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Psalter [Psalms 105-137]
In Greek, manuscript on parchment
[Greece, Constantinople, c. 1200-1250]

36 ff., on parchment (misbound, see Text below), written in a calligraphic Greek minuscule hand with numerous elegant abbreviations, on 22 long lines (justification 51 x 38 mm.), ruled in lead point, some prickings still visible, rubrics and capitals set off to the left in red, small drawing of crowned head in brown ink in upper margin of f. 5v. Rebound in a 16th century brown calf binding, with gold tooling on both covers (abraded), corners rounded out, smooth spine, vellum pastedowns, boxed. Dimensions 75/77 x 58 mm. (binding 90 x 65 mm.).

Extremely rare miniature Psalter from the Middle Byzantine period, elegantly written in a fine calligraphic script, and the second smallest Greek Psalter known. Although diminutive books occupy a class in themselves in Byzantine manuscript production, professionally produced in cosmopolitan centers for private devotion in a monastic context and typically unillustrated, they are rarely as tiny as the present example.

TEXT

f. 1, Contains part of Psalm 129 (2-8), incipit, "[...] και γαρ ουκ ηδυνηθησαν μοι...";

ff. 1-1v, Psalm 130 (1-8);

f. 1v, Psalm 131, verse 1 only;

f. 2, Contains verses 124-138 of Psalm 119 (misbound, to be inserted between ff. 30 and 31);

ff. 3-4, Psalm 132 (1-18);

ff. 4-4v, Psalm 133 (1-3);

f. 4v, Psalm 134 (1-3);

ff. 4v-6, Psalm 135 (1-21);

ff. 6-7, Psalm 136 (1-26);

ff. 7-7v, Psalm 137 (1-7), missing verses 8-9, ends "[...] θεμελιων αυτης";

ff. 8-8v, Psalm 106 (38-48), missing verses 1-37, beginning, "[...] Και εξεχεαν...";

ff. 8v-12, Psalm 107 (1-43);

ff. 12-12v, Psalm 108 (1-13);

ff. 13-15, Psalm 109 (1-31);
ff. 15-15v, Psalm 110 (1-7);
ff. 15v-16v, Psalm 111 (1-10);
ff. 16v-17, Psalm 112 (1-10);
ff. 17-17v, Psalm 113 (1-9);
ff. 17v-18, Psalm 114 (1-8);
ff. 18-19v, Psalm 115 (1-18);
f. 19v-20v, Psalm 116 (1-7);
ff. 20v, Psalm 117 (1-2);
ff. 20v-22v, Psalm 118 (1-29);
ff. 22v-33v, Psalm 119 (1-176), missing verses 124-138, folio misbound inserted fol. 2 (see above);
ff. 33v-34, Psalm 120 (1-7);
f. 34, Psalm 121 (1-8);
ff. 34v-35, Psalm 122 (1-9);
f. 35, Psalm 123 (1-4);
f. 35v, Psalm 124 (1-8);
f. 36, Psalm 125 (1-5);
ff. 36-36v, Psalm 126 (1-6), explicit, "[...] τα δράγματα ἁπτῶν" followed by the rubric introducing Psalm 127.

Diminutive manuscripts in Western Europe are extremely rare before the Renaissance. The earliest example known dates from the end of the thirteenth century, and that manuscript (now USA, Private Collection) was perhaps made to hang in a pouch worn around the neck like a relic. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, with the various virtuoso experiments in technique and design, Renaissance bookmakers and illuminators, examples become more common (see especially the Arthur Houghton collection of miniature books, now dispersed, with fine Renaissance examples, New York, Christie's, *Collection of Miniature Books formed by Arthur A. Houghton, Jr.*, 5 December 1979).

For Byzantium, miniature manuscripts are even rarer, according to Annmarie Weyl Carr (pp. 2005, pp. 8-9): "While no abrupt barrier divides such minuscule manuscripts from average ones, they do form a class unto themselves." Weyl Carr attempts to come to terms with questions of production and use. She notes that these manuscripts were objects of private use, much as pocket Western Books of Hours were. They were largely produced in metropolitan centers (e.g., Constantinople) for priests and monks (as can be gleaned from provenance details recorded in the books). She surveys the types of texts, and finds that they are overwhelmingly biblical in content, the Gospels, the New Testament and the Tetraevangelion (from the eleventh century onward), and especially the Psalter, which was recommended as a book of private prayer and contemplation throughout Byzantine history and was never adapted to a ritual of prayer such as occurred in the medieval Divine Office (on the use and illustration of the Psalter in Byzantium, see Vikan, pp. 31-33, plus nos. 20ff.). Most are without figural decoration, although their high-quality script and the presence of decoration confirm a professional rather than amateur production.

In an Appendix to her catalogue, Weyl Carr gives a list of Byzantine manuscripts of small format (from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries). Here it should be noted that what constitutes small format or "diminutive" for Weyl Carr goes from 125 mm. to 69 mm. (height). Among those described, the present manuscript is the second smallest. Only a twelfth-century Psalter in the Trivulzio Library in Milan (Cod. 340; 69 x 56 cm.) is slightly smaller than our example. The next closest is already significantly larger; it is also a twelfth-century Psalter in the British Library (Harley MS 5533; 85 x 60 mm.). In all, Weyl Carr records 85 "diminutive" manuscripts from Byzantium, of which 20 date from the thirteenth century, 7 of which are Psalters. The present example, thus, in spite of its fragmentary nature is evidently incredibly rare.

LITERATURE

Vikan, Gary, ed. *Illuminated Manuscripts from American Collections. An exhibition in honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, Princeton, Princeton University Art Museum, 1973.

Weyl Carr, Annmarie. "Diminutive Byzantine Manuscripts," *Codices Manuscripti* 6/4 (1980), pp. 130-161; reprint *Cyprus and the Devotional Arts of Byzantium in the Era of the Crusades*, London, Ashgate, 2005.

Η ΠΑΛΑΙΑ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ... Vetus Testamentum ex versione Septuaginta interpretum, Secundum Exemplar Vaticanum Romae editum, Tom. II, Trajecti ad rhenum, apud G. Vande Water et J. Van Poolsum, 1725.

ONLINE RESOURCES

4000 Years of Miniature Books (Adomeit Collection, Lilly Library)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/miniatures/adomeit.shtml>