

This is an extract from:

Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents:

A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments

edited by John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero

with the assistance of Giles Constable

Published by

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection

Washington, D.C.

in five volumes as number 35 in the series Dumbarton Oaks Studies

© 2000 Dumbarton Oaks

Trustees for Harvard University

Washington, D.C.

Printed in the United States of America

www.doaks.org/etexts.html

42. *Sabas*: Founder's *Typikon* of the Sabas Monastery near Jerusalem

Date: After 1100¹

Translator: Gianfranco Fiaccadori

Edition employed: Ed. Kurtz, *BZ* 3 (1894), 168–70.

Manuscript: Codex Sinaiticus 1096 (12th c.)²

Other translations: Russian, by A. Dmitrievsky, “Puteshestvie po vostoku,” *TDKA* (January 1890), 170–92, at 178–87; English, by L. Di Segni, in Joseph Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism: A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1995), pp. 274–75.

Institutional History

A. Foundation of the Monastery

The Great Lavra of St. Sabas, also known by its Arabic name of Mar Saba, was founded by its namesake, a Cappadocian ascetic,³ in 483 at a site nine miles southeast of Jerusalem in the generally dry Cedron River valley. His life and works are well known since he was the subject of a *Life* by Cyril of Skythopolis.⁴ Born in 439, Sabas became a disciple of the famous Palestinian monk Euthymios the Great, ca. 456. The Great Lavra supported one hundred fifty communal monks and seventy anchorites. During nearly fifty years as director of this monastic foundation, Sabas also founded or directed three other lavras, six cenobitic monasteries, and three philanthropic institutions.⁵ The so-called New Lavra owes its foundation in 507 to a breakaway group of Origenist monks, who controlled it until 555, shortly after the condemnation of their creed at the Council of Constantinople in 553. Subsequent foundations included the lavra Heptastomos in 512 and the lavra of Jeremias in 531. Sabas, a stalwart champion of Chalcedonian Christianity, died at the Great Lavra in 532.

B. Subsequent History of the Foundation in Medieval Times

Mar Saba survived the death of its founder and played an important part in the intellectual life of Palestine in the sixth century. The founder's biographer, Cyril of Skythopolis, took up residence in the New Lavra after the expulsion of the Origenist monks in 555, then moved to the Great Lavra in 557, where he died a short time later. John Moschos, author of the *Spiritual Garden*, one of the most popular works of ascetic literature, visited the monastery towards the end of the sixth century. Theodore of Sykeon was another famous visitor at this time.

The invasion of Palestine by the Sassanid king Chosroes II (591–628) in 614 provided an opportunity for Arab raiders to sack the monastery and massacre some forty-four monks, later venerated as martyrs. Yet unlike the majority of Palestinian lavras and monasteries, which never recovered from the disruptions accompanying the Persian invasion, Mar Saba was revived and

TWELFTH CENTURY

went on to play an important part in the great theological controversies of the next two centuries during what is called the foundation's Golden Age, 614–843.⁶

The famous iconodule theologian John Damascene was a resident of the Lavra in the first half of the eighth century during the height of the Iconoclastic controversy. From this base, safely out of reach of the imperial authorities, John authored many polemical works against iconoclasm. His adoptive brother Kosmas the Hymnographer was also a Sabaite monk. Towards the end of the eighth century and in the early years of the ninth, Theodore the Studite looked to Palestine for both administrative and liturgical components of his own monastic reform (see above, (4) *Stoudios*, The Studite Monastic Reform, C). Sabaitic chants were imported for use at his Stoudios monastery in Constantinople. In the middle of the tenth century, Paul the Younger, author of (7) *Latros* [8], recommends the observance of rules for fasting set down in the “rule of Jerusalem,” a possible reference to an early version of the liturgical *typikon* of Mar Saba. Finally, the scriptorium of Mar Saba served as a center of manuscript production not only in this era but down to the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Despite Mar Saba's intellectual achievements and influence during this era, the foundation had to contend with many serious threats to its survival. An outbreak of the plague decimated the monastery towards the end of the eighth century, and a great earthquake is reported by the author of the *Life* of St. Stephen the Thaumaturge, a contemporary Sabaite monk, to have led to a serious disruption of monastic life.⁷ These difficulties were followed by a massacre of the monks and the destruction of parts of the facility carried out by Bedouin raiders in 796.

The history of Mar Saba during the era of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099–1187) is not well known at present, yet it was most likely at this time that the surviving versions of the founder's and liturgical *typika* were drawn up. Earlier versions of the latter were likely in circulation on the periphery of the Byzantine Empire in the last decades of the eleventh century, judging from approving citations in such other monastic *typika* as (20) *Black Mountain*, (21) *Roidion*, and (24) *Christodoulos* (see Analysis below). After Saladin's reconquest of Jerusalem following the Battle of Hattin in 1187, there was another massacre of the monks at Mar Saba, and parts of the monastery were destroyed, though the church and tomb of St. Sabas were spared.

The prestige of Mar Saba's liturgical *typikon* in Byzantium itself was at its height in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Yet sometime before 1440, it was abandoned by the surviving community of Greek monks, who could no longer endure the incessant raids of neighboring nomadic tribes. It stood deserted for nearly a hundred years.⁸

*C. Later History of the Foundation down to Modern Times*⁹

Life at Mar Saba may have been revived under the superior Joachim in 1540, who is said to have assembled a community of some fifty Greek monks. Another tradition has the monastery coming under Serbian control. Under Ottoman rule, Mar Saba received protective firmans from several sultans, including Suleiman I (1533 and 1537), Selim II (1568), Mehmet III (1601), and Ahmed I (1605). Selim II even permitted the monks to bear arms to defend themselves against local Muslim tribesmen. In 1623, however, burdened by debts and menaced with expropriation, the Serbians sought to sell the facility to the local Armenian Christian community. The Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem, intervened, however, and successfully negotiated to buy Mar Saba in 1625.

Frequent Bedouin raids continued to trouble the foundation under its new owners for the balance of the seventeenth century. In 1688, Dositheos, the Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem, obtained permission from the Ottoman authorities to carry out a complete restoration of the facility. The eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, were also extremely troubled, marked by Bedouin incursions, pillages, and massacres. At the end of the nineteenth century, Vailhé (“Saint-Sabas,” p. 334) gloomily reported the lack of interest of the monks then resident at the foundation in scholarship or manual labor. Under the circumstances, therefore, the survival of Mar Saba down to our own times must be considered a prodigious achievement.

Surviving on the site are: the principal church of the Annunciation, dedicated by Sabas in 501 but much restored over the centuries; a church of St. Nicholas; the tomb of St. Sabas located between these two churches; a small chapel of St. John Damascene; and a refectory.¹⁰ The relics of St. Sabas, which had been taken to Venice in the Crusader era, were returned to Mar Saba by Pope Paul VI in 1965. As late as 1834, the monastery’s library had more than 1,000 manuscripts. Although many of these have since been dispersed to various European libraries, a rich collection still survives locally at the Greek patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Analysis

This brief founder’s *typikon*, written for a dual-nationality (Greek and Syriac) monastery, was (and remains) considerably less well known than the very famous liturgical *typikon* associated with this monastery that was recommended by eleven of the authors of the documents in our collection over the course of five centuries.¹¹ As one of the most famous monasteries in Christendom’s holiest destination for pilgrims, the Sabas lavra was in an ideal position for propagating its liturgical and dietary traditions. Of the three documents that represent other institutions that were apparently way-stations on the great pilgrimage route to Jerusalem or served as destinations in their own right, two, (21) *Roidion* [B2] and (34) *Machairas* [118], also endorse the Sabaitic liturgical *typikon*, and the third, (45) *Neophytos* [20], cf. [10] may have used it as well.

A. Lives of the Monks

The document does not specify the number of monks, but eunuchs and beardless youths were [1] inadmissible. A priest was specially assigned [3] for the performance of the vigil service in honor of the patron in the saint’s shrine. The community included [3], [7] both monks who lived together in the lavra and solitaires (called here *hesychastai*).¹² The monks were permitted [3] to leave the monastery once a month during the week for certain unspecified personal business, subject to the approval of either the superior or the ecclesiarch. The solitaires were to join [7] the community for vigils but not for the other commemorations of the saints. They were strictly forbidden to make appearances in the towns and villages. Iberians (Georgians), Syrians (Arab Christians), Franks (Latin Crusaders),¹³ presumably present in the monastery as visitors, were allowed [2] to sing the office and selected psalms, and were then to join the assembled brotherhood in the Great Church.

The discussion of violent disciplinary problems has no parallel in monastic foundation documents from Byzantium proper, though in the early twelfth century there was an increasing interest in penal discipline (cf. (34) *Machairas* [122] ff. and (45) *Neophytos* [CB1] ff.). Fighting was punished [5] with expulsion for those participants who refused to be reconciled with one another.

Those monks who got drunk, used abusive language, resorted to violence, or made (presumably disruptive) “associations and unions” were subject [6] to correction or expulsion. Monks caught cheating in their ministries were to be punished with confinement in their cells except at services and prayers.

Sexual precautions were stricter than elsewhere. In addition to the traditional (though by no means universal) exclusion [1] of eunuchs and youths from the community,¹⁴ the document denies women access to the main monastery or its principal dependency, even for prayer. Moreover, monks were generally to have no relations with women, not excluding serving as godfathers to them, or with nuns, not even for hearing their confessions.

B. Constitutional Matters

Although there is no discussion of the foundation’s own constitutional status, the denial of proprietary rights to the monks over individual cells suggests [4] a strong tendency to privatize institutional property. Monks could not bequeath to their disciples their cells either in the lavra or the dependency without the superior’s consent, nor, should they be promoted by the patriarch of Jerusalem to the rank of metropolitan, bishop, any other patriarchal office, or become the superior of another monastery, could they sell or donate them to someone else.

C. Financial Matters

A practical division of offices reserved [9] the office of superior for the Greek monks but left the offices of steward, treasurer, and the rest to be filled by Syrians since they were thought to be “more efficient and practical in their native country.”

D. External Relations

The document permits [8] seven days of hospitality to (presumably distinguished) guests, which is fairly generous compared to the three days allowed in (21) *Roidion* [B2] or in (34) *Machairas* [118]. The authors of (24) *Christodoulos* [A3] in the late eleventh century and of (45) *Neophytos* [4] in the late twelfth century must have been the beneficiaries of similar hospitality during their extended pilgrimages to the Holy Land (see also the pilgrimage plans of the superior designee in (25) *Fragala* [B10]). At the Sabas monastery, however, local residents and visitors coming for worship (= ordinary pilgrims?) were limited to the more usual three days of hospitality on grounds of “the large crowd of poor arriving daily.”

Notes on the Introduction

1. The dating proposed is for the final version of the text as it has come down to us, including the reference to “the Franks” in [2]. If the latter is indeed an interpolation, as Kurtz, *BZ* 3 (1894), p. 168, endorsed by Fiaccadori, “Proleitourgia,” p. 39, indicated in the foreword to his edition, then the base text may be considerably older.
2. See R. Taft, “Mount Athos: A Late Chapter in the History of the Byzantine Rite,” *DOP* 42 (1988), p. 187, n. 79. As noted in Fischer, “Typikon,” p. 307, Albert Ehrhard identified the unpublished Codex Coislinianus 295, fols. 218–52 (14th c.), entitled “*Testament of the blessed and holy fathers Sabas the Great and Theodosios the Koinobiarch concerning the life of monks . . .*,” as a longer version of the

- founder's *typikon* translated here, but this may only be another of the many manuscripts of the popular liturgical *typikon* associated with this monastery.
3. See Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 101–18; E. Hoade, “Sabas, SS.,” *NCE*, vol. 12 (Washington, D.C., 1967), pp. 775–76; Alexander Kazhdan and Nancy Ševčenko, “Sabas,” *ODB*, p. 1823; and Vailhé, “Saint-Sabas,” pp. 335–41.
 4. Cyril of Skythopolis, *Vita Sabae*, ed. Ed. Schwartz, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig, 1939), pp. 85–200 (= Halkin, *BHG* 1608); French translation by A.-J. Festugière, *Les moines d'Orient*, vol. 3, pt. 2: *Les moines de Palestine* (Paris, 1962); English translation by R. M. Price and J. Binns, *Cyril of Scythopolis: Lives of the Monks of Palestine* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1991).
 5. See the list in Vailhé, “Saint-Sabas,” p. 339.
 6. For details, see Vailhé, “Saint-Sabas,” pp. 21–24.
 7. *Vita S. Stephani Sabaitae Thaumaturgi*, chaps. 31, 173, *AASS*, vol. 3, July, pp. 516, 576.
 8. Vailhé, “Saint-Sabas,” p. 171.
 9. See Vailhé, “Saint-Sabas,” pp. 168–76 for details.
 10. Vailhé, “Saint-Sabas,” pp. 333–34; Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 68–76, 193, 283.
 11. The liturgical *typikon* is recommended in the tenth century by (7) *Latros* [8]; in the eleventh century by (20) *Black Mountain* [3], [8], [14], [19], [21], [22], [23], [29], [31], [63], [66], [89], [92], by (21) *Roidion* [B20], and by (24) *Christodoulos* [A17], cf. [B3]; in the twelfth century by (26) *Luke of Messina* [10]; in the thirteenth century by (34) *Machairas* [75], by (37) *Auxentios* [10] and by (39) *Lips* [24], [29], [30], [31], [32]; and in the fourteenth century by (56) *Kellibara II* [1], by (57) *Bebaia Elpis* [78], [80], and by (58) *Menoikeion* [4], [16].
 12. In the late eleventh century these appear also in (24) *Christodoulos* [A24] and in the thirteenth century in (34) *Machairas* [152] and (37) *Auxentios* [11].
 13. (21) *Roidion* [B3] is another instance of the less favorable treatment accorded to Frankish pilgrims.
 14. Cf. the ban on eunuchs in the twelfth century in (29) *Kosmosoteira* [3]; but eunuch monks were desired in the late eleventh century in (19) *Attaleiates* [30] and welcomed even in (29) *Kosmosoteira* [55] if they were large donors; youths are banned in (10) *Eleousa* [17] and in the twelfth century in (29) *Kosmosoteira* [49], but are encouraged in the thirteenth century in (36) *Blemmydes* [9].

Bibliography

- Beck, Hans-Georg, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), p. 397.
- Dmitrievsky, A. *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rykopisei*, vol. 3: *Typika*, pt. 2 (Petrograd, 1917), pp. 1–508. Provides details of 135 manuscripts of the famous liturgical *typikon* of St. Sabas.
- Ehrhard, Albert, “Das griechische Kloster Mâr-Saba in Palästina: seine Geschichte und seine literarischen Denkmäler,” *RQ* 7 (1893), 32–79.
- Fiaccadori, Gianfranco, “Proleitorgia,” *La Parola del Passato* 44 (1989), 39–40.
- Fischer, W., “Zu dem Typikon des hl. Sabas,” *BZ* 8 (1899), 306–11.
- Griffith, Sidney, “Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas: Arabic in the Monasteries of Palestine,” *CH* 58 (1989), 7–19.
- , “The Monks of Palestine and the Growth of Christian Literature in Arabic,” *Muslim World* 78 (1988), 1–28.
- Leroy, Jules, *Moines et monastères du Proche-Orient* (Paris, 1957), pp. 95–106.
- MacCoull, Leslie, “Sabas, Great Lavra of,” *ODB*, pp. 1823–24.
- Pandurski, Vasil, “Prep. Sava Osveshcheni-osnovolozhnik na Ierusalemiskiia Ustav,” *Godishnik na Duchovnata Akademiya Sv. Kliment Okhridski* 6 (32), 11 (1956–57), 425–49.
- Papadopoulos, Chrysostomos, “Hai diataxeis tou hagiou Saba,” *EP* 20 (1921), 139–45.
- Patrich, Joseph, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism: A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1995). Published too late for use by the editors of this volume.

TWELFTH CENTURY

Phokylides, Ioannes, *He hiera Laura Saba tou heghiasmenou* (Alexandria, 1927).

Vailhé, Siméon, "Le monastère de Saint-Sabas," *EO* 2 (1898–99), 332–41; 3 (1899–1900), 18–28, 168–77.

Vailhé, Siméon, "Les écrivains de Mar-Saba," *EO* 2 (1898–99), 1–11, 33–47.

Volk, Robert, *Gesundheitswesen und Wohltätigkeit im Spiegel der byzantinischen Klostertypika* (Munich, 1983), pp. 60–61.

Translation

Rule, Tradition and Law of the Venerable Lavra of St. Sabas

[1.] The decrees of our holy and blessed father Sabas are to be observed: neither a eunuch nor a beardless youth shall possibly be admitted to the Lavra; nor women be allowed, for the purpose of praying, to enter the Lavra or even the dependency or, what is more, the second door of the great dependency.¹ Any monk of the Lavra who is discovered either going into a convent [p. 169] and eating, drinking and staying therein (be it for depositing something on the pretext of safekeeping, or cutting the nuns' hair, or hearing confessions), or else carrying on correspondence with a woman, or indeed having any relations whatsoever with women, or even spiritual relationships, let him be expelled from the brotherhood as a cause of scandal not only to Christians but also to Gentiles.

[2.] Nor shall it be permitted that the Iberians, or the Syrians, or the Franks celebrate a complete liturgy in their churches. Let them instead gather over there, and sing the canonical hours and selected verses from the psalms in their own language, and read the Apostle and the Gospel as well, and then go to the Great Church and take part in the divine, undefiled, and life-giving sacraments together with the whole brotherhood.

[3.] The service of the vigil at the Saint's shrine shall be performed by a priest assigned to it.² Because of the impending vigil, no one at all shall be entitled to leave the Lavra on Saturday, unless it is unavoidable and to the advantage of the common good. But let him go and attend to his task after the vigil, subject to the consent of either the superior or the ecclesiarch. Should he turn out to be absent from the subsequent vigil, let him be deprived of everything, since the whole preceding week was sufficient for him to carry out his business; which, if possible, should be [done only] once a month. Those who leave for the hermitages and those who are residing therein, as long as they do this with the will and blessing of the superior, let them receive what they need. If they left arbitrarily and without permission, let them not be admitted on their return.

[4.] Whoever by the providence of God and the will of the patriarch has been promoted metropolitan or bishop or superior of another monastery or even to a dignity of any rank in the Great Church, let him no longer have authority over his cells in the Lavra or in the dependency either simply to sell or to donate them. Let these instead be under the authority of the holy monastic community, and be granted by the superior to other worthy brethren in need of them. This must be strictly observed also in the case of those who die. No one shall have the power, without the approval and consent of the superior, to leave his own cell to his disciple.

[5.] Should any dissension arise among some of the brethren, and wickedness so prevail that they beat each other and come to blows, if they are not reconciled and live again in brotherly love, let them be expelled from the monastic community as troublemakers and opponents of the commandment of Christ. In fact as the Apostle says, “The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome” (II Tim. 2:24).

[6.] Whoever of the brethren shall be found inebriated and using violence or showering abuse upon anyone, or associating and keeping company with others, let that one be either corrected or expelled. Likewise, whoever shall be found cheating in his ministry, let him be dismissed from it and thus punished for the sake of correction and repentance and never leave his cell except at the prescribed hours of the religious services and prayers.

[7.] As for those who want to lead a solitary life, and yet refuse either to go to church or, at the same time, to be completely isolated, we wish them to join the others only in the vigils, and be strictly excluded both from the commemorations of the saints and from any other public appearance in towns and villages [p. 170], inasmuch as contemplation profits by works rather than by words.

[8.] As for guests coming from outside, should any of them have a mind to strike roots into the Lavra, we shall offer them hospitality and rest for seven days. If they are from among those who are either living in the town or visiting as worshipers, even three days will be enough for their physical refreshment, given the large crowd of poor arriving daily.

[9.] Since in the act of the nomination of the superiors pernicious demons are accustomed to raise disagreements and divisions between the two languages (I mean between Romans and Syrians), in order to get rid of this scandal, we ordain that no Syrian should be appointed to the office of superior; but we both decide and accept that Syrians, being more efficient and practical in their native country, should be preferred for the stewardship and treasurership as well as for other ministries.

Notes on the Translation

1. Identification of these dependencies is uncertain, but see Vailhé, “Saint-Sabas,” p. 339, for a list of lavras and cenobitical monasteries associated with the foundation in the sixth century.
2. Cf. (19) *Attaleiates* [31], with the discussion of this passage by Fiaccadori, “Proleitorgia,” pp. 39–40.

Document Notes

- [1] Ban on eunuchs and beardless youths; no access for or relations with women. For exclusion of eunuchs and youths, see also (3) *Theodore Studites* [18]; (12) *Tzimiskes* [16]; (13) *Ath. Typikon* [34], [48]; (15) *Constantine IX* [1]; (29) *Kosmosoteira* [3], [49], [50]; (59) *Manuel II* [13], [15]; and (60) *Charsianeites* [C2]. For restrictions on relations with women, see also (3) *Theodore Studites* [9], [15], [16]; (22) *Evergetis* [39]; (26) *Luke of Messina* [3]; (29) *Kosmosoteira* [56], [84]; (30) *Phoberos* [55]; (32) *Mamas* [27]; (33) *Heliou Bomon* [27]; (34) *Machairas* [115]; (45) *Neophytos* [19]; (53) *Meteora* [7]; (58) *Menoikeion* [14]; and (60) *Charsianeites* [C2].
- [2] Limited liturgical privileges for non-Greek Christians. Cf. restrictions on Greek Christians in (23) *Pakourianos* [24].

TWELFTH CENTURY

- [3] Obligation of attendance at the Saturday vigil service. For this vigil service, see also (44) *Karyes* [10], [11]; cf. the critical attitude found in (20) *Black Mountain* [20] and (27) *Kosmosoteira* [11].
- [4] No proprietary rights for monks over their cells. Cf. (21) *Roidion* [B15], [B17] in which these previously established rights are challenged.
- [5] Punishment for fighting. See also (60) *Charsianeites* [B6]; cf. the prohibition of arguments over seating precedence in (22) *Evergetis* [9] and related documents.
- [6] Punishment for other disciplinary problems. Improper friendships and administrative corruption are also punished in (22) *Evergetis* [9], [42] and related documents.
- [7] Limitations on participation of solitaries in the community. Cf. the arrangements made for solitaries in (12) *Tzimiskes* [12], [18], [20]; (13) *Ath. Typikon* [37], cf. [43]; (24) *Christodoulos* [A24]; and (34) *Machairas* [152].
- [8] Limitations on hospitality to guests. See similar provisions in (21) *Roidion* [B2] and (60) *Charsianeites* [C4]; cf. (34) *Machairas* [118].
- [9] Reservation of the superiorship for Greeks and other offices for Syrians. Cf. the exception to the general exclusion of Greeks in (23) *Pakourianos* [24] for a secretary “knowing how to write and send the opinion of the superior to the rulers of the time . . .”