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## **MAXIMUS CONFESSOR - THE PALESTINIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND**

My purpose in this paper is to give a short survey on the sites associated with the first formative chapter of Maximus life in Palestine in the years 580-614, and the archaeological remains therein (we have no details about the suggested second stay in Palestine, in the years 633-641 - the year of the final conquest of Palestine by the Muslims).

**KEYWORDS:** Maximus life; Palestine

The convention that Maximus Confessor (580-662 CE) was a Constantinopolitan was derived from his 10<sup>th</sup> c. Greek *enkomion* by the Stoudite monk Michael Exaboulites. But since the publication of the early Syriac life,<sup>1</sup> written by his contemporary (though hostile) George (or Gregory) of Resh'aina, and after refresh examination of his writings for details concerning his life and activity, we know Maximus was a

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<sup>1</sup> S. Brock, "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor," *AB* 91 (1973), pp. 299-346.

Palestinian.<sup>1</sup> According to the Greek *Vitae*<sup>2</sup> he was born to a respectable Constantinopolitan family, was well educated, served as first secretary of the imperial archives under Heraclius. Then he was forced to escape the Monothelite heresy (still to be born) of the imperial court, fleeing to Philippikos Monastery at Chrysopolis, opposite Constantinople. But this part of the Greek *Vitae* is a hagiographic invention; his biography underwent a process of Constantinopolization imitating the noble origin of Theodore Stoudites.<sup>3</sup> The Syriac *Vita*, on the other end, is rich in factual details. According to the Syriac biographer he was born in the village of Hesfin (חצפין קריתא), in the Golan, east of the sea of Tiberias. His father was a Samaritan called Abna (אבנא), a maker of linen from Sychar (שכר), a Samaritan village near Neapolis, and his mother, named Shanda (שנדה), was a Persian slave-girl of a Jew of Tiberias named Zadoq (זדוק). Both were secretly baptized by the village priest of Hesfin - Martyrius (מרטור), getting new Christian names - Theonos and Mariame respectively. The birth name of Maximus was Moschion. At the age of nine he became an orphan, given to the guardianship of the village priest, who brought him

1 For farther arguments in favor of a Palestinian origin see: J.M. Garrigues, La personne composé de Christ d'après saint Maxime le Confesseur. *Revue Thomiste* 74 (1974), pp. 182-83; I.H. Dalmais, "La vie de saint Maxime le Confesseur reconsidéré. *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982), pp. 26-30; B. Flusin, *Miracle et Histoire dans l'oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis*, Paris 1983, Vol. II, pp. 52-54; Ch. Boudignon, "Maxime le Confesseur était-il Constantinopolitain?" in: B. Janssens, B. Roosen and P. Van Deun (eds.), *Philomathestatos. Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday, Études de patristique grecque et textes byzantins offerts à Jacques Noret à l'occasion de ses soixante-cinq ans*, [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 137], Leuven - Paris - Dudley/MA 2004, pp. 11-43.

2 There are five Gr. recensions: BHG 1233m and n, BHG 1234, BHG 1235 and BHG 1236. Of these, BHG 1234 is the only one that was published in print in PG 90. 68A-109B. A part that was left out of this edition was later edited and published by R. Devreese, being based on two other recensions of this text [R. Devereese, "La vie de St. Maxime le Confesseur et ses recensions", *AB*46 (1928), 5-49, pp. 18-23]. All the Gr. texts are being prepared for publication in CCSG by Bram Roosen. For the state of affairs up to 1985, see: P. Allen, "Blue-print for the Edition of *Documenta ad Vitam Maximi Confessoris spectantia*," in: C. Laga, J.A. Munitiz, and L. Van Rompay (eds.), *After Chalcedon. Studies in Theology and Church History offered to Professor Albert Van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday* [OLA 18], Leuven 1985, pp. 11-21. See also: *Scripta saeculi vii vitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia, una cum latina interpretatione AnastasiiBibliothecarii iuxta posita*, ediderunt Pauline Allen et Bronwen Neil, Turnhout - Brepols, Leuven, University Press, 1999 [Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 39]; *Maximus the Confessor and his companions: documents from exile*, edited and translated by Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002; *The Life of Maximus the Confessor recension 3*, edited and translated by Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, Strathfield, N.S.W., St Pauls, 2003.

3 W. Lackner, "Zu Quellen und Datierung der Maximusvita," *AB* 85 (1967), pp. 285-316; J.M. Garrigue, *supra*, note 2, p. 181; Boudignon, *supra*, note 2, p. 12, who points to a somewhat comparable transformation of Steven the Sabaite, and John of Damascus, indicated by M.F. Auzépy, "De la Palestine à Constantinople (VIIIe-IXe siècles): Etienne le Sabaïte et Jean Damascène," *TM* 12 (1994), pp. 138-218.

and his brother to *Palaia Laura* monastery - the Old Laura of Chariton in the Judean desert. There he grew up and became a monk. The abbot gave him a new name - Maximus. Later he drew the attention of Sophronius, the future bishop of Jerusalem (634-638 CE). He and John Moschus were living in the New Laura, located at a close proximity of the Old Laura, from 590 to 603 CE, when they left Palestine. Maximus acquired his education in the vivid intellectual milieu of the Palestinian monasteries, where the theological doctrines of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. controversies were forged. The monks of the Old Laura took a prominent role in these controversies. According to Garrigues and Dalmais,<sup>1</sup> John bishop of Cyzicus, with whom Maximus was in correspondance, with whom he examined Origenists issues in the writings of the Church Fathers, and to whom he addressed *ambigua* II, is to be identified with John of Cyzicus, the abbot of St. Abraham monastery on the Mount of Olives, about whom John Moschus relates an edifying anecdotes in *Leimonarion* 187. The monastery was founded by Abba Abraham the Great, abbot of the monastery annexed to St. Mary the New church, erected by Justinian.<sup>2</sup> St. George Monastery mentioned in Maximus' correspondence with John, a community of monks and of nuns, should be located according to him in Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> not in Cyzicus, on the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara.

As a result of the Persian conquest of 614 Maximus fled from Palestine. Boudignon had suggested that he went first to Alexandria, where he joined the company of Sophronius and of the Patriarch John the Almsgiver. He stayed there until the Persian conquest of Egypt in 617,<sup>4</sup> when he fled via Cyprus to Constantinople. Taft had suggested a stay of some ten years in Constantinople, where he composed his *Mystagogia*.<sup>5</sup> His precise moves are

1 Garrigues, *supra*, note 2, pp. 182-3; Dalmais, *supra*, note 2, p. 28.

2 A monastery with a bath house was recently excavated on the eastern slope of Mount Olives. A Greek inscription attributed to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> c., or early 8<sup>th</sup> c. mentions the priest and hegumen Theodore, and the monk Cyriacus. See: D. Amit, J. Seligman and I. Zilberbod, "The Monastery of Theodorus and Cyriacus on the Eastern Slope of Mount Scopus, Jerusalem," in: C.L. Bottini, L. Di-Segni and D. Chrupeata (eds.), *One Land Many Cultures. Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislaw Loffreda, OFM*. Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 2003, pp. 139-148; L. Di Segni, "A Greek Inscription in the Monastery of Theodorus and Cyriacus on Mount Scopus", *ibid.*, pp. 149-51, who mentions other monasteries on Mt. Olives mentioned in the literary sources. A marble plate depicting hunting scenes on its rim (reproduced there on p. 147, fig. 14), may points to connections with Constantinople. For such plates see: J. Dresken-Weiland, *Reliefierte Tischplatten aus Theodosianischer Zeit*, [StudiDi Antichita Cristiana XLVIII], Roma 1991, taf. 9,11.

3 On this monastery see: S. Vailhé, "Répertoire alphabétique des Monastères de Palestine," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 4 (1899), p537, no. 49.

4 Boudignon, *supra*, note 2, pp. 15-22.

5 R.F. Taft, 'Is the Liturgy Described in the *Mystagogia* of Maximus Confessor Byzantine, Palestinian, or Neither?' *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* Terza, Serie, 8 (2011), pp. 223-270.

not known, but finally he arrived at North Africa. Brock had suggested two possible periods of sojourn in Africa: the first from 628/630 to 633, and the second from 641 to 645, with a return to Syria-Palaestina in between. There were also short periods of stay in Cyprus and Crete. In North Africa he encountered Sophronius, and joined the Monastery of the Eucratades, where he found other Palestinian refugee monks already gathered there by Sophronius.

As for the final chapter in his life, we know that he came to Constantinople only by 653, where he was arrested and exiled in 655 to Bizye in Thrace, and in 662 to Lazica, where he died.

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## SYCHAR

Sychar,<sup>1</sup> the place of origin of Maximus father - a Samaritan, was a village near Neapolis, *en route* to Scythopolis, at the SE foot of Mt. Gerizim, overlooking a fertile valley ('Askar valley). There is a spring - Ain 'Askar. This is the place where Jesus met the Samaritan woman, and there he abode two days according to *John* 4, 5-42: "<on his way from Judaea back to Galilee, he had to pass through Samaria> Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, give me to drink (for his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water..." (*John* 4, 5-10).

The traditional site of Jacob's well (175180) since the 4<sup>th</sup> c., first frequented by the Bordeaux pilgrim, and later by Paula, and other Christian pilgrims,<sup>2</sup> where a cruciform Early Christian church was erected later in the Byzantine period, is at a distance of 2 km from 'Askar (177180) - ancient

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1 Y. Tsafir, L. Di Segni and J. Green, (eds.), *Tabula Imperii Romanii. Iudaea/Palaestina*, Jerusalem 1994 (= *TIR*), p. 238: 'Askar;

2 *TIR*, p. 205: *Puteus Iacobi*; P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, Paris 1985, p. 289.

Sychar, to the west.<sup>1</sup> In the Samaritan Chronicle it is referred to as Iskar. In the 4<sup>th</sup> c. the Samaritan leader Baba Raba reached there in his fights against his enemies. As we learn from the Syriac *vita*, in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. Sychar was a Samaritan village. In the Madaba mosaic map we read: "Sychar, now Sychora".<sup>2</sup> Zarmaza (צַרמָצָא) sent by the Samaritans to meet Muhammad, came out from this village. And it was still settled by Samaritans to the eve of the Crusaders conquest.<sup>3</sup> Remains of a Roman mausoleum<sup>4</sup> with typical Samaritan sarcophagi were found there.<sup>5</sup>

## TIBERIAS

As was mentioned above, according to the Syriac *vita*, Maximus' mother was a Persian slave-girl at the house of Zaduq, a Jew from Tiberias. Jews were not allowed to hold Christian slaves; Persian slaves were allowed. Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, served since the early 3<sup>rd</sup> c., under R. Yohanan, as the seat of the Jewish Sanhedrin - the highest religious Jewish autonomous authority, and of the chief Jewish academy (*Beth Midrash HaGadol*). In ca. 235 the Jewish Patriarch R. Yehuda Nesiah moved his seat from Sepphoris to Tiberias. The Palestinian Talmud was redacted there in ca. 365. The Jewish leadership continued its stay there even after the institution of Jewish Patriarchate was abolished in 419. But gradually Christianity penetrated into the city. According to Epiphanius (mid 4<sup>th</sup> c.), there was a Christian bishop at Tiberias already before Constantine, in the days of the Patriarch Hillel. Epiphanius claims that he adopted Christianity on his bed of death). The efforts of a local Jewish convert - the Comes Joseph, a companion of the house of the Patriarch, to propagate Christianity among the Jews in Tiberias and Lower Galilee (at Sepphoris,

1 The cruciform plan of Jacob's Well church is known only from Arculf (ca. 670 CE). It had already been visited by Paula (Hier. *Ep.* 108.13), but in the absence of archaeological evidence it is not known whether it had assumed this shape at that time. For references to the church remains see *TIR, op. cit.*; A. Ovadia and C.G. de Silva, "Supplementum to the Corpus of the Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land I." *Levant* 13 (1981), pp. 200-261, # 59.

2 M. Avi Yonah, *The Madaba Mosaic Map*, Jerusalem 1954, nos. 33 and 35; H. Donner, *The Mosaic Map of Madaba*, Kampen 1992, pp. 48-49, nos. 34 and 37; M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata (eds.), *The Madaba Map Centenary 1897-1997*, Jerusalem 1999, pp. 65 and 66, nos. 38 and 41 respectively.

3 See also Ben Zvi, *The Book of the Samaritans*, pp. 66-67; *The Tulida* (ed. M. Florentin), p. 78 and *index locorum*; M. Levi-Rubin, "The Samaritans during the Early Muslim Period according to the Continuation to the Chronicle of Abu 'l-Fath," in: E. Stern and H. Eshel (eds.), *The Samaritans*, Jerusalem 2002, p. 570 (Hebrew).

4 E. Damati, "The Sarcophagi of the Samaritan Mausoleum at 'Ascar ('Ein Suchar), in: R. Zeevy (ed.), *Israel - People and Land* 2-3 (20-21) (1985-86), pp. 87-106 (Hebrew); idem., "A Roman Mausoleum at 'Askar," *Qadmoniot* VI/3-4 23-24 (1973), pp. 118-120 (Hebrew).

5 R. Barkai, "Samaritan Sarcophagi," in: E. Stern and H. Eshel (eds.), *The Samaritans*, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 310-338 (Hebrew).

Capernaum, Nazareth), under Constantine was far from being successful. His effort to convert part of the Hadrianeum of Tiberias to a church encountered Jewish protest. Finally he had to leave Tiberias, and move to Scythopolis. Later, in 451, a Christian bishop is first attested in the Council of Chalcedon. The community became organized; Kurion, one of the first disciples of Euthymius - the leader of Palestinian monasticism in the 5<sup>th</sup> c, was of Tiberias. Jerome maintained contacts with one of the sages of Tiberias, who helped him translating *Chronicles* to Latin. Under Justinian the city, still mainly Jewish, was surrounded by a wall, and a monastery with a splendid basilica, dedicated presumably to St. Paul was erected on the top of the mountain overlooking the city on the west. The city extended along the coast, with a NS colonnaded street and a promenade facing the sea, both skirted with public buildings, such as a basilical mansion, a bathhouse, a market place, a theater and a stadium. An aqueduct provided running water.<sup>1</sup>

In 614 its Jewish population, led by a rich named Benjamin, assisted the Persians. In 628, with the returning of the True Cross, Heraclius visited the city, and forced Benjamin to be baptized in the house of Eustathius of Shechem (Theophanes, *Chron.* A.M. 6120, ed. de Boor, Leipzig 1883, p. 328). In 635 it surrendered to the advancing Muslim forces, and replaced Scythopolis as the capital of Jund Urdun, the administrative unit that replaced *Palaestina Secunda*.

## HESFIN<sup>2</sup>

Hesfin (Chaspin, Khisfin) in the Golan was a village along the road leading from Scythopolis and Tiberias to Damascus, in the territory of Hippos, a city of Palaestina Secunda. It is located on a fertile lava soil. Remains of two churches, one – the Western - tri-apsidal, and the second – the Eastern restored in 604, were uncovered on the outskirts of the village. Both might have belonged to larger monastic complexes. The existence of a third church, in the village center, is suggested by chancel screens and posts dispersed in that zone. A wealth of finds including gold jewelry, glass and silver and bronze metal vessels, were retrieved in Roman tombs, indicating the wealth of the local population, pagan in their religion. The necropolis is located to the NE of the village. Also were found many Late Roman epitaphs and Greek inscriptions on mosaic floors of both churches, and on architectural members. The architecture of the dwellings, and of

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1 Y. Hirschfeld, "Tiberias," in: E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 4, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 1464-1470; idem., "The 'Anchor Church' at the Summit of Mount Berenice near Tiberias, *Biblical Archaeologist* 1993, pp. 122-133.

2 Z. Ma'oz, "Haspin", in: E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 2, Jerusalem-New York 1993, pp. 586-588.

the store-rooms, in basalt ashlar, and the roofing system by basalt beams laid on corbels, or arches, is typical to this region - a westward extension of the Hauran. The western church ("Georgius Church"; 14.20x20.50; two rows of 6 columns, nave 6.60m wide, aisles - 2.80m; Ionic capitals, Attic bases), was tri-apsidal. Parts of its S aisle, including its apse (1.85m wide, 1.40m deep), and a smaller part of the central apse (4.25m wide, 2.60m deep), were exposed. The screen was of imported marble. The walls were plastered, white washed and decorated in red paint on the inside. The S aisle, the bema, and the nave had mosaic floors decorated with colorful floral and geometric motives, resembling those of Kursi. Two birds were defaced. A Greek inscription reads: "For the salvation of Georgios Sathephela". Glazed and gilded tesserae suggest that the clerestory or the apse had delicate mosaics. The roofing was of tiles. It was dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 6<sup>th</sup> c., and it was in service into the 7<sup>th</sup> c.

The Eastern Church ("Thoma Church"; 12.75m wide; more than 8.7m long), partially exposed, is located ca. 200m farther to the E. Remains of two superimposed mosaic floors, 20 cm apart, were found. A Greek inscription of 5 rows in the upper mosaic floor, laid on the occasion of works of restoration, mention several names, among them the priest and abbot Thomas, in year 667 of the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the indiction = 604 CE according to the Pompeian era. It reads:

"Offering of Olympius, and for the preservation of Leontius and Eugenius (his) sons, and for the memory and rest of Varus (his) father and of Basilius and Eugenius (his) brothers, and of Varus (his) son. In thanksgiving he renovated this holy building, through the efforts of Thomas, priest and hegumen, in the month of July, indiction 7, year 667."<sup>1</sup>

## THE OLD LAURA<sup>2</sup>

The Old Laura - Souka, was the last of the three laurae founded by Chariton early in the 4<sup>th</sup> c., according to his mid 6<sup>th</sup> c. hagiographer, a monk of Souka. According to *Vita Xenophonis* (ed. Galante), and the later Nicephorus Callistus (d. 1340), Xenophon and his two sons Arcadius and John lived in the Old Laura in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. The Russian abbot Daniel saw there the graves of the two sons in 1106-7.

1 For the correct era and Eng. tr. see: L. Di Segni, *Dated Greek Inscriptions from Palestine from the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1997, pp. 278-80.

2 Y. Hirschfeld, "List of the Byzantine Monasteries in the Judean Desert", in: G. C. Bottini, Leah Di Segni, and E. Alliaia, *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land. New Discoveries. Essays in Honour of Virgilio C. Corbo*. Jerusalem 1990, pp. 8-12; *idem.*, "The Monastery of Chariton, Survey and Excavations," *Liber Annuus* 50 (2000), pp. 315-362, Pls. 1-26.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> c. it was called the Old Laura, to differentiate it from the New Laura founded nearby by Sabas in 507 CE. It then belonged to the Sabaite confederation of monasteries. Its heads and monks supported the Great Laura during the Origenist controversy. In 506, when 60 dissident monks withdrew from the Great Laura, the abbot of the Old Laura refused to accept them in his monastery (*V. Sab.* 36, 122). Abba Cassianus of Scythopolis, priest of the Great Laura, became the abbot of Souka for 8 years (538-546), and afterwards he headed the Great Laura (*V. Sab.* 88, 196). In the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> c., up to his death at 557 its most prominent monk was Kyriakos, one of the “heroes” and sources of Kyril of Scythopolis. Under his leadership the Laura was an anti-Origenist bastion.

It seems that after the massacre of 44 Sabaitic monks of the Great Laura during the Persian conquest, the Old Laura assumed for a while a prominent role. Maximus Confessor is the first in a series of its monks.<sup>1</sup>

Another point I would like to elucidate in this paper about the Palaestian connection of Maximus Confessor pertains to church architecture as reflected in his *Mystagogia*.<sup>2</sup> This treatise is a commentary on the liturgy, written to serve as a spiritual guide for those who turned to him as a monk, whether his fellow monks, devout laity, or bewildered or anxious clergy. According to Boudignon,<sup>3</sup> the *Mystagogia* was dedicated to Théocharistos, a priest and prominent figure in both religious and political spheres in North Africa. He was associated with the Palaestian milieu of emigrant monks living in North Africa and in Rome, to whom also Maximus belonged.<sup>4</sup> These monks adhered to the Palaestian liturgy. It seems,

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1 J. Patrich, *Sabas - Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Century*, [Dumbarton Oaks Studies XXXII], Washington 1995, pp. 140 and 155, note 45.

2 Migne, *PG* 91, 657-718. For the Greek text with translations to French and modern Greek see: C.G. Sotiropoulos, *La Mystagogie de saint Maxime le Confesseur. Introduction - texte critique - traduction française et grecque*, Athènes 2001. An earlier French translation was published, in pieces, by Myrrha Lot-Borodine, in *Irenikon* 13 (1936) pp. 466-72, 595-97, 717-20; 14 (1937) pp. 66-69, 182-85, 282-84, 444-48; 15 (1938) pp. 71-74, 185-86, 276-78, 390-91, 488-92. A French translation of the *Mystagogia* was published in the Ph.D. dissertation: Marie-Lucie Charpin, *Union et différence. Une lecture de la Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris IV - Sorbonne, 2000. For a new critical edition of the *Mystagogia*, based on a Ph.D. dissertation in the Université d'Aix en Provence 2000, by Christian Boudignon, entitled: *La Mystagogie ou traité sur les symboles de la liturgie de Maxime le Confesseur (580-662). Edition, traduction, commentaire*, see: *Maximi confessoris Mystagogia: una cum Latina interpretatione Anastasii Bibliothecarii (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca no: 69)*, Brepols: Turnhout, 2011.

3 *Supra*, note 2, pp. 38-41. See also I.H. Dalmais, “Théologie de l’église et mystère liturgique dans la Mystagogie de S. Maxime le Confesseur,” *Studia Patristica* 12-13 (1975), p. 145.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40. Boudignon also suggests to identify this Theocharistos with the homonymous signatory on the libellus addressed to the bishops of the Latran council by the four Sabaite hegoumenoi - John of St. Sabas near Jerusalem, Theodore of St. Sabas in Africa, George and Thalassios, abbots of Sabait monasteries in Rome. To this Thalassios, he suggests, Maximus’ *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* were addressed. Accordingly, he concludes



therefore, that the episcopal liturgy he is commenting on and interpreting in the *Mystagogia* is that of Jerusalem, rather than that of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup>

The *ordo* of the eucharistic rite he describes includes the Little, or First Entrance (η πρώτη εισοδος), Lectures, Hymns and Gospel, Dismissal of the Catechumens and closing of the doors, the bishop's descent from his throne, the Entrance of the Mysteries (η δε των αγιων και σεπτων μυστηριων εισοδος), the Kiss of Peace, the Creed, and the distribution of the Mysteries.

This source indicates that by the 7th c., and seemingly even earlier, the Eucharistic rite in Palestine already included a processional transfer of gifts - the Entrance of the Mysteries.<sup>2</sup> It seems that such was not the case in 4<sup>th</sup>c. Palestine, since there is no allusion to such a procession neither in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, nor in the *Itinerary* of Egeria.<sup>3</sup>

Maximus does not mention the route of the procession, just its existence. Where did the procession could have started? In Constantinople, the procession of the Great Entrance began at an external sacristy, adjacent but detached from the church, known as *skeuophylakion* (Gr. for sacristy), and ended at the altar. In Palestine, from the mid-fifth century onwards, chapels were annexed almost regularly to the northern or southern sides of a

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(p. 40): “Cela invite véritablement à supposer une formation de Maxime en Palestine, dans une lauré sabaitique ...”, and p. 41: “Maxime n’était donc très probablement pas constantinopolitain, mais bien palestinien.”

1 Yet, according to Robert Taft – a great authority of Byzantine liturgy (*supra*, note 9), the *Mystagogia* was composed in Constantinople and describes a Constantinopolitan liturgy. However, with regard to the Great Entrance, there is much similarity between the two.

2 The entrances are mentioned in: *Mystagogia* 8 - PG 91, 688; 16 - PG 91, 693; 23 - PG 91,697 and 24 - PG 91, 704-708. See also T.F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park and London 1971, p. 157; R. Taft, *The Great Entrance. A History of the Transfer of Gifts and other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrisostome*, Rome 1975 [*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 200, second edition, Rome 1998], pp. 43-44 and 192-93; and F. E. Brightman, “The Historia Mystagogica, and other Greek Commentaries on the Byzantine Liturgy,” *Journal of Theological Studies* IX (1908), p. 248. Following the common opinion of that time, Mathews and Taft took Maximus Confessor to be Constantinopolitan. Now we know he was Palestinian. A Palestinian liturgy, which acknowledges a processional transfer of gifts in the local, episcopal eucharistic rite, ca. a century earlier than Maximinus, is to be found in a passage of the *Scholia* on Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite attributed to Maximus, which seems actually to be from John Scholasticus, bishop of Scythopolis (ca. 536-550), it is said that only the deacons march in the transfer of gifts procession, and only the *discos* is covered by the veil. The *Scholia* were written between 538 and 543. See: *Scholia* 3, PG 4, 136, 137, 144; Taft, *ibid.* p. 43, note 103. On John of Scythopolis see B. Flusin, *Miracle et Histoire dans l’oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis*, Paris 1983, pp. 17-29, who concluded (p. 28) that the *Scholia* were written between 538 and 543. H.U. von Balthasar, “Das Scholienwerk des Johannes von Skythopolis“, *Scholastik* 15 (1940), pp. 16-38, had demonstrated that most *scholia* on Ps. Dionysios attributed in PG 4 to Maximus the Confessor, were actually the work of John of Scythopolis.

3 Taft, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

basilical church.<sup>1</sup> Such chapels could have played a similar role. As was already suggested by Crowfoot long ago, they should be interpreted as *prothesis* chapels.<sup>2</sup> There the eucharistic offerings were placed and displayed in advance, and from thence they were led in procession to the altar. Such a chapel, on the southern side, is described in the *Testamentum Domini Jesus Christi* as a *diakonikon* (ביתא דמשמשנא – *bit' dmšmšn'* in the Syriac text).<sup>3</sup> According to this text, the *diakonikon*, accessible from the forecourt, formed a south-western annex to the church. It was a room in which the eucharistic offerings were placed for display, presumably on a table or a secondary altar, to be seen, or watched. In another passage (II, 10, pp. 130–131) we read that during the liturgy the deacon brought the oblation (קורבנא – *qwrbn'*) to the altar, where the bishop offered thanks over it. Since the oblation was first displayed in the *diakonikon*,<sup>4</sup> at the other end

1 See: J. Patrich, “Early Christian Churches in the Holy Land”, in: *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, eds. Guy G. Stroumsa and Ora Limor [Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 5]. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006, pp. 355–400.

2 J.W. Crowfoot, ‘The Christian Churches’, in C.H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, New Haven 1938, pp. 175ff.; idem, *Early Churches of Palestine*, London 1941.

3 Ed. Rahmani, l.19, pp. 22–27 = ed. Vööbus 1975, Syriac text – pp. 10–11; Eng. tr. – pp. 33–34. The *Testamentum Domini Jesus Christi* is a mid-fifth-century set of Early Christian regulations attributed to Clement of Rome, the disciple of St. Peter, but presumably of Syrian origin, originally written in Greek, but preserved only in a seventh-century Syriac translation. See J. Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, MD 1950), pp. 185–86. Although there is hardly a single church that can match the prescriptions of the *Testamentum Domini* to the last detail (seemingly a recommended ideal, rather than a normative-realistic prescription), it is clear enough that they best accord with the contemporary churches of the Holy Land, while the churches of northern or eastern Syria, Illyricum, the Aegean world, or Constantinople are in disaccord with them on many points. In the churches of Syria annexes may occur, but always adjacent to the church-head, either as an elaborate *martyrium*, sacristy, or baptistry. Similar is the case in the northern part of Transjordan, within the Province of Arabia. On the other hand, side rooms and chapels, generally on the north, are very common in all three provinces of Palaestina and in the central and southern sectors of Arabia – in Gerasa, Madaba, and Nebo. The chapel annexed on the north to Gaza Jabaliyeh – a mono-apsidal basilica with an apsidal *martyrium* at the end of the northern aisle and a rectilinear *martyrium* at the eastern end of the southern aisle – is of particular interest. It has a rectangular sanctuary on the east and on the west, a kind of ante-chamber, separated from the chapel by a screen with an offering table, on which the faithful could place their offerings. Two openings in the southern wall communicate between the chapel and the basilica, and two other, in the northern wall, enable access to the baptistry. The chapel is referred to by the excavators as *diakonikon*. See J. B. Humbert et al., *Gaza Méditerranéenne: Histoire et archéologie en Palestine* (Paris 2000), pp. 121–25; C. Saliou, ‘Gaza dans l’Antiquité tardive: Nouveaux documents épigraphiques’, *Revue Biblique*, 107 (2000), 390–411.

4 Literally, *diakonikon* is simply the place of the deacons. In other literary sources, and in some inscriptions, it designates rooms of various functions, where deacons were in office (mainly baptismal chambers, sacristies, or vestries). Therefore, when speaking of the chamber from which the Great Entrance procession set out, the term *prothesis* is here applied to avoid unnecessary confusion. Later, from the ninth century onwards, *prothesis* denoted the room where the *proskomide* ceremony took place, in which the elements were

of the church and remote from the altar, a transfer of offering over a sizeable distance was required, following the dismissal of the catechumens. A Great Entrance procession is implied by the recommended architectural prescription given in this text. The *Mystagogia* of Maximus the Confessor indicates that such a procession formed part of the Palestinian rite in the seventh c.

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arranged and blessed before being brought to the altar, but in that late period, in Greek Orthodox churches this *prothesis* room was located to the north of the apse, beyond the *ikonostasis*, unlike the *prothesis* chapel in our discussion.