἀγίων Θεοφάνιων διὰ δεκαπέντε ἡμερῶν κλητορεύων πάντας καὶ ὀργίων καὶ εὐχαρίστων τῷ Κυρίῳ” (Vitti, Die Erzählung..., 463, l. 18 – 464, l. 8 and 464, l. 18–21).}

\textit{(139) On the later tradition of the VC, see Cameron and Hall, Eusebius. Life of Constantine..., 48–50.}

The Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre in Eastern Christian traditions

Further analysis of the Diegesis as compared to hagiographical versions of the story of the Holy Sepulchre reveals an even tighter association of the two “foundation-dedication” stories. As discussed above, in some of the Oriental Synaxaria and Menologia the commemoration of the Encaenia on 13 September (or rather, the equivalent date in the local calendar) is furnished with relevant hagiographical narrative explaining the origins of the feast.

Similarly to the version of the Coptic Synaxarium published in the series of PO, the Synaxarium Alexandrinum contains a reading for the sixteenth of the month of Tūt (13 September) that marks the consecration of the churches. The account starts with a conventional story of Helena setting out to Jerusalem to look for the True Cross. Her son, the emperor Constantine, gladly supported her in this endeavour, dispatching some soldiers to accompany her on the trip and allocating significant sums of money for her purposes. Her quest having been a success, Helena celebrated the discovery of the Cross and resolved to build the churches of the Resurrection and Golgotha, along with a number of other religious edifices. After Helena’s decision to launch out into building activities, an episode is introduced that is nearly identical with the passage from the Diegesis. Helena wanted to embellish the churches with precious stones wrought in gold and silver. Yet, there was a holy bishop in Jerusalem who dissuaded her from accomplishing her intentions. Following his advice, Helena abandoned the project and remitted the significant amount of money to the bishop. Akin to the story of the foundations in Jerusalem, the account of the

(143) “Tum iussit templa resurrectionis, Golgothae, Bethlehemi, speleuncae, coenaculi, Gethsemani, et caetera templa exstrui, praecepitque ut gemmis insertis, auro et argento ornamentur. Erat autem in nobili Hierosolymorum civitate sanctus episcopus qui ipsam ne illud faceret dehortatus est, dicens: ‘Mox venient gentes, quae hunc locum servitutii subiicient, et evertetur vel auferetur quod feceris; quare tibi potius curandum ut decentia pro more aedificatione extruas, reliquam vero pecuniae partem pauperibus largiaris.’ Hortanti obsecuta, eidem pecuniam multam tradidit et opus commisit” (Synaxarium Alexandrinum, 29–30).
building of St Sophia in Constantinople relates how the emperor Justinian intended to make the floor of the church entirely of silver. Some Athenian philosophers and astrologists, however, discouraged him, saying that in the last days indistinct kingdoms will come and despoil the church of all treasures. Thus, paying heed to the foresight of the wise men, the emperor forsook his plan.\(^\text{144}\)

Continuing her church-building projects, Helena received further support and financial assistance from her son. Constantine appointed overseers of the work, who were instructed to pay the labours their wages each day.\(^\text{145}\) The version of the account for the commemoration of the Encaenia located in the Coptic Synaxarium, published and translated into French by R. Basset, adds some details; the daily salary was to be paid to the builders in order to avoid their grumbling, which, the emperor feared could provoke the Lord’s anger against him.\(^\text{146}\)

The Ethiopic Synaxarium, following its earlier Arabic prototype, contains the reading for the commemoration of the Encaenia in Jerusalem on 16 Maskaram. It is very close to the version transmitted in the Coptic Synaxaria. There are, however, some minor divergences. The bishop of Jerusalem, identified as Macarius, is placed in charge of all the construction work and the master-builders. Also, the account of the money paid per diem is much lengthier, though the meaning is kept unchanged: the salaries were to be given without delay to exclude any complaint that might irritate God.\(^\text{147}\)

The Diegesis is overtly reminiscent of the episode included into the Coptic and Ethiopic Synaxaria. Upon the order of the emperor Justinian, the anonymous Byzantine narration goes, “each day silver coins were brought from the palace and placed in the Horologion, and who-

\(^{\text{(144)}}\) “Βουλόμενος δὲ καὶ τὸν πάτον όλοάργυρον ποιῆσαι οὐ συνεβούλευσαν αὐτῷ διὰ τὸ εἰς τὰ ἔσχατα πένητας ἀφήσωσι αὐτά. Οἱ δὲ αὐτὸν ἀναπείσαντες ἦσαν Ἀθηναῖοι φιλόσοφοι καὶ ἀστρολόγοι, Μαξιμίνος, Ἰερόθεος καὶ Σύμβουλος, λέγοντες, ὅτι ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις βασιλείας ἀμύδρας ἐλεύσονται καὶ ταῦτα ἀφέλονται καὶ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς αὐτῶν ἐσαν τούτο” (Viti, Die Erzählung..., 457, l. 13–19).

\(^{\text{(145)}}\) “Cum dein, ad filium conversa, hunc certiorem fecisset de iis quae a se peracta fuissent, laetatus est et ad eam alias opes atque inspectores operum direxit, eam admonens ut integram operariis mercedem post singulos dies tribueret” (Synaxarium Alexandrinum, 30).

\(^{\text{(146)}}\) Basset, Le Synaxaire arabe jacobite, 274.

ever was lifting the stones took one silver coin each day so that none of them would be discouraged or commit blasphemy.”

The story of Helena’s mission and foundations in Jerusalem, placed under 4 Hori (13 September) for the commemoration of the dedication of the Resurrection church in the redaction B of the Armenian Synaxarium, contains none of the episodes that have parallels to the Diegesis. Although the Armenian version of the narrative is very close to the Coptic and Ethiopic accounts, reiterating essentially the same legend of Helena’s quest for the Cross and subsequent building of the churches in the Holy Land, the omission of the two specific passages is rather surprising. We can only speculate about possible reasons behind such a significant, for us, discrepancy. Possibly, the Coptic, Ethiopic and Armenian translations were made from different Greek redactions of the hagiographical legend. Yet, it could also be that the compiler or translator of the Armenian Synaxarium merely cut out some parts of the story according to his own tastes.

Most interesting, however, is a unique detail in the text for the Encaenia in the Armenian Menologium. The main part of the article included in this collection dwells on the church’s symbolical significance. The introductory section of the entry, however, briefly explains the reason for the feast of dedication. In a quasi-historical manner, the text introduces, not only the traditionally main protagonists, Constantine and Helena, but also Pope Sylvester, as the persons involved in the building and consecration ceremony of the Anastasis church. Helena, we are told, was in charge of the dedication; she ordered to perform a great feast for eight days and to accompany it by sacrifice of lambs and calves. She also instituted the feast to be celebrated each year on 13 September.

(148) “Μιλιαρίσια γὰρ ἀργυρᾶ καθεκάστην ἐκομίζοντο ἐκ τοῦ Παλατίου καὶ ἐτίθοντο εἰς τὸ Ωρολόγιον καὶ ὁσοὶ ἀνεβίβαζον λίθους, ἐλάμβανον καθεκάστην ἡμέραν ἄνα ἀργυροῦ ἑνός, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀκηδιᾶσαι τινὰ ἀπὸ αὐτῶν ἢ βλασφημῆσαι” (Viti, Die Erzählung..., 444, l. 13–17).


(150) This is the version of the Menologium transmitted in the manuscript the Arm. c. 3. The episode explaining the meaning of the feast of the dedication according to this manuscript is briefer and, seemingly, closer to whatever the Greek model might have been, than the legend in the manuscript Marsh. 438. The version in the Marsh. 438 manuscript is noticeably embellished with Armenian elements, apparently in accordance with legendary tradition cur-
The reference to animal sacrifice is a remarkably close, and rather unique, parallel to the Diegesis, where the emperor Justinian is similarly described as offering abundant animal sacrifices on the occasion of the church’s dedication. There is little doubt that this detail could have crept into the Diegesis only under the influence of an authoritative model, since there was no historical ground for such information. There could be no better source and model for the motif of animal sacrifice at the dedication than the hypothetical Greek version of the account of the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre.151

The Legend of the Holy Sepulchre in Coptic

The treatment of the hagiographical history behind the feast of the Encaenia would be glaringly incomplete if we were to omit another legendary account tightly associated with the Holy Sepulchre. The two separate themes of the Encaenia festival — the church dedication and the invention of the Cross — were essentially blended in the majority of Byzantine hagiographical accounts focusing on the discovery of the Cross. Although Byzantine literature in Greek transmitted only the account of Helena’s legendary finding of the Cross, there is an interesting story in Coptic relating the discovery of the Christ’s Tomb by Eudoxia, a fictional sister of Constantine the Great.152 Some elements of this legendary story, particularly the pronounced distinction between the two discoveries, are featured in the Coptic discourse on the

rent in Armenia. Thus, St Gregory the Illuminator is introduced into the story as the one who also participated in the supervision of the building project. It reflects the legendary tradition popular in Armenia of St Gregory the Illuminator and the king Trdat going to Jerusalem with Constantine the Great and the Pope Sylvester to build the churches and monasteries and, thereafter, to divide the Holy Places between the Armenians and the Romans.

I gratefully recognize the help of Professor Zara Pogossian in translating this significant, for the present research, passage from the Armenian manuscripts and providing useful comments on its content.

(151) There could be no better source and model for the motif of animal sacrifice at the dedication than the hypothetical Greek version of the account of the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre.


Cross ascribed to Cyril of Jerusalem and have been already mentioned above.

The great significance of the Encaenia and the existence of two separate liturgical feasts in the Eastern calendar for commemorating the Holy Sepulchre and the Finding of the Cross paved the way for two separate stories to develop on Coptic soil. As has been reasonably noted by H. Drake, there was a vacuum in the history of the Encaenia feast as regards the foundation of the Holy Sepulchre, and the need to fill this gap called for the composition of an appropriate account.

Combined with the physical presence of two structures in Jerusalem on which to hang these stories and the fact that the Helena legend came to focus so intensively on the discovery of the Cross, this liturgical separation opened the way for the story of Eudoxia and the Sepulchre.153

Although the Coptic legend of the Holy Sepulchre reflects the pervasive influence of the famous inventio crucis, it nevertheless appears to be an original composition; no equivalent survives in any other language. However, it is possible there was a Byzantine model of this Coptic text. There is a major difference of opinion concerning the issue of a plausible Greek original. Pearson, in the Introduction to the edition and translation of the Coptic legend, was in favour of the hypothesis that the Eudoxia narrative (conventionally called so after the name of the protagonist of the story) is an original Coptic composition rather than a translation from a Greek model. Orlandi, on the other hand, placed the legend in the context of the non-Chalcedonian literature of Egypt, which was supposedly produced mainly in Greek. Consequently, he regarded the Eudoxia narrative as a translation from Greek.154 If the Coptic version did derive from a Greek source, it would substantially support the hypothesis that there was an early Byzantine narrative describing the foundation and the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre.

Despite allegedly being a translation from a Greek original, the Eudoxia story finds no reflection in Greek literature. It has, however, some traces in other Coptic compositions. These literary reflections may point to the popularity of the hagiographic legend on Coptic soil. The encomium of St George of Cappadocia attributed to Abba The-

(154) Ibid., 19.
Ekaterina Kovalchuk

odotus, the bishop of Ancyra, explicitly names Eudoxia as the one who accompanied Constantine the Great and his mother, Helena, on pious visits to the churches of Jerusalem. In another Coptic literary work, the already-mentioned homily on the Cross written by Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, the spurious sister of Constantine appears as well. Yet, in this account her name is not given: Constantine, leaving for Jerusalem in order to discover the Cross, is told to take along with him his mother and “his sister, who was a virgin.”

The latter text shows more familiarity with the Eudoxia legend rather than mere awareness of the existence of Constantine’s sister. It has been already noted that the homily on the Cross distinguishes between discovery of the Tomb and discovery of the Cross. Such unusual separation of the discovery of the Tomb event is also conspicuous in the Coptic Eudoxia legend.

Yet, the significance of the homily extends further than its attention to the discovery of the Tomb. For, after the exposition of the finding of the True Cross and the discovery of the place of Christ’s burial and resurrection, the homily relates in some detail the building of the church at the Tomb. Here again we can identify some important resemblance with the church building process as described in the Diegesis. When Constantine resolved to build churches in the holy places of Jerusalem, he commissioned a great number of workers and ordered that the required material be brought. In this way, he collected an enormous amount of building materials for his grand project.

And forthwith they began to burn bricks for the church, and Constantine sat handicraftsmen to work, each at his own trade, and he made foremen to supervise the work which was carried on in all the workshops. . . . And he ordered to be brought to him vast quantities of alabaster, and stone slabs for tessellated pavements, and marble, and well-grown timber, and silver, and copper, and a very large quantity of lead; in short, he made to be brought every-
thing which was required for the building. . . . And those who were
working at the building the new Jerusalem were very many. And
one may say that they were more in number that those who worked
on the Temple of Solomon in days of old. And the work was carried
on until the shrines were completed, and they decorated them and
made them to be like unto the firmament of heaven in its beauty.¹⁵⁸

This passage manifests close affinities with the equivalent story of
the material collection in the Diegesis, as well as with the Old Testa-
ment account of David’s provision of material for the Temple build-
ing.¹⁵⁹ The biblical text was probably on the mind of both composers.
The large number of workers laboring under the supervision of head-
masters, collection of material required for the grand-scale building
projects, and the sheer beauty of the completed churches — are the de-
tails equally present in the descriptions of both the Holy Sepulchre and
St Sophia. At the same time, these correspondences strongly evoke the
classic biblical account of the Temple foundation.

The account of the collection of materials in the story of St Sophia
seems to be almost identical with the Eudoxia legend. The Diegesis
recounts that Justinian ordered his officials throughout the empire to
send him all kinds of building material, columns and piers, slabs and
revetments, lattice doors and other goods “appropriate for the build-
ing of the church.” According to the text, this was obediently carried
out according to the imperial instructions.¹⁶⁰

The points of contact between the two texts, and particularly their
similar descriptions of church construction, can be considered as sup-
port for the existence of a “foundation-dedication” legend of the Holy
Sepulchre that significantly influenced the author of the Diegesis. The
authors of the Eudoxia legend and the discourse on the Cross appear
to be drawing on a common hagiographical source (or sources) that
contained, besides the discovery of the Tomb, the story of the building

(158) Wallis Budge, Miscellaneous Coptic Texts…, 803–804.
(159) 1 Chron. 22: 1–4; 14–16; 29: 1–5.
(160) “Εγράψε δὲ τοῖς στρατηγοῖς καὶ σατράπαις καὶ κριταῖς καὶ
φορολόγοις τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν θεμάτων ἀπασίν ἐρευνᾶν πάντας αὐτούς, ὅπως
εὑρόσι κίονας τε καὶ συστεμμάτια, στηθαία τε καὶ καγκελλοθυρίδια καὶ
τὴν λοιπὴν υλὴν τὴν ἀνήκουσαν εἰς ἀνεγεῖραι ναὸν. Πάντες δὲ οἱ παρ᾿
αὐτοῦ ὁρισθέντες <εὑρόντες> ἀπὸ εἰδωλικῶν ναῶν καὶ ἀπὸ παλαιῶν
λουετρῶν τε καὶ οίκων ἐπέμπον τῷ βασιλεῖ Ἰουστινιανῷ μετὰ σχιδέων
ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν θεμάτων Ἀνατολῆς τε καὶ Λύσεως, Βορρᾶ τε καὶ Νότου
καὶ ἐκ πάντων τῶν νήσων” (Vitti, Die Erzählung..., 436, l. 15 – 437, l. 8).
and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre. This would be the same hypothetical legendary narrative that should be responsible for a considerable amount of material found in the *Diegesis*.

As a result of the undertaken comparative analysis of literary motifs and episodes in the accounts for the feast of the Jerusalem Encaenia from the Oriental collections, some Coptic hagiographical legends, and the *Diegesis*, I conclude that the close textual resemblances are best explained if we assume there was a Greek version of the legendary account relating the building and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre. This legend arguably served as a source for the Oriental versions and the influential model for the *Diegesis*.

Furthermore, the parallels detected between the *Diegesis* and the section from Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini* dealing with the building and dedication of the church complex at Golgotha suggest the author of the account of St Sophia’s construction purposefully selected the source material and deliberately drew upon stories connected with the foundation of the Holy Sepulchre that were available to him. This literary parallelism was not an end in itself but served a deeper ideological goal; it was a technique intended to depict the church of St Sophia as a new Temple that superseded any other great religious foundation. This ambition could be achieved only if the Holy Sepulchre, which was commonly perceived as a new Jerusalem and was indeed the most significant foundation in all Christendom, were deprived of its central position. The methods of literary imitation and appropriation applied by the author served this purpose very effectively; the use of common motifs highlighted the resemblance between the two churches. After the necessary association of the great foundations was established, the hindrance of potential rivals could be eliminated and the unsurpassable excellence of St Sophia proclaimed.

**Hagiography as a Literary Background of the *Diegesis***

A comparison of the *Diegesis* with the hagiographic legends of the building and dedication of the Holy Sepulchre revealed close parallels of narrative motifs in the given accounts. Besides giving way to the interpretation of the deeper ideological significance behind this, very likely deliberate, literary imitation, the resemblance between the texts leads to another corollary — it suggests more than a random association of the *Diegesis* with the lore of hagiographic literature. Indeed, upon a closer examination of the foundation account one cannot but notice a distinct hagiographic character of the narrative, which is espe-
cially pronounced in the usage of literary themes and miracle stories that are typical of a range of hagiographical accounts.

Inasmuch as it is proposed here to classify the account of St Sophia as a hagiographical legend, it is necessary to deal first with a general issue of hagiography and then, more specifically, with the question of how justifiable such an approach to the Diegesis is.

The questions of genre definition and the generic study of Byzantine literature have already produced some controversy. Without going into the problem of legitimacy and usefulness of such an approach to the study of Byzantine literature in particular, which clearly lies beyond the scope of the present research, it is nevertheless necessary to give a brief overview of this debatable issue with regard to hagiographical literature and to clarify what is understood under the term of hagiography in the present study.

The classical definition of hagiography has been given by the father Delehaye: “It thus appears that, in order to be strictly hagiographic, the document should be of a religious character and should aim at edification. The term may only be applied therefore to writings inspired


(162) The term “hagiography,” relevant to both Byzantine and Western Medieval contexts, has a number of meanings in modern scholarship. Apart from being conventionally considered as a literary genre, it also refers to a literary discipline focusing on lives and cults of saints as reflected in the textual sources (G. Philippart, Hagiographes et hagiographie, hagiologes et hagiologie: des mots et des concepts, Hagiographica 1 (1994) 1–16). For a summarising discussion of the question of hagiography as a literary genre see Aigrain, L’hagiographie, 206–46; В. Лурье, Из Иерусалима в Аксум через Храм Соломона: археологические исследования о Сионе и Ковчеге, ХВ 2 (8) (2000 [ed. 2001]) 141–150.
by devotion to the saints and intended to promote it.”163 The classification of hagiographical literature according to the original strict sense, however, has become inadequately limiting as the study of hagiography proceeded over the last century. The students of hagiography have been continually confronted with the complexities of a form and mode, subject matter and function of the literary compositions associated with this literary genre.164 The intricacies of the methodological approach to the body of literature defined as hagiography have been pinpointed recently by C. Rapp who clearly realized the lop-sidedness of generic study of a literary corpus which is conventionally labeled as hagiography:

Scholars have tended to devote most attention to saints’ Lives and, as a consequence, have posited the existence of a ‘genre of hagiography’ despite the variety of late antique literary formats in which the various aspects of the quest of pious men and women for the holy life are related. The label misleads since it presupposes that hagiographical writing follows a specific set of rules, such as typically defined the composition of particular genres in classical and late antiquity . . . No such guidelines were ever formulated for writing about saints. In fact, it is the subject matter alone that defines what we call ‘hagiography’, and not the manner of its literary representation which could take a variety of literary forms — most prominently, the Vīta, the miraculum, or, as we shall see below, the letter. In the stricter sense, hagiography is not a ‘genre’. Still it did have conventions — such as stock phrases and oft-repeated miracle stories — that developed over time, as more and more texts were added to the corpus of saints Lives, each continuing and often subtly manipulating the established tradition of hagiographical writing.165


(164)  It has been persuasively argued that Byzantine hagiography should not be put into a straight-jacket of literary genre akin to generic classifications applied, for instance, in the study of classical literature of Ancient Greece and Rome. As an alternative, a more general definition of hagiography as a broader category comprising texts marked by hagiographical discourse has been suggested (cf. van Uytteghre, L’hagiographie..., 170–179). Unlike other fairly clear-cut Byzantine literary genres (eg. hymnography or epistolography), hagiography should rather be viewed as an over-all category that encompasses a number of literary genres.

Despite the justified reservations as to such a generic approach, which have been aptly articulated by Rapp, the study of Medieval hagiography continues along traditional lines focusing mainly on the *Vitae* of saints. The precursor of hagiographic genre, which conventionally began with the *Life of Antony*, was a group of texts identified as the acts of martyrs, recording heroic deeds of the people who were persecuted and died for the Christian faith. Later on, the subject of the hagiographic *vitae* was confined to men and women who, as a rule, attained the sainted status by means of miracles, the *conditio sine qua non* of sainthood. Although the literary form of hagiographical discourse could reasonably vary, the scope of hagiography was originally limited to the subject of the holy men and women strictly speaking. Accordingly, hagiography is seen primarily as a biographical description of the holy men aimed at their glorification and claiming for them the status of a saint. In addition to hagiographical descriptions of saints’ lives, there is a vast range of religious works which are conventionally subsumed under the literary genre of hagiography but are not biographical descriptions of saints *per se*. The *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, the *Spiritual Meadow*, the *History of the Monks of Syria*, to name just a


(167) The works which modern scholars classify as hagiography often have a different self-definition in manuscripts. Apart from *bios*, a rather dominant way of hagiographical exposition, some hagiographers presented their works in the epistolary form and referred to the mode of their story-telling as that of *diegesis* or *diegema*. Two other genres of hagiography, frequently mentioned in the titles of hagiographical narratives, are *enkomion* and *martyrion*. The existence of different modes of hagiographic representation demonstrates, at the very least, that hagiography was not confined to one particular literary type but utilised various genres and forms of exposition (RAPP, Reflections on the Rise of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity…, 80; idem, Storytelling as Spiritual Communication in Early Greek Hagiography: The Use of *Diegesis*, *JECS* 6 (1988) 436–437).

(168) A number of studies on the genre of hagiography with detailed discussion of various literary forms of hagiographic documents were done by H. Delehaye. They remain valuable source of insight and classic reference works for anybody dealing with the field of hagiography. See, for example, Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints…;* idem, *Les Passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1921). An attempt at overview of hagiographical literature, with a special attention to its sources and methodology, was made by Aigrain, *L’hagiographic…* The volume is useful as a reference book — it comprises a comprehensive bibliography on the subject.
few, — all of which are traditionally considered as hagiographical literature yet depart from traditional biography of saints and represent a variety of formats and discourses.\(^{169}\)

Apart from a relative freedom as regards the form of representation of hagiographic discourse, its scope and character could also vary considerably. The original purpose of hagiography to edify and promote the devotion to the people who were great example of holiness and faith substantially changed over time. As the persecution subsided and there were no more martyrs whose life and deeds were the main focus of hagiographic compositions, the content of hagiography reflected the socio-ideological and political changes of the society as well. The main \textit{dramatis personae} of hagiography were no longer limited to the men and women dying for the true Christian faith or striving for sanctity of their lives but included the members of the imperial court and the ecclesiastical elite who were mainly concerned with their own public image and reputation. A major shift occurred around the ninth century. Hagiographers of the mid-Byzantine period were predominantly occupied with emperors, patriarchs, bishops, state officials and concentrated mostly on political and ecclesiastical conflicts.\(^{170}\) Hagiography, therefore, became a powerful means of political propaganda and a carrier of imperial ideology. It has been reasonably suggested that, because of such distinctive secular flavour, some hagiographic works of this period should be regarded as “semi-secular hagiography” instead of being characterized too generally as hagiography.\(^{171}\)

Along with the indicated modifications with regard to the type of main heroes, hagiographic genre did not remain limited to only people either. As noted by Lourie,\(^{172}\) \textit{mutatis mutandis}, the classical scope of hagiography could be extended also to sacred objects. Suffice it to browse, for instance, through the \textit{Bibliotheca Hagiographica} (\textit{Latina, Graeca, Orientalis}) published by the Bollandists to perceive with how

---

\(^{169}\) Rapp drew attention to the problem of inaccuracy of generic distinction with regard to this group of texts that are conventionally labelled as hagiography. She suggested to re-define this type of works as monastic literature (\textit{Rapp, Reflections on the Rise of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity...}, 64).


\(^{171}\) P. Alexander, \textit{Secular Biography at Byzantium}, Speculum 15 (1940) 204.

\(^{172}\) ЛУРЬЕ, Из Иерусалима в Аксум..., 137, п. 2.
great a variety of the subject matter and literary form the corpus of hagiographical literature was enriched over the centuries. These reference collections list in a convenient form diverse works that, evidently, belong to the realm of hagiography. Among the popular subjects of hagiographical discourse were material relics of the saints, but also the reliquary items related to Christ and the Theotokos — such were, for example, tunic of Christ, the letter fallen from the sky, the belt and the robe of the Theotokos, and the like. Miracle–working images of Christ, Theotokos and saints also received much attention of Byzantine hagiographers. As Lidov correctly observed,

Miracle-working icons could be regarded among the heroes of the Orthodox church. . . . these icons were perceived as living beings, they could move, speak and even fight with pagans, unbelievers or sinners. The defence of the Orthodox faith was one of their major functions.

No wonder that, being likened in their role to the heroes of faith, the icons became one of the favorite themes of hagiographic accounts too. Comprehensive lists of narratives about images published in the BHG demonstrate that icons, perceived as miraculous agents of the divine power, were a common subject matter of numerous hagiographic texts.


(175) BHG 1086. For a scholarly discussion of the texts dealing with Marian relics see A. Cameron, The Virgin’s Robe. An Episode in the History of Early Seventh Century Constantinople, Byz 49 (1979) 42–56; Ch. Angelidi, Pulcheria. La castità al potere (Milan: Jaca Book, 1996) 81–86.

(176) Many of narrationes de imaginibus were collected and edited by E. von Dobschütz, Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende (Leipzig: Hindrichs, 1899) (TU, 18).


(178) Cf. Iesus Christus in BHG 780–801; Maria Deipara in BHG 1141; BHG 1065m–1070c; Orthodoxiae festum in BHG 1388–1391; BHG 1387y–1391b.
In the same vein, no one would question nowadays hagiographical nature of various legends about the invention of the True Cross, the main focus of which is the Wood of the Cross on which Christ was crucified.\(^{179}\) That is true, there are a few people involved, immediately or somewhat more indirectly, into the paramount, for religious history, discovery: famous mother of Constantine the Great, Helena, and Judas Kyriakus, who gained a prominent status in the ecclesiastical world particularly because of the role they played in the finding of the Cross. Yet, as a matter of fact, the legends of the inventio crucis cannot be said to be a hagiographical account of any specific person. It is, indeed, the hagiography of the sacred object, namely, of the Wood of the Cross that, similarly to holy men, is vested with the miraculous powers and therefore is perceived as a channel of divine manifestation.

The quasi-historical account of the saints or sacred objects was not always in the forefront light of hagiographic texts. Popular in the Christian East, narrationes animae utiles\(^{180}\) had often a totally fabulous nature. More than anything else, the stories aimed at giving a valuable moral lesson for edification of the faithful. A series of these highly instructive tales is, as a rule, also approached as falling into the category of hagiographic literature. By extension, the designation of hagiographic genre is applied also to a corpus of Byzantine apocalyptic texts. The association of apocalyptic literature with the hagiographical genre was established already by the father Delehaye\(^{181}\) whereas a more extensive study of Byzantine apocalyptic tradition was carried out only comparatively recently by P. Alexander.\(^{182}\)

Furthermore, a number of stories which are associated with hagiography mainly because of their liturgical function relate neither of saints nor sacred objects, but of certain events or natural disasters, such as wars, liberations of cities, translations of relics, earthquakes, floods, (179) Cf. Crux Christi in BHG 396–451y; Crux et passio in BGH\(^1\) 396–451z.


etc. The elements of spiritual edification and miraculous manifestations of divine power are prominent here similarly to conventional hagiographic Lives. Often, the texts about different events do not clearly fall into the category of hagiography, but are rather quasi-historical narratives displaying some hagiographic features that allow associating them with this genre.

One of the historical accounts in a hagiographic disguise is a text about the events of the war with the Bulgarians. Among a group of notices composed for commemoration of victims of the war with the Bulgarians in 811 there is a text that especially drew attention of scholars. That the Diegesis “About the emperor Nikephorus and how he left his bones in Bulgaria” admittedly manifests some features of hagiographical character was first noted by Gregoire183 and later elaborated by Dujčev.184 Most recently, Markopoulos upheld the earlier expressed view that this text is a hagiographical composition.185 The main trait that was considered as exposing the hagiographic character of the narrative is the ending formula typical for the texts read in the monastic environment for commemoration purposes. As a matter of fact, the narrative had probably been originally a historical text that was given some hagiographic polish to adjust it for commemoration of the prisoners-martyrs and the victims of the war of 811 during the liturgical office on 26 July.186

Much revealing of mid-Byzantine tradition to commemorate liturgically various events are the Constantinopolitan Synaxarium and Typicon. These hagiographic compilations contain a number of entries in memory of fires, earthquakes, floods, sieges, barbarian invasions, ecumenical councils, dedications of cities and churches,187 pointing to the fact that the liturgical year of Constantinople was shaped around


(186) Delhaye, Synaxarium, cols. 846–848.

(187) Ibid., cols. lxxv–lxxvi.
the events of its own history. The celebrated events, similarly to the tradition recording lives and merits of saints, were given a shorter or longer hagiographic account relating the historical (or what was believed to be historical) background of the event commemorated. These notices, though having rather diverse nature and origins, were used in the commemoration office of specific events and, thereafter, especially due to their function as lectio hagiographica, belong to the corpus of Byzantine hagiography.

Hence, it should be emphasized, hagiography could thematically deviate from a narrow focus on a particular individual with a status of the saint and dealt with a diversity of themes. The subject matter of a hagiographic text often included physical objects or events that, nevertheless, had to be somehow related to the biblical characters and holy men, or to possess some religiously significant dimension as, for instance, miraculous recovery and other manifestations of divine intervention.

The above overview does not pretend to be either detailed or exhaustive. It is meant to demonstrate that there is a great variety of literary production that is conventionally referred to as hagiography. It is possible to speak about a narrow sense of the hagiographic genre, which refers strictly to the lives of saints; and a broad sense, which includes a range of literary compositions, varied in their format, about sacred objects and historical events as well as edifying stories and apocalyptic texts.

For the sake of clarity in our own work, we should distinguish between the vitae of saints strictly speaking, and hagiographical texts that could be presented in a diversity of forms, have rather different functions and, significantly, quite a range of subject matter. Un-


(189) For example, there are seven entries commemorating earthquakes or, rather, divine deliverance from them in the Byzantine calendar. Only three entries (on 25 September, 25 January, and 26 October) give a longer description of the events, whereas the rest of the commemorations are rather concise (Delehaye, Synaxarium, cols. 79. 18–80. 21; 117. 1–3; 166. 31–44; 308. 29–32; 308. 29–32; 380. 19–23; 425: 1–17; 904. 28–32). On the historicity of the Synaxarium entries see B. Croke, Two Early Byzantine Earthquakes and Their Liturgical Commemoration, Byz 51 (1981) 122–147.
understandably, it is not the first group of literary texts that is regarded here as a context for our story of the building of St Sophia with. With relative ease, the Diegesis can be placed within the second category of hagiographic literature which, having less strictly defined framework, displays a number of similarities with our narrative of St Sophia.

**Hagiographic Features of the Diegesis**

As we have seen, it was quite a wide-spread practice that the venerable objects and events which were viewed as crucial, from the Christian perspective, for memory of the Byzantine past received nearly the same “hagiographical” treatment as the saints. The church of St Sophia was a most prominent shrine of the Byzantines and certainly merited no less attention of hagiographers than other religious objects. If miraculous icons could be regarded amongst the heroes of the Orthodox church, even much more so could be perceived the Great Church of Constantinople. There is, therefore, little wonder that St Sophia would become the main theme or, as it could also be said metaphorically, the “protagonist” of the account with a distinctly hagiographic character. The Diegesis, consequently, can be considered as a sort of the *Vita ecclesiæ Sanctæ Sophiae* where the church plays a role of the main “hero.” Not unexpectedly, that is exactly how the Diegesis is called in one of the manuscripts — a rather late copy of the foundation account in the manuscript *Athous Iwiron 383* bears the title “Τὰ πάτρια τῆς ἁγίας Σοφίας τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ ἔξοδα αὐτῆς” (emphasis mine).  

The widely-used reference to the account of the building of St Sophia as a diegesis can also suggest further association with hagiographic writings. For quite frequently Byzantine hagiographers avoided referring to their own compositions as bios. Instead, they used the words diegesis or diegema when speaking about their literary works. Yet, despite an explicit connection of the diegesis as a mode of narrating with a hagiographic discourse — existence of such a link was convincingly demonstrated in the article of C. Rapp — the use of the word diegesis is so common in the narrative literature of various genres that it is

---

(190) Vitti, *Die Erzählung...*, 74.

(191) The instances of the word diegesis being used as a reference to hagiographic Vitae are discussed in Rapp, *Storytelling as Spiritual Communication*, 437–438.

(192) Ibid., 431–448.
hardly possible to speak of generic classification on the basis of such self-definition in literary pieces. We can conclude that, however important a terminological designation in fact is in identifying the nature of a composition, it is not a decisive factor for association with one or another a literary genre. Yet an overall nature, style, content and function of a literary text are. These aspects will be given further attention, with a particular emphasis on the liturgical function of the Diegesis.

There is another rather curious factor that once and again prompts us to place the Diegesis in the context of hagiography. The account, as a matter of fact, appears in the Bibliotheca Hagiographica (BHG 369m) — the essential reference book for hagiographic literature. The inclusion of the Diegesis into the BHG can certainly imply that the text has been already considered by F. Halkin as a composition pertaining to the realm of hagiography. The place where it is listed — among the texts associated with the name of Constantine the Great — is somewhat unexpected, for we know that the narrative focuses on Justinian rather than on Constantine. This erroneous location of the account, however, could be explained if reasoned by the incipit of the narrative: it begins with the foundation of Constantinople by the emperor Constantine the Great. The story must have been thought as one of numerous legends forming the Constantine-cycle since it starts with the description of his building achievements and therefore has been mistakingly associated with the name of Constantine by the editors of the BHG.

The only codex which is adduced in the Novum Auctarium of the BHG as containing the story, entitled in Latin as Fundatio urbis CP. et ecclesiae S. Sophiae, is the sixteenth century manuscript Holkham. Gr. 57 of the Bodleian library in Oxford. The text, evidently, is nothing else but one of the numerous versions of the Diegesis which, as we can judge from the ending sentence, belongs to the family k according to Vitti’s classification. The manuscript adduced in the BHG, interestingly, is missing from the comprehensive list of more than 80 codices compiled by Vitti.

One of the characteristic features of hagiographic texts, from the point of view of textual criticism, has been observed by Delehaye, who remarked that “tous ceux qui me ent la main à nos texts semblent conspirer pour les altérer.” Indeed, textual criticism of hagiographi-
Literary Motifs and Miracle Stories as Markers of Genre

In support to the theoretical assumptions formulated above I would like to adduce some literary evidence demonstrating that the Diegesis is associated with hagiographical literature in a broader sense, and not only with the thematically related stories of the Holy Sepulchre.

A vivid illustration of a common hagiographic substratum shared by the Diegesis comes from an episode in a commemoration article for the feast of the martyr St Sophia, recorded in the Ethiopic Synaxarium on 5 Maskaram. Certainly, the hagiography of the early Christian martyr St Sophia and her daughters, who supposedly died in the beginning of the second century, is not altogether irrelevant to the narrative of the church of St Sophia. The church built in the memory of the martyr in Jerusalem had the same name as the one assigned to the Great Church of Constantinople. The link between the two churches, therefore, is based on their bearing the same name of St Sophia, although with a totally different significance.


(197) St Sophia of Jerusalem was also known as the church at the house of Pilate. Its dedication was celebrated on 7/8 August, but also on 21 September (cf. Garitte, Le calendrier palestino-georgien..., 296–297, 335; K. ოქლაეი, ბიზანტიის წმინდა სიკარტი, Tbilisi, 1912) 134; M. van Esbroeck, Le saint comme symbole, in: S. Hackel (ed.), The Byzantine Saint (London: Fellowship of St Alaban and St Sergius, 1981) 137–138. For hagiographic legends of St Sophia and her daughters Pistis, Elpis and Agape see BHO 1082–1085; BHG 1637x–1639; NA BHG 1637x, 1627y, 1637z.

(198) The intricacies of existence of different saints named Sophia as well as the usage of a theological concept of St Sophia as Holy Wisdom of God —
Having recounted the story of Sophia’s martyrdom, a hagiographer continues to the events that took place after the death of the saint woman. Constantine had the relics of St Sophia translated to Constantinople and placed them in an already built church.

Before [he heard] her history his people built a church, and wrote upon a tablet, “This is the house of Constantine;” and an angel of God came down and destroyed it. And he wrote, “This is the house of Sofya” (Sophia), and although the workmen wanted to cut it they left it written. One day whilst the son of the king was playing with his friends there, the angel of God whose name was Rufael appeared unto them and said unto them, “What is the name of this house?” And the youth said, “I do not know.” And the angel said unto him, “Tell thy father to call it the house of Sofya” (Sofia). And the youth said unto him, “Wilt thou wait here until I come back?” and the angel said, “I will.” And when his father heard this he knew that it was an angel, and he killed his son, and said, “The angel will not depart from that place because he must wait for the youth.” And that angel is there to this day waiting for the youth.199

Noteworthy, Greek versions of martyrdom of St Sophia and her three daughters do not contain the legendary episode about building the shrine and giving it a name to commemorate the Roman martyr Sophia.200 Neither does a corresponding legend in Syriac contain a similar story.201 Interestingly, the scene of conversation between a young lad and the angel who gives the name to the church in the Ethiopic legend reappears in the Diegesis. The motif of the angel revealing the name of the church to a youth and then becoming its guardian is strongly reminiscent of the episode in the legend of St Sophia in Constantinople.

all of which complicate the possibility of establishing clear interrelation between the stories — were treated in van Esbroeck, Le saint comme symbole..., 128–140.


(201) A. S. Lewis, Select Narratives of Holy Women (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900) (Studia Sinaitica, 9–10).
The Byzantine legend of the angel incorporated into the *Diegesis* goes as follows. Being invited by the Emperor Justinian to dinner, the *protomaistor*, the main master, leaves the place of construction together with all the builders and craftsmen for the imperial palace. The master sets his son — a young lad — to guarding the instruments. Watching over the building equipment the youth sees a beautiful eunuch, whom he takes for one of the palace officials. The eunuch reprimands the builders for leaving God’s work unfinished and orders the lad to go and call them back to finish the work. When the son of the main master refuses to leave the spot and leave the tools unattended, the eunuch vows by God’s Wisdom, in whose name the church is being built, to guard the place until the youth returns. The lad goes to the palace and recounts his conversation to his father, who takes him to the Emperor. Upon listening to the story, Justinian understands that the eunuch that appeared to the lad was none other than an angel of God. The emperor expresses his gratitude to God for showing His goodwill and revealing the name of the church, and, with the approval of the father, decides to send the youth to the Cyclades. In this way, he assumes, the church will always be under the angel’s protection.

The similarity of the two narratives is striking. How then should this vivid parallel be interpreted? The re-occurrence of the episode of a guardian angel giving a name to the church in both narratives could be explained in one of the following ways: the influence onto each other’s stories or they simply drew upon a common stock of miracle stories which was continually growing and being re-cycled. The way of interdependency of the narratives, if that is the reason of the parallelism, is difficult to resolve. Since the Ethiopic *Synaxarium* includes the variety of material that belongs to different chronological strata, the given story of St Sophia could be both earlier and later than the *Diegesis*. Had we known more about the textual history of the episode of the guardian angel, we would have had more grounds to surmise a chronological correlation between the stories of the martyr St Sophia and Constantinopolitan church of St Sophia. Yet for now, it has been only possible to detect this pronounced similarity, which suggests, at the very least, the *Diegesis’* relation to hagiographical material.

Another hagiographical piece showing rather close resemblance with the *Diegesis* as far as literary themes and motifs are concerned is a legendary story, *De columna viduae*, belonging to the cycle of the...
miracles of St George. In one of the manuscripts this miracle is called “Περὶ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τοῦ κίονος.” It is likely that this miracle comes from an originally longer composition about building of the church of St George which could be similar to the account of St Sophia that we have in our disposal. The main focus of the miracle is the donation of the column by a widow to the church of the great martyr George that was being built in Palestine. The anonymous emperor, having set his mind to build the church in honour of the saint, commissioned a man to be in charge of the building process. The man entrusted with the responsibility to build the church as soon as possible started the building by laying the foundation. Later, however, he realised the need for additional columns. Failing to find the place appropriate for quarrying the supervisor of the building, however, came across a spot with ready-made pillars of exceeding beauty. It happened that at the same location there lived a rich widow who desired to send a beautiful column for the church building hoping it would be counted for the spiritual benefit of her soul. Yet when seeking assistance in bringing her donation to the place of the building she was refused by the man who oversaw the transportation of the rest of the columns. Greatly distressed, the widow said a prayer to the holy martyr George complaining about the infelicitous situation. Evoking enormous astonishment and fear of the devout lady, there appeared a soldier riding a horse, apparently none the other than the holy martyr George, with whose miraculous intervention the column was immediately transported to the foundation spot and placed in the right part of the church in accordance with widow’s pious request.

This miraculous story recalls the Diegesis in a couple of instances. First of all, the motif of a rich widow sending the columns for the building of the church is prominent in the story of St Sophia as well. The Diegesis relates an episode of a widow from Rome, named Markia, sending a set of eight columns, which were in her disposition as a dowry, to Constantinople in response to Justinian’s quest for building material. She, similarly to the widow in the miracle of St George,
dispatched her gift expressing, this time in a letter, a pious hope that it
would be used for the salvation of her soul.\(^\text{204}\)

The same theme of a widow making a donation to the emperor
building the church — this time, the donation of a land plot that was
occupied by the widow’s private house — reappears in the account of
building St Sophia following the episode of material collection. Here,
once and again, the widow sought the reward for her pious deed on
the Judgement day. The emperor magnanimously promised the wid-
ow, the texts inform us, that she would be berried at the same place
after the church is built and perpetually commemorated.\(^\text{205}\)

Unfortunately, because of lack of any definitive chronological infor-
mation about the hagiographic legends discussed above, the literary
similarities can not be used for establishment of interrelation between
these hagiographic legends and the *Diegesis*. Yet, quite significantly, the
observed parallels do demonstrate that the *Diegesis* shares a number
of literary themes and motifs with hagiographic texts. Along with the
erlier observations on commonalities of literary patterns present in
hagiographic stories of the foundation-dedication of the Holy Sepul-
chre, the identification of parallel stories in the legend of the martyr St
Sophia and the miracle of the column in the church of St George points
to existence of a common stock of hagiographic themes and motifs that
was also employed in the *Diegesis*. What is more, it is quite striking to
observe that all of the parallels identified and analysed above — sev-
eral episodes in the accounts of the Holy Sepulchre, the legend of the
guardian angel and the donation of the column by a widow — are
found exclusively in the hagiographic narratives dealing with vari-
ous aspects of the church foundation. Obviously, there is an inherent
association of the *Diegesis* with hagiographic legends concerned with
the church building. Although not possible to substantiate by some
evidence — no such data are available at present — it is rather tempt-
ing to assume that the accounts of the Holy Sepulchre, the legend of the
guardian angel of the church of St Sophia in Jerusalem, and the
miracle about the column sent by the widow for the church built in
honour of St George were the sources re-cycled by the author of the
*Diegesis*. We can speculate even further that there must have been oth-
er literary pieces, particularly hagiographic accounts concerned with
the theme of the church building and dedication, which were used as


\(^{\text{205}}\) Ibid., 438–39.
sources or models of the *Diegesis* and, if revealed, would demonstrate more points of correspondence in terms of literary motifs and narrative plots akin to those already identified.

Nevertheless, leaving such speculations aside until more evidence is found, the existence of considerable amount of already identified literary motifs shared by the *Diegesis* with a few hagiographical accounts can justify a re-consideration of the *Diegesis* as regards its literary genre — the issue which formerly posed a great difficulty for scholars. It can be claimed, from a literary point of view, that the account has a pronounced nature of a hagiographic legend. That is, on the basis of the narrative correspondences in the material analysed thus far, we can argue that an appropriate literary context for the *Diegesis* of St Sophia is the lore of Byzantine hagiographical production.

**Liturgical Function of the *Diegesis***

Association of the *Diegesis* with the realm of Byzantine hagiographical literature it closely related to the problem of the original destination and function of the legendary account. I will further suggest that its original purpose — which particularly justifies definition of the *Diegesis* as a hagiographical account of the church foundation — was to be read in the annual commemoration of the *encaenia* festival of the church of St Sophia. It has been already discussed earlier that Byzantine church had a prominent tradition of celebrating the dedication of churches that, very likely, included liturgical reading of the relevant text explaining the details of the church building history. It appears that the *Diegesis* was exactly such a text for being read in the liturgical office of the *encaenia* of the Great Church.

If the *Diegesis* indeed was the account designed for the dedication feast of St Sophia then why, one may wonder, it does not appear to be included into any Byzantine collection traditionally providing liturgical readings, like those of the *Menologia* or *Synaxaria*. It can be rightly expected that the narrative for commemorative purposes would be incorporated into specialised editions that were in wide use in the Byzantine ecclesiastical culture. Yet, there are cases of some hagiographical legends that were certainly designed for the liturgy and used as *lectio hagiographica* and were nevertheless omitted from Byzantine compilations. A vivid example of such inexplicable omissions is the case with the *Vita* of Constantine the Great and his mother Helena, commemorated on 21 May, being absent from the Metaphrastic collection of hagiographic texts — the fact noted by some scholars as truly
surprising.\textsuperscript{206} Thus, despite the existence of certain pronounced rules and regularities in traditional practices of the Byzantine liturgy, there are numerous divergences from the commonly established principles. The \textit{Diegesis} therefore could also be one of those irregular instances of the text that, although meant for reading in the church, was omitted from official collections.

Yet it is not impossible, however, that the \textit{Diegesis} was actually included into some liturgico-hagiographic collections which, however, did not survive into our days. To this very conclusion points a later Georgian translation of the \textit{Diegesis}, which was made no later than the eleventh or twelfth century from a Greek model.\textsuperscript{207} The Medieval Georgian literary tradition, which is often very helpful in reconstructing how the matters were in Byzantium, does include the \textit{Diegesis} into the collection of hagiographic texts. Although there is no surviving equivalent evidence about the precise usage of the \textit{Diegesis} in Byzantium, the Georgian hagiographical collection reflects, almost doubtless, the original liturgical function of the translated text.

The oldest of the four Georgian manuscripts of the text — the thirteenth-century codex A-70 of the K. S. Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts in Tbilisi — transmits the \textit{Diegesis} among other hagiographic narratives arranged according to the order of the liturgical calendar.\textsuperscript{208} Although there is no precise date indicated for which the \textit{Diegesis} was assigned for, it is rather explicit for what time approximately the text was meant: the preceding and following texts give a clear indication of a chronological framework meant for the foundation account of St Sophia. Thus, in an immediate precedence of the \textit{Diegesis} there are hagiographical accounts for the feasts of the Vision of Constantine and the Discovery of the Cross by Helena (7 May), two sermons by John of Bolnisi, and the \textit{Life} of St Stephen the Younger. After these texts the \textit{Di-
Egesis is placed, being followed by the account of the Sack of Jerusalem by Antioch Strategios assigned for 11 May.209

All of it suggests that the *Diegesis* must have been meant for 11 May, which could be connected with nothing else but the famous commemoration day of the feast of the dedication of Constantinople. The subtle link of the dedication of the Great Church with the γενέθλια of Constantinople is not altogether foreign to the Byzantine liturgy either. For both offices of the *encaenia* as described by the *Typicon* of the Great Church share common themes and readings, which points to the fact that the feasts were tightly associated in their liturgical expression.210

There is some evidence confirming that the celebration of at least one of larger restorations of St Sophia was timed to coincide with the *encaenia* of Constantinople. An adscript at the end of the codex *Laur. S. Marci* 304 informs us that the copying of the manuscript was finished on Sunday 13 May when the ritual opening, that is the dedication, of the Great Church was celebrated.211 According to Byzantine practice the *encaenia* was to be celebrated on Sunday — that is why the exact date of the church dedication could be slightly shifted as compared with the model celebration. Thus, the date of 13 May, mentioned in the


(210) The παραμονή of the office for the dies natalis of Constantinople is similar to the annual commemoration of the *encaenia* of St Sophia if fallen onto Saturday or Sunday. Moreover, the τροπαία for the liturgical dedications of St Sophia and the City display the same concern with the theme of the protection of the city by the Theotokos, sometimes fully overlapping in their hymnological expression. Namely, both *encaenia* offices contain the *troparion* “Τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν, Κύριε, ὡς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὀφθαλμόν, ἐκ πάσης σου δικαίας ἁπειλῆς ἐλευθέρωσον, καὶ τοὺς σκήπτρους τῆς βασιλείας αὐτῆς διαπανόρθωσε, καὶ τοῖς σκάφισι κατακόσμησε, βαρβάρων ἀποστροφὴν καὶ τῶν κινδύνων ἀπαλλαγήν διὰ τῆς Θεοτόκου δωροῦμενος” (Mateos, *Typicon...*, I, 144–147, 286–289).

(211) "ἐτελειώθη σὺν Θεῷ μηνὶ μαίω ἤ σατηνη ἡμέρα ὡς ἡμέρα ἡ Μεγάλη Ἐκκλησία." The reading of the manuscript with a suggested correction is given according to A. Пападопуло-Керамевс, Из истории греческих этимологиков, *Журнал Министерства Народного Просвещения* 319 (1898) 115–119. There is also a relevant discussion of the question when the mentioned dedication must have occurred. The conclusion reached is that the dedication of St Sophia on 13 May must have been celebrated either in 994 or in 882, following the repairs after the damage caused by the earthquake of 989 or 869 respectively. Cf. also C. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Trustees for Harvard University, 1962) 76–78.
manuscript as the time of the *encaenia* of St Sophia, is apparently associated with the celebration of the dedication of Constantinople, placed on the nearest Sunday adjacent to 11 May.

Another proof that some of medieval *encaenia* of St Sophia might have been timed with 11 May is derived from the later Russian tradition. The Medieval Russian church preserved the custom to celebrate church dedications on 11 May, which must have been introduced in Kievan Rus in obedience to practice inherited from Byzantium. Thus, as witnessed by Medieval Russian liturgical collections, dedications of the church of Tithe and the first church of St Sophia in Kiev were celebrated on 11 May or on a nearby Sunday.

Therefore, it is very likely that at some point the *Diegesis* was used, if not originally assigned, for such an occasion of the *encaenia* of St Sophia that was celebrated after one of the renovations took place. And, if the witness of the Georgian hagiographic collection is to be taken into serious consideration, this specific dedication fell on 11 May.

Further evidence of the *Diegesis* being employed in the liturgical office of the *encaenia* of the Great Church comes from within the Greek tradition itself. Thus, the sixteenth-century codex Vaticanus gr. 1701 containing just a fragment of the *Diegesis* has the following conclusion at the end of the legend: “ἐώς ὧδε τὸ πέρας τοῦ λόγου τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐκατοδομηθήσης.” Although the manuscript is rather late, we can consider the closing statement as a straightforward indication that the narrative was meant for the commemoration day of the dedication of the church, which could hardly mean anything else but the official feast of the *encaenia* of St Sophia.

Another interesting observation can be made on the basis of divergent readings in the erratic manuscript tradition. Some of the main codices of the *Diegesis*, all of which belong to the β-version of the μ-reduction according to Vitti’s classification, give the version of the text ending with the following prayer:

---


(213) I reproduce here the original spelling according to C. Giannelli, *Codices Vaticani Graeci Codices 1684–1744* (Vatican: Vatican Library, 1961) 44.

Let us give glory to our holy God who enables us to be worthy to enter this admirable church and to render the due praise to Christ the Lord. For to him be the glory and honour, power and worship now and always and for ever more, amen.\(^{215}\)

The particular formulation of this prayer explicitly points to the fact that the *Diegesis* was read aloud in the church of St Sophia. It is specifically in this sacred building that the congregation of the faithful, upon listening to the account of the church foundation, was encouraged to render praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. It is very likely, therefore, that the text accompanied by this kind of prayer must have been destined to be read during some liturgical celebration in the church of St Sophia. Similarly, in the context of scholarly discussion of Constantinian hagiography, it has been remarked that the closing prayers of the oldest *Vitae* of Constantine the Great show that the accounts were meant for the liturgical use.\(^{216}\) Hence, we can also assume that the prayer rendering glory to God attached to the *Diegesis* in several manuscripts is an indicator of the liturgical context of the account. Noteworthy, the doxology closing the text appears mainly in some of the manuscripts representing a variant of the earliest redaction.\(^{217}\)

\(^{215}\) “Ἡμεῖς δὲ δῶμεν δόξαν τῷ ἁγίῳ θεῷ ἡμῶν τῷ ἱκανῶσαντι ἡμᾶς αὐτάρκεσαι ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀξιοθαύμαστος ναὸς, τοῦ εἰσιέναι ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀναπέμπειν χριστῷ τῷ θεῷ πρέποντας αἰνους. Ὅσι αὐτῷ πρέπει δόξα τιμή κράτος καὶ προσκύνησις, νῦν καὶ ἕως τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.” The text of the prayer is given according to the codex *Vaticanus gr. 973* (VITTI, *Die Erzählung...,* 102). Translation of the Greek passage is rather complicated. The phrase ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀξιοθαύμαστος ναὸς might have been originally a scholion, which was later introduced into the main text without a proper syntactical adaptation. I am grateful to Basil Markesinis for this clarifying suggestion.


\(^{217}\) The manuscripts containing this closing prayer — the twelfth-century *Parisinus gr. 1712* and *Vaticanus gr. 697*, as well as the sixteenth-century *Vaticanus gr. 973*, which is a copy of *Parisinus gr. 1712*, — all represent one of the oldest independent versions of the *Diegesis*. These codices have been listed
which is suggestive of the fact that a liturgical usage was an original destination of the \textit{Diegesis}. Indeed, it seems very appropriate that the \textit{lectio hagiographica} for the \textit{encaenia} of the Great Church would be finished with the doxological prayer, exactly as it features in an earliest variant of the textual tradition of the \textit{Diegesis}.

All in all, the material discussed in this article strongly suggests that the \textit{Diegesis} is a hagiographical story read during the feast of the \textit{encaenia} of St Sophia. The time framework for such a liturgical function of the \textit{Diegesis}, however, should be limited to the mid-Byzantine period. The conventional dating of the \textit{Diegesis} to the ninth century marks the lower chronological limit for usage of the legendary account as a reading during liturgy at St Sophia. Such a function would be terminated with the sack of Constantinople by Latin troops in 1204, when the practice of celebrating the \textit{encaenia} ceased in the capital and was never to be renewed in the former splendour — the fact made known to us by Symeon of Thessalonica.$^{218}$

\textbf{SUMMARY}

This article aims to demonstrate that the famous \textit{Diegesis} about building of St Sophia in Constantinople is a hagiographic legend composed for the feast of \textit{encaenia}. In order to substantiate this hypothesis I first look at the history and then hagiography of the Encaenia of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. A comparative analysis of the \textit{Diegesis} with Byzantine and Oriental legends of the Holy Sepulchre as well as with some other hagiographic narratives provided tangible proves of a shared stock of hagiographic motifs and conspicuous literary similarities. Along with additional data coming from the manuscript tradition of the \textit{Diegesis}, close literary parallels and common hagiographic topoi pointed towards a conclusion that the story of the foundation and dedication of St Sophia belongs to the lore of hagiographic production that served the needs of liturgical celebrations, in this case the celebration of the church dedication feast.

among the most important witnesses of the original text (cf. Preger, \textit{Scriptores...}, I, xi–xiii; Vitti, \textit{Die Erzählung...}, 175–182).