

THE GREEK OLD TESTAMENT LECTIONARY AS A LITURGICAL BOOK

Sysse Gudrun Engberg

When Carsten Höeg and Günther Zuntz wrote their "Remarks on the Prophetologion"(1), they estimated the number of manuscripts of the Greek Old Testament lectionary at about 160, on the basis of the list of 150 manuscripts(2) given by A. Rahlfs(3). Eight items on this list(4) turned out not to be prophetologia, but full Septuagint texts, or liturgical books, some of which contain a number of O.T.readings written out. Thus Rahlfs' list is reduced to 142 manuscripts, to which we can add 31 more, identified by the editors of the Prophetologium during our work on the edition(5). Finally, I would like to add to the list the printed edition called Anagnostikon(6), partly because it probably was copied from a manuscript, which it then substitutes, perhaps with a few corrections and redactional changes, and partly because the book was not reprinted and thus had no after-life as a printed book.

Even though the list now counts 174 items, the prophetologion is still a manuscript much more rare than is the New Testament lectionary. The Renaissance lists of Greek manuscripts in South Italy mention only few prophetologia as compared to the other liturgical books(7), and one wonders whether every church or monastery could have possessed an O.T.lectionary and, if not, how they could fulfill the requirements of the service. One possibility would have been to mark the readings in a full Septuagint manuscript, as is indeed found in some cases(8). But this arrangement would only be satisfactory during the Lenten period with its lectio continua(9) from Isaiah, Genesis and the Proverbs, whereas it for the rest of the feasts, both fixed and movable, would be very difficult to find the actual readings from out of the bulky manuscript of the Old Testament. This corpus of 174 prophetologion manuscripts, dating from

the 9th to the early 17th centuries, constitutes a homogeneous group. They contain the lessons for Lent, for the feasts between Easter and Sunday after Pentecost, and for the fixed feasts of the year. In general the text is fairly stable, and there is never doubt as to whether a manuscript belongs to the group of prophetologia.

The question now arises: when, how and why did this type of liturgical book come into being, and when, how and why did it disappear? Høeg and Zuntz(10) have tried to answer the when and how of the first question; they assumed that the lectionary was invented in the early eighth century, shortly after the reform that relegated the O.T.lessons to the Missa Praesanctificatorum, and that it was probably created in Constantinople, maybe at the Stoudion monastery. However, this does not fully explain why a liturgical book was created just for the purpose of O.T. reading in the form in which we have it. One could still imagine getting along with two books, a Septuagint manuscript already existing in the church and now provided with marginal notes specifying the readings for the Lenten period, together with a small lectionary containing the lessons for the feasts of the Pentecost period and the fixed feasts only. However, this solution does not seem to have been common, since an examination of the oldest prophetologion manuscripts shows that all three parts of the liturgical year were already represented in these. Most of the early manuscripts are fragments, and one can only guess at their full contents. But the Lenten period is amply represented, as e.g. in the uncial part of the palimpsest Flor.Conv.Soppr.152 from the ninth, or in Vaticanus gr.1456 from the tenth century(11). The Lenten lessons are the part of the book that could most easily be replaced by a full O.T.text with marginal references, and it seems therefore logical to assume that the full-born prophetologion sprang from its inventor's head with approximately the same repertory as in the later manuscripts. The reason for creating the O.T.lectionary was, among other things, that it was more practical to have all the

O.T.readings written out in one volume. Another may have to do with the performance of the lessons, a point to which I shall return later. A third reason which is also mentioned by Høeg and Zuntz(12), may be the wish for uniformity in the liturgical practice. Shortly after the invention of the prophetologion, maybe in the early ninth century, the system of ekphonic notation(13) was introduced into the O.T.lectionaries. Forty-two of the existing manuscripts are provided with this notation. This fact points in the same direction and indicates that the ecclesiastical centre which had created the lectionary also wanted identical performances of the O.T.readings throughout the Empire, not only as far as the choice of text was concerned, but also in the details of the musical recitation. Could it be that the relative scarcity of prophetologion manuscripts reflects the failure of this enterprise and the fact, that O.T.lessons in parts of the Byzantine world either were not read at all, or were recited according to an older, now lost, system? The bulk of the manuscripts were produced in the 11th to the 13th centuries, as can be seen from the following list:

8-9th cent.	10 mss
10th cent.	16 mss (two dated)
11th cent.	37 mss (four dated)
12th cent.	41 mss (two dated)
13th cent.	28 mss (five dated)
14th cent.	13 mss
15th cent.	9 mss (one dated)
16th cent.	16 mss (nine dated, one of which is the printed edition)

Only few prophetologia were copied in the 14th and 15th centuries (14), whereas surprisingly many were produced in the 16th century, just before the O.T.lectionary went out of use. It should be kept in mind that one of the 16 items from this century was the printed book which presumably appeared in at least a couple of hundreds of copies. Did the need for

the O.T.lectionary still exist in the 16th century(15)? Most of the manuscripts written in the 11th to the 13th centuries show, as already said, considerable uniformity as to the choice of lessons and the texts themselves. The neumes are uniform to a much lesser degree, as can be seen from the critical apparatus of the edition of the Prophetologium. Also, the selection of fixed feasts of the year is relatively stable, even if many manuscripts omit some feasts, and new feasts where O.T.lessons are to be recited turn up in the later centuries. Perhaps the variation is not as great as could have been expected for geographical or liturgical reasons.

But one aspect in which the manuscripts do differ very much is the arrangement of the material. Some begin with the lessons for Lent (the triodion part of the book), proceed with the pentecostarion part, and end with the lessons for the vigils of the fixed year, including X-mas and Epiphany(16). One early manuscript(17) starts with Lent and ends with Annunciation, which corresponds to the title of the last section of the manuscript, found on f.58v:

Ἐκλογάδιον συν θεῶ των ἀναγνω(σμάτων) τοῦ παλαιοῦ. ἀρχόμενο(ν) ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου σα(ββάτου) πρωῖ, ἕως του εὐαγγελισμοῦ (Book of selections of readings from the O.T.beginning with Holy Saturday and ending with Annunciation).

If the number of vigils and processions for the fixed year was very large in a given manuscript, this arrangement into one cycle was not practical. In many manuscripts the two cycles, the movable and the fixed year cycle, become separated. The movable feast cycle begins with X-mas and Epiphany (even though these two belong to the fixed year) and continues with the triodion and pentecostarion readings. Then the fixed year cycle follows, starting with September 1st. This arrangement is parallel to the one in the Gospel lectionary, inasmuch as it separates the two cycles and begins the fixed year with the feast of the Indiction. It is typical of some prophetologia of the Constantinople type of

the "classical" period, i.e. the 11th and 12th centuries, but it is not uniformly used.

Some manuscripts combine the two cycles in a different way from the one-cycle arrangement mentioned above. They begin with X-mas and end with the November feasts, intertwining the fixed into the movable year. Yet others start with September 1st, combine the two cycles and end with August. This is, of course, a most unpractical system, since you never know just where the feasts from February to May will be placed in relation to the movable cycle.

A title in a manuscript(18) written in A.D.1072 seems to prove that the one-cycle arrangement starting with September 1st is relatively early:

Ἄρχ(η) σὺν θεῶ βιβλί(ου) γενε(σο)προιμιῶν
 ἀρχόμε() ἀπο μη(νὸς) σεπτεμ(βρίου) καὶ μέχ(ρι)
 τῶν ἀγίων πάντ(ων): (Beginning of the book of
 Geneso-proverbs, setting out from the month
 of September and ending with Sunday of All
 Saints).

The manuscript itself is arranged according to the one-cycle arrangement starting with X-mas. The title, which does not correspond to the actual arrangement of the book, is thus found towards the end of the manuscript, on f. 209v, instead of at the beginning. The title comes from the Vorlage, but the scribe has rearranged the order of the feasts to suit his own purposes and yet copied the now useless title.

It seems probable that each anagnostis responsible for the O.T. readings created his own chronological arrangement of his manuscript. One manuscript from Mount Athos(19) even tries to combine the Old and the New Testament lessons, i.e. all three lectionaries, into one book starting with Easter, certainly a most chaotic arrangement which makes it difficult to find one's way around. Could this be the personal creation of someone who was responsible for the readings of both the O.T., the Epistle and the Gospel?

A prophetologion manuscript may be combined with other types of liturgical books. In these "combination manuscripts", a

text pentecostarion is copied next to a prophetologion containing only the fixed feasts, or a sticherarion or text triodion is placed next to a prophetologion. This again may indicate that the prophetologion was a personal manuscript used by a person with distinct functions in the church, and it foreshadows the later development where all O.T.readings enter the text books of the triodion, the pentecostarion and the menaia, such as became the practice in the printed liturgical books. The prophetologion became useless and disappeared.

Since the O.T.lectionary went out of use in the 17th century at the latest, very few orthodox Greeks have ever heard of its existence. Consequently, I am often asked when I work with a prophetologion manuscript in a Greek monastery, what kind of book this is. When I described it to a monk on the island of Amorgos, he exclaimed that a book containing all the O.T.readings and not much else was "dīschristo", that is, unpractical, not useful. Why, then, was it created and why did it become useless?

I shall try to answer the last question first. In modern times the O.T.lessons are of course read, and not cantillated, as are the Epistle and the Gospel readings. In a church - as opposed to a monastery - the O.T.lessons will be read, normally in a rather monotonous voice, by a psaltis. Therefore it is more practical to have this text in the same book as the other parts of the office performed by the choir. By contrast, the New Testament lessons are performed with ceremony by the deacon or the priest from a special place in the church, and the Gospel lectionary is even carried around the church before the reading takes place. This requires a separate book containing only the readings. The disappearance of the prophetologion must be connected with a change in the performance of the O.T.readings.

In Byzantium, these readings were cantillated in the same ceremonial manner as were the New Testament readings. Sometimes a different view is put forth, viz.that the New Testament readings were recited with more ceremony and in a more

melodic way than the O.T. lessons which were read almost as prose. An examination of the ekphonic system used in the three lectionaries shows that all three texts must have been recited in approximately the same way, since the sequence of neumes, the formulas so to speak, are the same, and the text is broken up into comparable pieces of three to four words in both the Old and the New Testament texts. The O.T. text was performed by an anagnostis who might need to have all the relevant texts in one book that could be carried down into the nave for recitation. In the manuscripts, the reading is often indicated to take place after the small entrance, and the prophetologion may have been carried around the church during this ceremony.

The troparion and the prokeimenon are invariably indicated before the O.T. readings. These two sung texts are never provided with musical notation, but the mode is always indicated. The wish to have these liturgical texts prefixed to the O.T. readings may have been part of the reason why it was necessary to create the O.T. lectionary: there was simply not enough space in the margin of a full Septuagint manuscript to indicate the troparion and prokeimenon sung before the reading. Whereas the lessons in many manuscripts are provided with ekphonic notation, the mode in which the lesson presumably had to be recited, is never indicated. The cantillation may possibly have been done in the mode of the preceding prokeimenon.

Why were the O.T. lessons at some point degraded to play a less important part in the service than the other biblical readings? One reason is surely the development of the service according to a more monastic tradition, and the disappearance of the tritekton service characteristic of the Great Church in Constantinople. A prominent feature of the O.T.-reading system was the recitation of one Isaiah lesson for the tritekton during Lent. When these readings were absorbed into the ordinary orthros services, they found a more natural place in the text triodion.

Another reason may be that the musical parts of the service

took over more importance as compared to the biblical texts. The development of the more elaborate and flourishing musical style that is indicated in the manuscripts perhaps reflects the fact that the music took up more time, which had to be taken from other parts of the service, as e.g. the O.T.readings. The psaltis may have preferred to show off his voice in the kalophonic embellishments of the hymns rather than in the somewhat tedious cantillation of the Prophet text.

- (1) Quantulacumque, Studies Presented to Kirsopp Lake, London 1937, 189-226.
- (2) In Remarks, the number mentioned is 153, which is not correct. At the bottom of Rahlfs' list of 150 MSS, he refers to another two, viz. Oxford, Bodl.Auct.F.4.32, and Paris BN, Coislin 193. Neither of these is a prophetologion.
- (3) Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften des Alten Testaments, Berlin 1914, 440-443.
- (4) Messina 140 and Athos, Pantokrator 234 (flyleaves) are both Septuagint texts. Paris BN, Coislin 211 is a Gospel lectionary. Athos, Esfigmenou 5, and Ivron 771 are text triodia with some O.T.lessons written out. Athens Nat.Lib.107 contains N.T.texts. Paris BN, gr. 1035 contains paraphrases of Prophet texts. Sinai 11 is a psalter.
- (5) Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae. Lectionaria Vol.I: Prophetologium I-II, ed. Carsten Høeg, Günther Zuntz, Gudrun Engberg, Hauniae 1939-1981.
- (6) Biblion legomenon Anagnostikon..., ed. by Manouel Glynzounios and printed by Francesco de' Giuliani, Venice 1596. Cf. E.Legrand, Bibliographie Hellénique, vol.ii, 112-114.
- (7) Remarks 190, note 3.
- (8) The system of indicating in the margin of a Septuagint manuscript the incipit and explicit of the lessons, together with the indication of their liturgical placement, is found in some early fragments, such as Messina 140 and Athos, Pantokrator 234, two of the items that had to be deleted from Rahlfs' list.
- (9) Or rather: Bahnlesungen, according to Baumstark's definition.
- (10) Remarks 221f.
- (11) MMB, Prophetologium, 269ff, and A. Turyn, Dated Greek MSS of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in the Libraries of Italy, Urbana 1972, vol.i, 45f.
- (12) Remarks 222.
- (13) C. Høeg, La notation ekphonétique, Copenhagen 1935; G. Engberg, Ekphonic Notation, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, London 1980, vol.vi, 99ff.
- (14) One must, of course, take into account the fact that the need for copies may have been more or less covered by the production in the 11th to 13th centuries of manuscripts

that were still in use in the 14th and 15th centuries. Also, some of the manuscripts may have been assigned a too early date, because the stability of the liturgical hand makes an exact dating difficult.

- (15) I hope to provide an explanation for this curious fact in a future publication.
- (16) For the contents of the prophetologion, see the appended list.
- (17) Flor.Plut.ix,15 (A.D. 964). Cf. MMB, Prophetologium, vol.i, 427.
- (18) Athens, Nat.Lib.20.
- (19) Filotheou 6. I owe my gratitude to Robert Allison for kindly lending me his microfilm of this manuscript.

Contents of the Prophetologium:

- 1 X-mas
- 2 Epiphany

Triodion part:
3-41 Lent

Pentecostarion part:

- 42 Midpentecost
- 43 Ascension
- 44 Sunday before Pentecost: Council of Nicaea
- 45 Pentecost
- 46 Monday after Pentecost: Gonyklisia
- 47 Sunday after Pentecost: Agion Panton

Menologion part:

- 48 1.IX. Indiction, Symeon Stylite
- 49 8.IX. Nativity of Theotokos
- 50 13.IX. Consecration of Anastasis Church
- 51 14.IX. Exaltation of Cross
- 52 26.IX. John Evangelist
- 53 11.X. 7th Council (A.D.787)
- 54 26.X. Dimitrios, earthquake (A.D.740 or 989)
- 55 8.XI. Michael
- 56 13.XI. John Chrysostom
- 57 21.XI. Ta agia ton agion
- 58 1.I. Circumcision
- 59 25.I. Gregory Theologos
- 60 27.I. Translation John Chrysostom
- 61 2.II. Presentation
- 62 17.III. Earthquake (between A.D.780 and 797)
- 63 25.III. Annunciation
- 64 8.V. John Evangelist
- 65 11.V. Foundation of Constantinople
- 66 5.VI. Echthron epeleusis
- 67 24.VI. Nativity of John Baptist
- 68 29.VI. Peter and Paul
- 69 16.VII. Fourth Council
- 70 20.VII. Elijah
- 71 6.VIII. Transfiguration
- 72 15.VIII. Dormition
- 73 16.VIII. Mandilion of Edessa (A.D. 944)
- 74 29.VIII. Beheading of John Baptist
- 75 August: Epeleusis ton barbaron
- 76 Eis to agion kai angelikon schema