

Mary the Doorkeeper – On the History of the Miraculous Image of the Theotokos in the Complex of the Holy Sepulchre

Since the Early Byzantine period St. Mary of Egypt has been one of the most important local saints of the Holy Land, and her miraculous story was for centuries recounted in front of pilgrims who came to Jerusalem. In this paper I would like to argue that the location of the miracle performed on St. Mary of Egypt, which is inextricably linked with the main door of the church, can serve as an indicator of the location of the major entrance to the Holy Sepulchre complex. The main entrance to the church was shifted a number of times over the centuries and its exact location at any point in time is not always clear. Locating the hagiographical tradition of St. Mary of Egypt within the Holy Sepulchre complex can provide additional information relating to its convoluted architectural history.

But first I would like to clarify that neither do I aim to question the veracity of the described miracle, nor do I claim the uninterrupted existence of a single image preserved from the time of Luke to the present day. I leave these matters to the field of faith. I do not claim the existence of one specific painting that was moved over the centuries within the Holy Sepulchre or elsewhere. Instead I concentrate my efforts on tracking a specific phenomenon (connected to a certain image within the Holy Sepulchre complex) and its physical location within a continually changing church. This tradition, no matter its historical veracity, has been upheld without interruption to the present day*.

The *Vita* of St. Mary of Egypt and the Atrium of the Martyrium Basilica of Constantine

According to her *Vita*, St. Mary of Egypt (Ἡ Ὁσία Μαρία ἡ Αἰγυπτία, Mary the Egyptian or Maria Aegyptiaca) was born in a small place in Egypt in the fourth or fifth century¹. At twelve she left her parents' home for Alexandria driven by a hyper-sexuality disorder, as implied by the text. After some time she joined a group of male pilgrims who were heading to Jerusalem for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and arrived in the Holy Land looking for new sources of male

companionship. But her life changed dramatically on the day of the Exaltation of the Cross, bringing to her repentance:

»When the holy feast of the Exaltation of the Cross came [...], at early dawn I saw everybody hurrying to the church (ἐκκλησία) and off I went, running along with those who were running. So, I came with them to the courtyard of the church (the basilica's atrium, οἴκου προαύλια). When the time came for the divine Exaltation <of the Cross>, I tried to join the crowd and force my way to the entrance, pushing <my way> forward but being pushed back. Eventually, with great trouble and grief – wretched woman <that I am> – I approached the door through which one entered the church (the door of the temple, αὐτὸν τὸν ναόν) where the life-giving cross was displayed. But as soon as I stepped on the threshold of the door (the doorstep, θύρας), all the other people entered unhindered, while some kind of divine power held me back, not allowing me to pass the entrance <of the church>. Once more I was pushed back and forth, finding myself again standing alone in the courtyard (in the atrium, προαύλια). [...] After this happened three or four times, I became fatigued and no longer had the strength to push and be pushed back, for my body was exhausted as a result of my violent effort. So, I gave up and went back and stood at the corner of the courtyard of the church (in a corner of the atrium, προαύλια). Only then did I realize the cause which prevented me from laying eyes on the life-giving cross, for a salvic word touched the eyes of my heart, showing me that it was the filth of my actions that was barring the entrance for me. [...] As I was crying, I saw the icon of the all-holy Mother of God (εἰκόνα τῆς παναγίας Θεοτόκου) standing above the place where I stood. I looked straight at Her and said, Ὤ Virgin Lady, Though Who didst give flesh to God the Word by birth, [...] help me, a lone woman who has no one to help her. Command that I, too, may be allowed to enter the church (τὴν εἴσοδον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας). Do not deprive me of <the opportunity of> seeing the cross on which God, to Whom Thou gavest birth, was crucified in the flesh [...]. Command, my Lady, that the door (the doorstep, θύραν) may be opened also to me, that I may venerate the divine cross. [...] < [...] As soon as I spoke these words [...] I moved from

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¹ Cross/Livingstone, Dictionary 884; Farmer, Dictionary 271; Kouli in Sophronius, Life 66-67.

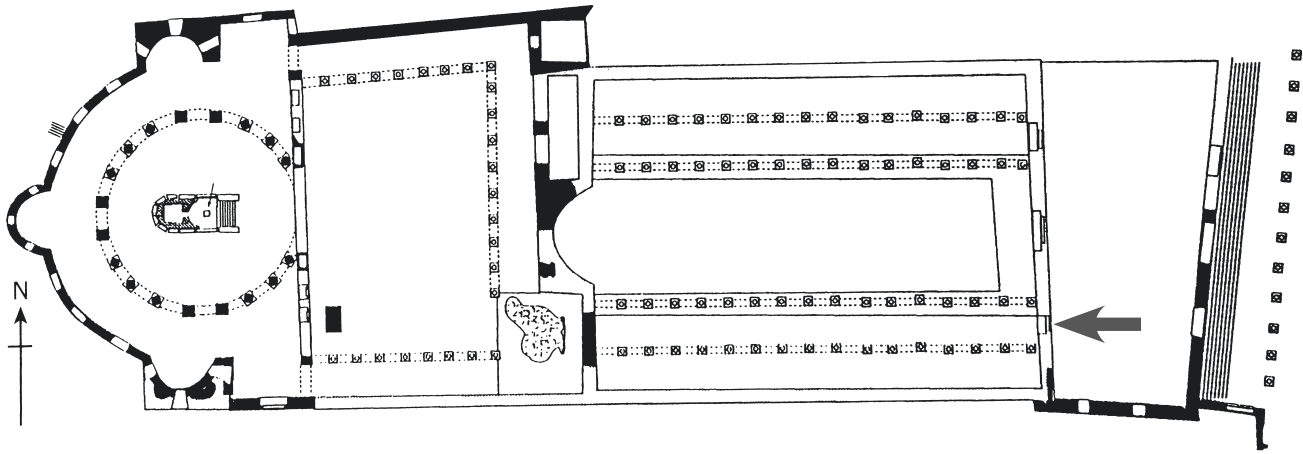


Fig. 1 Holy Sepulchre Complex, fourth century. – (From Corbo, Santo Sepolchro tab. 3).

that place where I stood praying, and returned and joined those people who were entering <the church>. No longer did anyone push me and that, nor did anyone prevent me from approaching the door (the doorstep, θύρας) through which they entered the church (the temple, ναόν). [...] Then I reached the door (the doorstep, θύραν) that until then had been barred to me [...]. In this way I entered <the church> without any effort. Thus I found myself inside the Holy <of Holies>, and I was deemed worthy to see the life-giving cross [...]. [...] After I kissed the holy ground, I rushed out to Her, Who had stood as guarantor for me. So I came to that place where the bond of guarantee was signed and, kneeling in front of the ever-virgin Mother of God, I said the following words: »O my Lady, [...] be the teacher of my salvation and guide me toward the path which leads to repentance. < While I was saying these words, I heard someone crying aloud from afar, »If you cross the <river> Jordan, you shall find a place of repose.< [...] Having cried out these words, I came out of the courtyard of the church and hurried away. [Subsequently, St. Mary of Egypt left Jerusalem, crossed the river Jordan and lived in the wilderness until her death some 47 years later]«².

What matters most for the purposes of this paper is the exact placement of the miracle described in the text, which is clear and consistent in its architectural details. The event took place in the »atrium of the basilica« (οίκου προαύλια), there Mary of Egypt managed to squeeze up to the door of the

temple (αυτόν τον ναόν) where the lifegiving Tree of the Cross was being shown to the people. She was stopped on its very doorstep (θύρας). The icon of the Theotokos, which talked to the sinful woman, hung above the crowd's heads not far from this very door, in the corner of the atrium (whether this refers to the right or the left corner is unclear).

This information can be translated into architectural reality. Although it is not clear from the *Vita* when St. Mary of Egypt visited Jerusalem (fourth, fifth or even sixth century?), the complex as it is described is without doubt that of Constantine³. A detailed description of the original Holy Sepulchre complex consecrated in 335 is given by Eusebius in his »Life of Constantine«⁴. It consisted of two major parts: the Rotonda of the Anastasis, built around the Holy Tomb with an open courtyard in front (an inner atrium), and the huge Martyrium basilica with its own entrance courtyard (an outer atrium), which people entered from the *cardo* at the east end of the complex⁵. The »three doors well placed to face the sunrise received the crowds flowing in« of Eusebius' description should be understood as those through which the crowd entered the basilica from the outer atrium, the one referred to in the story of Maria Aegyptiaca.

So, the specific location of the events as described in St. Mary of Egypt's *Vita* can be located very precisely within the Constantinian complex of the Holy Sepulchre – the place within the outer atrium, a courtyard that connected the en-

2 Sophronius, *Vita* 22-25 (3712-3716 Migne). The Greek text of the *Vita* (BHG 1042) was edited by Migne (1863). The English translation is from Sophronius, *Life*, here 82-84. The Greek terms, given in parentheses, are from Migne's text, some preceded by (my own) more precise translations of architectural terms.

3 Egeria's itinerary, written in c. 380, confirms that during the celebration on the first day of the Exaltations of the Cross, that took place in the Martyrium basilica, variety of people came from all nearby provinces, including lay women from Egypt; Egeria 48-49 (trans. Wilkinson 146-147).

4 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine III* 33-39 (trans. Cameron/Hall 133-137): »As the principal item he [Constantine] first of all decked out the sacred cave. [...] He then went on to a very large space wide open to the fresh air [...]. On the

side opposite the cave, which looked towards the rising sun, was connected the royal temple, an extraordinary structure raised to an immense height and very extensive in length and breadth. [...] Three doors well placed to face the sunrise received the crowds flowing in. [...] For those going on from there to the entrances situated at the front of the shrine, another open space awaited them. Arcades stood there on either hand, a first court and colonnades beyond, and finally the gates of the court. Beyond these, right in the middle of the open square, the porticoes forming the entrance to the whole, beautifully wrought, offered to those passing outside a striking view of what was to be seen within«.

5 Corbo, *Santo Sepolcro*; Patrich, *Holy Sepulchre*; Biddle, *Tomb 53-73*; Krüger, *Grabeskirche* 38-71.

trance from the *cardo* to the Holy Sepulchre complex from the East, and specifically to the entrance door from the atrium to the Martyrium basilica (fig. 1).

Not only is the exact date of Maria Aegyptiaca's visit to Jerusalem unknown but also when and by whom her *Vita* was recorded. Traditionally, its authorship is ascribed to Sophronius, who was Patriarch of Jerusalem (634-638) after Modestus, towards the middle of the seventh century, which would mean it was composed more than 200 years after the time it describes.

The earliest evidence for the existence of the tradition connecting a specific image of the Holy Virgin with the story of St. Mary of Egypt within the Holy Sepulchre complex can be found in the itinerary of the Piacenza Pilgrim (c. 570, some 70 years before the suggested date of composition of the *Vita*)⁶. Here »a portrait of Blessed Mary on a raised place« is mentioned⁷. Unfortunately, this evidence is unclear and does not allow for a reconstruction of the exact location of the icon inside the church building. However, the Piacenza Pilgrim lists the miraculous icon among the other relics – starting with the wood of the Cross and other Passion relics, the Last Supper cup and two more Marian relics – putting them »in the same place« (in Wilkinson's translation or simply »there«, *ibi*, in the Latin original), where »there« can be interpreted both as a specific room or as the church complex in general. Numerous interpretations are possible. One is that all the listed relics, including the icon, were concentrated in one place, namely in a specific relic room (*cubiculum*) in the outer atrium of the basilica where the Cross relics were kept and taken out for veneration in the atrium. Another is that they were divided between two relic rooms mentioned in the »Short Account of Jerusalem« (*Breviarius de Hierosolyma*) of the early sixth century⁸. *Breviarius* version A makes a distinction between two relic rooms – first, a chamber with the relics of the True Cross on the left side of the outer atrium of the Basilica of Constantine (corresponding to the description of the Piacenza Pilgrim – »in the courtyard of the basilica is a small room where they keep the Wood of the Cross«), and second, the *sacrarium* situated inside the Basilica of Constantine, where the reed, the sponge, and the cup are stored (the icon of St. Mary is not mentioned in either of them)⁹. A third possibility,

suggested by an anonymous reader of this paper, posits that there were three different sacristies within the sixth century Holy Sepulchre complex – one for the Cross, a second for the Passion relics, and a third chamber in an unspecified location for Marian relics (including her girdle and the icon discussed). The first mention of the St. Mary the Egyptian miracle icon within the church complex by the Piacenza Pilgrim leaves us only with speculations. I suggest that it is possible that the icon was kept inside or on the wall of the *cubiculum* where the cross (and other?) relics were kept in the outer/eastern atrium of the Martyrium basilica. This location is in tune with the narrative of the miracle as described in Sophronius' *Vita*, which may be considered a further source supporting this location – this one unquestionably clear and repetitive in its architectural nuance. I strongly suggest that prior to the seventh century, the icon was located somewhere near the main entrance to the church complex which would correspond to the miraculous narrative (and to the continuous history of the miraculous icon, hung high enough to remain safe and be visible from the main entrance) and that at that time it was still the eastern portal leading to the Martyrium basilica via the outer atrium from the *cardo*.

Yet other plausible interpretation, based on the description in the *Breviarius* of two (or even three) different relic rooms, suggests that the icon at the time of the Piacenza Pilgrim was placed somewhere in the inner atrium¹⁰. This location is in tune with the next stage of the development of the legendary presence within the Holy Sepulchre church. As I argue in the following, there is reason to believe that the location of the legend and the main entrance to the church complex moved to the southern portal during the seventh century.

Location at the Southern Portal Following the Restoration Works of Modestus

Later evidence, from the second half of the seventh century onwards locates the miraculous spot in a different place within the Holy Sepulchre complex – at the southern portal.

I suggest that Arculf's account, as recorded by Adomnan in about 670, describes the place connected to the image

6 Wilkinson, *Pilgrims* 83 n. 32; 177 n. b; Pringle, *Churches* 14.

7 Piacenza Pilgrim 18-20 (trans. Wilkinson 83): »[...] We entered the Holy City and venerated the Lord's Tomb. [...] From the Tomb it is eighty paces to Golgotha. [...] From Golgotha it is fifty paces to the place where the Cross was discovered, which is in the Basilica of Constantine, which adjoins the tomb and Golgotha. In the courtyard of the basilica is a small room where they keep the Wood of the Cross. [...] The title is also there which they placed over the Lord's head, on which they wrote 'This is the King of the Jews'. [...] At the moment when the Cross is brought out of this small room for veneration [it] arrives in the court to be venerated [...]. [...] In that place are also the sponge and reed [...] and also the onyx cup which he blessed at the Supper, and many other marvellous things beside: a portrait of Blessed Mary on a raised place, her girdle, and the band which she used to have on her head«.

8 *Breviarius* 1-3, Version A (trans. Wilkinson 59-60): »In the centre of the city is the Basilica of Constantine. As one goes into the basilica itself there is a chamber on the left in which has been placed the Cross of the Lord. From there you go into the Church of St. Constantine. [...] And going from there into Golgotha there is a great court where the Lord was crucified. [...] To the west of this place one enters the Holy Resurrection which contains the Tomb of the Lord. [...] Then one goes into the sacrarium of the Basilica of St. Constantine. A chamber is there which contains the Reed and the Sponge, and the Cup which the Lord blessed and gave his disciples to drink [...]«.

9 Pringle, *Churches* 9 does not accept the existence of two relic rooms even in his reading of the *Breviarius* and claims all the relics were kept at the same sacristy room.

10 This is especially true if the »seven marble seats for the elders« mentioned in *Breviarius* are understood as the Martyrium's synthronon.

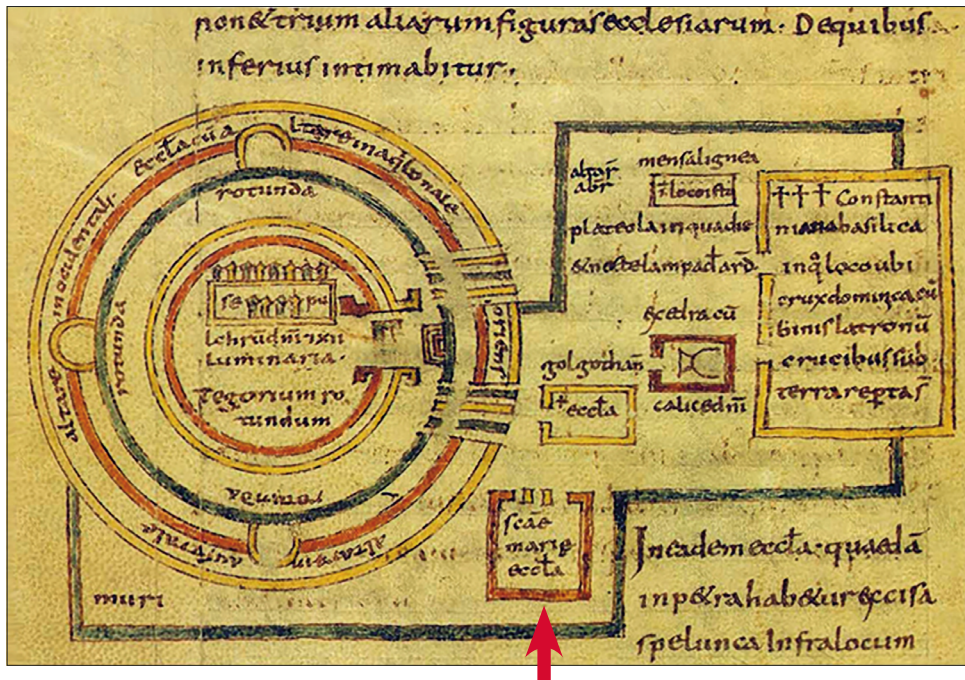


Fig. 2 Arculf's Plan of the Holy Sepulchre Complex as it was in the seventh century, Adomnan, *De locis sanctis* (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 458, fol. 4v, 9th c.). – (From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rotunda,_Adomanan_de_locis_santis.jpg [Public domain]).

of the Theotokos that spoke to St. Mary the Egyptian even without mentioning the image explicitly¹¹. I suggest that the »Church of Saint Mary the Lord's Mother« mentioned and depicted by Arculf south of Golgotha (that in his time was already covered with a »huge church«) is connected to the tradition of the icon of St. Mary of Egypt. To make my point, more argumentation from the next source should be added.

Epiphanius the monk (most probably in the late eighth or ninth century), while describing the same place, adds more detail to this somewhat complicated arrangement¹². In order to understand better the direction of both descriptions, the diagram of Arculf (fig. 2) should be examined. The viewpoint described in both texts is today's southern gate. Arculf's »rectangular church of Saint Mary the Lord's Mother« as well as the »the icon of the very holy Theotokos, who forbade Saint Mary to enter the church« of Epiphanius, are located at the same spot – »next to the Anastasis and on its right« by Arculf and »on the left side of Saint Constantine« by Epiphanius. The diagram also clearly shows that the place associated with Mary is situated between the

Anastasis to the left, and the Martyrium to the right, south-west of Golgotha, making it the most southern spot on his schematic ground plan.

Although seventh to ninth century descriptions do not allow for a conclusive picture of the interior of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, I nonetheless wish to claim that from the second half of the seventh century onwards, references were made to St. Mary's image, chapel or story relating to St. Mary of Egypt at the southern part of the inner atrium, somewhere between the Anastasis and the Martyrium, south-west of the newly built »huge church« at Golgotha (more or less at the base of the present day Crusader bell-tower). The two-storey church over Golgotha was built of stone by Bishop Modestus (d. 630) following the Persian invasion and the plunder of the church treasure, introducing *inter alia* the new tradition of the Tomb of Adam under the place of Crucifixion in the Holy Sepulchre complex¹³.

Following finds from excavations in the *Parvis* by Virgilio Corbo¹⁴ and Charles Coüason¹⁵, some researchers, including Myriam Rosen-Ayalon who worked on the stone decora-

11 Adomnan 2-8 (trans. Wilkinson 95-97): »[The church built over the Lord's Sepulchre] is a very large church, entirely made of stone, and built on a remarkable round plan. [...] It has eight doors, or entries [...]. Four of them are on the north facing east [...], and the other four are on the south facing east. [...] Next to the round church we have been describing, and on its right (it is called Anastasis, meaning Resurrection [...]) is a rectangular church of Saint Mary the Lord's Mother. Further to the east has been built another huge church, on the site which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. [...] This rectangular stone construction, the Church on the site of Calvary, has adjoining it on the east the Basilica built with great magnificence by King Constantine. It is also called the Martyrium [...]. There is an open court between the Anastasis [...] and the Basilica of Constantine. It stretches as far as the Church of Golgotha [...]. There is a chapel set between the church of Golgotha and the Martyrium, and it contains the Lord's Cup which he blessed [...] during the supper [...] with the apostles [...]. [...] Inside the Cup is the very Sponge filled with vinegar [...]. [...] Moreover Arculf saw the Lance with which the Soldier struck the Lord's side as he was hanging on the Cross. This Lance is kept in the Basilica of Constantine, in the portico; its

shaft has been divided in two, and it has been set in a wooden cross. The whole city of Jerusalem makes pilgrimage also to this, in order to kiss and venerate it.«

12 Epiphanius I 10-II 11 (trans. Wilkinson 117): »And in the middle of the Holy City is the holy Tomb of the Lord, and near the Tomb the place of the Skull. [...] Between these buildings is the garden of Joseph, and to the north of the garden is the guardroom where Christ was imprisoned and Barabbas. And between the guardroom and the Crucifixion is the door of Saint Constantine, in which the three Crosses were found. And above the door is the sanctuary in which is kept the cup from which Christ drank the vinegar and gall. [...] Near it is the Patriarchium. Below the Patriarchium is a church without a throne, which was to have been given a throne by the synod at the time of the Saracen invasion. And on the left side of Saint Constantine is the icon of the very holy Theotokos, who forbade Saint Mary to enter the church on the day of the Exaltation. There also she made her promise.«

13 Kühnel, *Mise-en-scène*, Keshman Wasserman, *Cross and Tomb*.

14 Corbo, *Santo Sepolcro*.

15 Coüason, *Holy Sepulchre*.

tion of the facade¹⁶, argue that Modestus' change introduced a new entrance to the Holy Sepulchre, the southern one (i.e. the present-day entrance), which probably became the preferred entrance to the complex from the mid-seventh century onwards. The presence of the miraculous icon of the Theotokos south-west of Golgotha, which I claim is reflected in the accounts of Arculf and Epiphanius, could serve as additional proof that the main entrance to the complex of the Holy Sepulchre was on the south side. The change in location of the main entrance from east to south could have been the result of the incorporation of the Omar Mosque within the southern part of the outer atrium of the Constantinian Martyrium, as was suggested by the legend in which Sultan Omar ibn al-Khattab refuses Patriarch Sophronius' invitation to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and instead prays in front of its main entrance doors. The legend is preserved in the Annals of Eutychius, the tenth century Patriarch of Alexandria, about the Arab conquest of Jerusalem of 638. This is confirmed by the stone inscription found in the outer atrium of the Constantinian Martyrium basilica¹⁷. If my suggested interpretation of the Piacenza Pilgrim is correct, it is possible that the mosque usurped the very place previously associated with St. Mary's story. Moreover, one of the main reasons for recording the *Vita* of St. Mary of Egypt in the middle of the seventh century and especially for paying so much attention to the architectural components of the church, was probably in order to record the exact place of the »original miracle«, which at that very time was starting its journey to another spot within the Holy Sepulchre complex. Three probable reasons could have prompted such a move: the introduction of the mosque within the outer atrium of the Martyrium; the gradual transfer of all relics (including the miracle icon discussed) to the southern part of the complex; and finally the reconstruction conducted by Modestus at Golgotha and its immediate surroundings following the Persian conquest (let us not forget that Sophronius, the suggested author of St. Mary the Egyptian's *Vita*, succeeded Modestus as patriarch of Jerusalem). I suggest that the mid-seventh century *Vita* wanted among other things to conserve the »original spot« of the miracle within the early Christian church, before it disappeared from people's memory forever¹⁸.

The Western Entrance of the Crusader Church

Now comes another unexpected twist in this complicated plot. The Anglo-Saxon Saewulf, who visited Jerusalem in 1101-1103 shortly after its conquest by the Crusaders in 1099, reports on St. Mary's icon still present in the Holy Sepulchre complex¹⁹. There can be no doubt that the place described by Saewulf as being associated with the miraculous image is the chapel later known as St. Mary the Latin (still in the Franciscan custody today), while St. John is the Forty Martyrs that stands below the Crusader bell-tower of the present-day church (probably replacing St. Mary's church mentioned by Arculf) (fig. 3).

How can such a dramatic change comparative to the early Christian witnesses be explained? Why was the image (together with a chapel dedicated to St. Mary Mother of God) moved from the entrance at the southern gate to north of the Anastasis? Firstly, one should bear in mind the devastating destruction of the Holy Sepulchre by al-Hakim in 1009 and the Byzantine reconstruction, conducted by the Byzantine Emperor that followed in the eleventh century²⁰. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that Saewulf's witness came at a time of the massive Crusader renovation of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. As Denys Pringle suggests, these renovations were done in stages – while some of the spaces in the church were being rebuilt, other parts remained open to visitors²¹. If we look carefully at Saewulf's description, we see that the image of Mary is hung facing the West, that is towards the gate known today as St. Mary's Gate (blocked during the Ottoman period), accessed from the Patriarch's Way (today Christian Quarter Road). This gate seems to have been used during the renovation of the southern gate that took place early in the renovation process, according to Pringle, and was finished towards the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre in 1148²². I would like to suggest that the relocation of the miraculous image that talked to St. Mary of Egypt might indicate that in Saewulf's time – the early twelfth century – the western gate was considered the main entrance to the church (temporarily, of course, on account of the renovations).

16 Rosen-Ayalon, Fassade.

17 Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 931 fig. 382 pl. VI 1 and 6; Krüger, Grabeskirche 72-73; 236 n. 181-182; Pringle, Churches 9; Versteegen, How to share 34-35 fig. 4. – Today, this tradition is also preserved in Jerusalem – the Omar Mosque, built in 1193, stands in front of the southern portal of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, Busse, 'Umar-Moschee.

18 For different conclusions about the whereabouts of St. Mary's church and the location of the miraculous icon of St. Mary, based on Arculf's and Epiphanius the monk's accounts, see J. Patrich's article in this volume.

19 Saewulf 11-12 (trans. Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 103): »Near this place of Calvary is the Church of St Mary, in the place where the Lord's body was taken down from the Cross, and before he was buried he had spices put on him, and was wrapped in his shroud and his napkin. [...] But beside the church itself [i.e. the Anastasis], on one side and the other, there are two famous chapels, one

dedicated to St Mary and the other to St John, for those two participants of the Lord's sufferings stood thus at his side, on one side and the other. In the west wall of the chapel of Saint Mary is to be seen, painted outside, the picture of the mother of God. Mary the Egyptian was once repentant with all her heart, and praying for the help of the Mother of God, and was wonderfully consoled by the figure in the picture speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, as it is to be read in her *Life*«.

20 Vincent/Abel, Jerusalem 218-259; Ousterhout, Rebuilding. Until recently it was Constantine IX Monomachus (1042-1055) who was put in charge, but as Biddle, Tomb 74-99 convincingly stated, it was Michael IV the Paphlagonian (1034-1041) before him; Pringle, Churches 11.

21 Pringle, Churches 12-31.

22 Pringle, Churches 20.

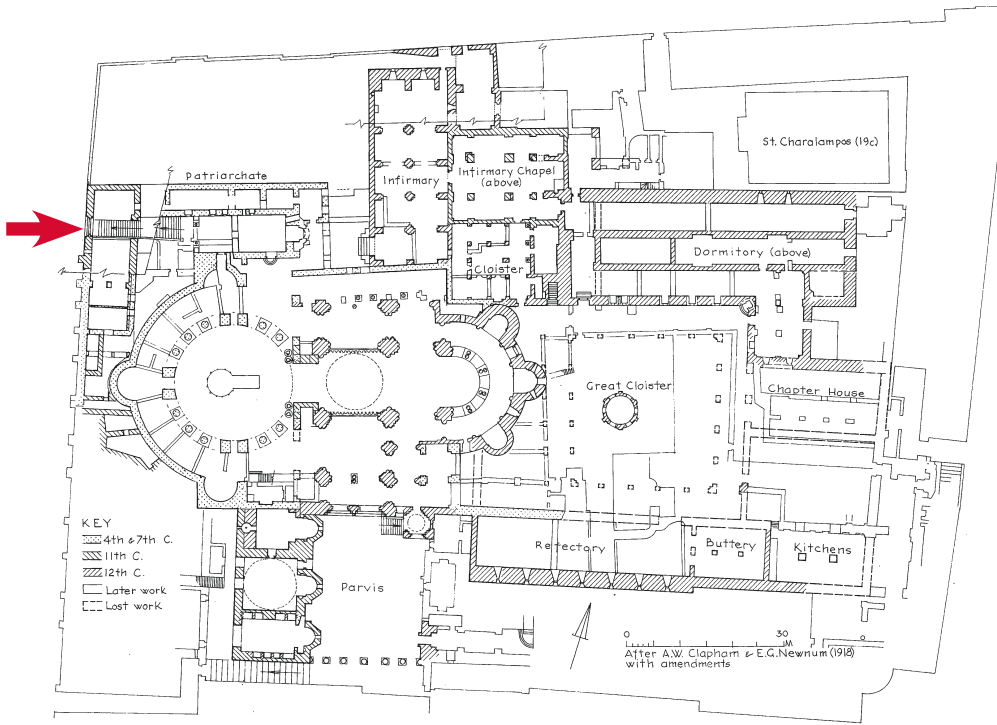


Fig. 3 Holy Sepulchre Complex in the Crusader Period. – (From Pringle, *Churches* 49 fig. 7).

Daniel and the Byzantine Witnesses of the Icon of the Theotokos of St. Mary of Egypt in Constantinople

The Russian Abbot Daniel entered the Holy Sepulchre complex through the same western gate when he accompanied King Baldwin in around 1108²³. But unlike Saewulf, after passing the narrow gate, the Abbot Daniel has no recall of what his predecessor saw just a couple of years earlier regarding the story of St. Mary of Egypt. Instead of relating to any extant gate or image, Daniel describes what seems to be the tradition of the Early Christian Constantinian basilica, and explains where the image was at the time of Mary of Egypt herself, that is in the late fourth/early fifth century, referring to the ruins of the Martyrium, still visible in his time²⁴. Why Daniel did not describe the icon/painting in its present place, but instead refer to the »original place« of the miracle some 700 years earlier? There are a number of possible reasons. Firstly, Daniel might not have been familiar with the contemporary

tradition, but only with the one based on written sources, such as the St. Mary the Egyptian's Early Byzantine *Vita*, and was able to locate the miracle in the still extant ruins of the Martyrium. It might also have been the case that Daniel, who was Orthodox, did not accept Saewulf's Catholic tradition. The most plausible reason is that Daniel was aware of a competing tradition, as he himself had in Jerusalem from the Kievan Rus' via Constantinople, and viewing the Constantinopolitan Orthodox tradition as the true one simply ignored the local Catholic one. In Constantinople there was a tradition that connected the icon of the Theotokos that was brought to the Imperial city from Jerusalem with nothing less than the Imperial Door (or Imperial Gate) – the main entrance from the narthex to the naos of the Hagia Sophia church. The presence of the two miracle-working icons, Christ and Theotokos, were reported repeatedly in testimonies from the late eleventh to the fifteenth centuries²⁵. The so-called »Anonymous Mercati« (a Latin translation from a Greek original) from the late eleventh/early twelfth century is one of

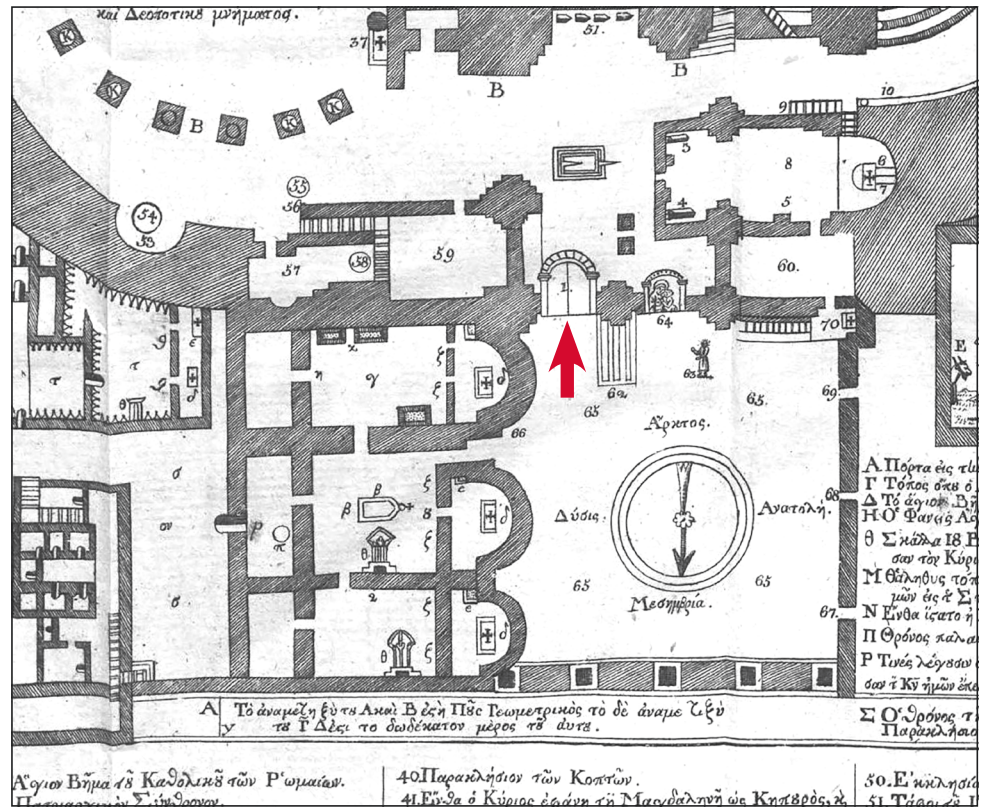
23 Daniel (trans. Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 168): »And on that Saturday at the seventh hour of the day Baldwin went with his retinue from his house to the tomb of the Lord, and all were on foot. And he sent to the hospice of Saint Saba and summoned the abbot and his monks. And the abbot went with his brethren to the tomb of the Lord, and I, wretch that I am, went with the abbot and the brethren. And we came to the Prince [Baldwin] and all bowed to him, and then he bowed to the abbot and the brethren and commanded the abbot and wretched me to walk by him, while the other abbots and monks he ordered to walk in front of him and his retinue he ordered to follow behind. And we came to the western doors of the church of the Resurrection and here a multitude of people blocked he door of the church and we could not enter. And Prince Baldwin commanded his soldiers to drive the people back by force and they made a passage as far as the tomb and we were able to pass through the people to the tomb«.

24 Daniel (trans. Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 131): »And on that spot a very large square church (dedicated to the Exaltation of the True Cross) was built, but now there

is only a small church. Here to the East is the great door to which came St Mary the Egyptian desiring to enter and kiss [the cross], but the power of the Holy Spirit would not admit her to the church. And then she prayed to the Holy Mother of God whose icon was in the porch near the door, and then she was able to enter the church and kiss the True Cross. By this door she went out again into desert of the Jordan«.

25 Majeska, *Russian Travelers* 206-209; Lidov, Leo the Wise; Erdeljan, *Chosen Places* 115-118. – Lidov lists six sources that mention the icon that talked to St. Mary of Egypt in the Hagia Sophia: Anonymous Tarragonensis (late 11th c., Latin text), Anonymous Mercati (c. 1100, Latin translation of a lost Greek original), Ignatius of Smolensk (1389, Russian account), Alexander the Clerk (1394/95, Russian account), Deacon Zosima (1419-1422, Russian account), and finally Symeon of Thessalonica (c. 1400). Some of the accounts say the image of the Theotokos was placed on the right side of the entrance, while others on the left.

Fig. 4 Detail from the Map of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from the 1749 edition of Chrysanthos, Proskynetarion. – (From Deluga, Gravures 373 fig. 4).



the earliest pieces of evidence for this²⁶. According to him, the miraculous icon was taken from Jerusalem to Constantinople by the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI the Wise (886-912) and should be seen against the background of the recent conclusion of the iconoclastic controversy in Byzantium (in which the miraculous image of the Virgin which talked to St. Mary of Egypt played an active role)²⁷. This Constantinopolitan tradition survived as long as the Byzantine Empire existed. There is no evidence known to me about the fate of the icon in Constantinople with the demise of Hagia Sophia during the Ottoman Conquest²⁸. Yet the tradition, together with the

miracle-working image, (re)appeared in Jerusalem in the Early Modern period, but this time in its Greek Orthodox version²⁹.

Early Modern Orthodox Accounts Associated with the Western Door

The tradition as it was recorded by Saewulf in the early twelfth century started to appear in Greek Orthodox accounts of the Early Modern period, but not before the fall of Constantinople³⁰. One sixteenth century anonymous Greek itinerary

26 Ciggaar, Description 249: »In the right part of the church, behind the atrium, at the silver gates, there is an image of Mary on the wall, formerly preserved in Jerusalem; the one to which St. Mary of Egypt prayed in her time, when she heard a voice coming from the lips of the Holy Mother of God. This holy image was brought to St. Sophia from the holy city Jerusalem by Emperor Leo« (trans. Lidov, Leo the Wise 399).
 27 Lidov, Leo the Wise 399.
 28 There is an alternative tradition first recorded in 18th c. Russian sources that claims that this very icon, that came from Jerusalem to Constantinople, was the one painted originally by the Evangelist Luke and that from Constantinople it was brought first to Chersonesos (on the Crimean Peninsula) and then to Novgorod, from where, after some 500 years, it ended up in Moscow; Tolstaja, Ikona; Keshman W., Icon.
 29 Another case of contesting Orthodox vs Catholic traditions is the Stone of Unction, found simultaneously both in Constantinople and within the Holy Sepulchre church in Jerusalem, from the Crusader period until the fall of Constantinople, see Rachman-Schrire, Unction. Also in this case, with the physical disappearance of the Constantinopolitanian competitor, the tradition united peacefully in the Jerusalem relic, still venerated today.
 30 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Descriptions. Three out of eight texts published in this volume mention St. Mary the Egyptian's story and all of them locate

the miraculous Theotokos image near the western door: (1) Anonymous, III. Душеспасительный Разказ о Свь. Гробе, о Св. Граде Иерусалиме и всех местностях Земли Обетованной, in: Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Descriptions 22-38 (Greek) and 162-176 (Russian), esp. 165. Copied from a manuscript from the Vienna Library, ms. No 244. According to analysis, the text should be dated to the second half of the 15th c. (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Descriptions VII). (2) Анонимус, VI. Проскинитарий содержащий все чудесные знамения, явленные Спасителем нашим в Святом городе Иерусалиме и описание местности, in: Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Descriptions 55-118. 135-140 (Greek). 194-241 (Russian), esp. 203. The text is copied from a manuscript preserved in Mt. Athos, Iviron monastery, no. 845. Date of the two colophons 20 January 1585 and 1 March 1586, the copy of the proskynetarion should be dated to 1586, it was written earlier (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Descriptions IX-XI). (3) Anonymous, VII. О Граде Иерусалиме и окрестностях его, Земле Обетованной, in: Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Descriptions 110-127 (Greek) and 242-249 (Russian), esp. 245 nos. 16-18. The text is copied from a manuscript preserved at Mt. Athos, Iviron Monastery, no. 740, from the early 16th c. (written before the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre bell-tower in 1545, Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Descriptions XI-XII).



Fig. 5 St. Mary the Egyptian Story in front of the *Hagia Porta* from the 1807 edition of Chrysanthos, *Proskynetarion*. – (By courtesy of Travelogues, Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, <http://eng.travelogues.gr/item.php?view=38818>).

reflects the fact that the tradition associated with St. Mary of Egypt can be found at none other than the western entrance to the church of the Holy Sepulchre (the one from Christian Quarter Street)³¹. Repeated Greek accounts clearly show that the Early Modern Greek Orthodox local authorities accepted the Western Catholic Medieval tradition existent in Jerusalem. However, it is crucial to note that all the Greek Orthodox accounts of which I am aware that relate to the western door as that of St. Mary of Egypt, are dated from the second half of the fifteenth century or the sixteenth century, that is,

31 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Descriptions* 245: »The Church of the Holy Tomb has three doors, one from the West, in which St Mary wanted to enter and an Angel prevented her, and there the Theotokos is depicted, that replied to her and said: 'If you cross the Jordan you will find your rest'. The two other doors are to the right of the Church. There are 12 columns, 6 of them made of porphyry and 6 of marble. [Above them] are the Feasts of the Lord depicted in marble« (author's trans.).
 32 Interestingly, the earliest of the three accounts mentioned above, dated to the late 15th c., mentions that the icon of the Theotokos »was« at that place, while the latter two, from the early and late 16th c., say that the image »is« there, in the present tense. This evidence probably explains the consecutive process of

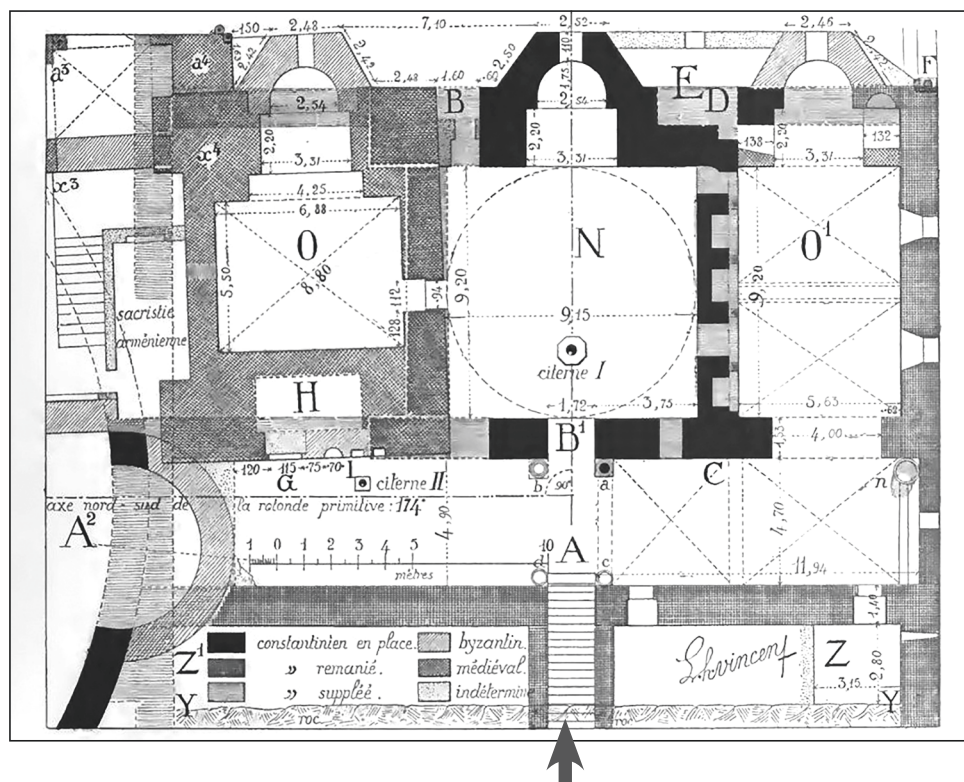
after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (and consequently the termination of the above-mentioned tradition at Hagia Sophia)³². I believe that this Early Modern Orthodox tradition should be seen as a transitional stage and a revival by the Greek Orthodox community of the last venerated spot of the Jerusalem miracle after years of its having been abandoned in favour of Constantinople. It might also indicate that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries St. Mary's Gate, reached via Christian Quarter Street (also called Patriarch Street), was still in use³³. It seems plausible that when the Ottomans blocked this door, the location of the image associated with St. Mary of Egypt moved once again.

The Chapel of St. Mary of Egypt Right to the *Hagia Porta*

In the early eighteenth century the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Chrysanthos (1707-1731) published a »Proskynetarion of Jerusalem and Palestine« (1728)³⁴. The text of this pilgrim guide was accompanied by a map of the church of the Holy Sepulchre to which a number of illustrations were added in subsequent reprint editions. The 1749 Chrysanthos edition has a number of details relevant to the present discussion (fig. 4): St. Mary of Egypt kneels in front of the image of the Virgin at the right (blocked) door, to the right of the present-day entrance, marked here as Ἡ Ἁγία Πόρτα (*Hagia Porta*, Holy Gate)³⁵. To the right, the chapel numbered 70 is dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt and to the miraculous event under discussion. This map clearly indicates that in the eighteenth century the location of the miraculous story moved to the main (and since Ottoman times only) entrance to the church, the southern portal. A larger image that accompanied the 1807 edition of the Chrysanthos »Proskynetarion« goes further in reinforcing the old story in its new place (fig. 5)³⁶. The Angel stands at the *Hagia Porta* and prevents *Hosia Maria* from going through the door on the left, while on the right the same woman prays to an image of the Theotokos that hangs above the entrance to the *Paraklesion*, a chamber on the ground floor of the »Chapel of the Franks«, dedicated to *Hosias Marias*. The two sequences of St. Mary's story, as told supposedly by Sophronius and relating originally to Constantine's basilica, was now located within the complex of the Crusader Holy Sepulchre church.

»returning« the image from Constantinople to Jerusalem, that started with a revival of the tradition from the point before which it left Jerusalem, first in a remembered image and later as an embodied pictorial object.
 33 On the complicated and often unclear history of the doors of the Holy Sepulchre and its Muslim doorkeepers de Sandoli, *Keys*.
 34 Chrysanthos, *Proskynetarion* 1728; Deluga, *Gravures* 370-371. – After the first edition, the book was reprinted in 1749, 1787 and 1807; it was also translated into Serbian and Russian.
 35 Deluga, *Gravures* 373 fig. 4.
 36 Chrysanthos, *Proskynetarion* 1807, 30.

Fig. 6 Ground plan of the three chapels to the west of the *Parvis*. – (From Vincent/Abel, Jérusalem 139 fig. 93).



It was this particular tradition that was documented in the *Status Quo* document by Lionel Cust in 1929. In this document »the Orthodox Chapel of St. Mary of Egypt, beneath the Latin Chapel of St. Mary’s Agony« is mentioned on the north side of the *Parvis*³⁷.

The Present-Day St. Mary of Egypt’s Image of the Theotokos in the Chapel of St. James

However, even the *Status Quo* agreement did not prevent the tradition of Maria Aegyptiaca from moving one more time within the Holy Sepulchre complex. Today the miracle-working image of Mary Mother of God that prevented St. Mary of Egypt from entering the church is still present and venerated within the Holy Sepulchre complex (fig. 6-8). The present-day visitor will find the icon in a chamber at the back of the St. James chapel. At first glance, the present-day place, hidden deep inside the complex, might be seen as disconnected from its traditional function as a marker of the main entrance to the church. However, I do think that originally the place was chosen in connection with the main entrance to the church, as it stands to the right side of the Patriarch’s Way – a route which leads down from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate on the roof of the Holy Sepulchre complex through the Patriarch’s Door (an entrance between the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene and that of the Forty Martyrs) towards the *Hagia*

Porta. The placement of the icon to the right of the Patriarch’s Way to the southern portal alludes, most probably, to the Great Entrance of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople³⁸. Today metal doors detach the icon physically from the Patriarch’s Way, so it found itself backstage in St. James chapel, rather than on the main path. The icon itself needs further study. The silver stamps on its *riza* indicate that it was made in Moscow by the silversmith’s atelier »A. Ovchinnikov and son« (А. Овчинниковъ и Сынъ) in the year 1884. Moreover, Kamal Boullata, who studied Palestinian art and its local Christian origins in nineteenth century Jerusalem, gives the name of the painter who decorated the icon-stand upon which the miracle-working icon is venerated today as Jerusalem-based artist Costi Tadros who painted the stand in 1856³⁹. So the icon was painted no later than the middle of the nineteenth century and most probably stood inside »the Orthodox Chapel of St. Mary of Egypt« right of the Holy Gate at the time of the publication of the *Status Quo* by Cust in 1929. I do not know exactly when these post-*Status Quo* changes took place and why. It is tempting to connect the move with the miracle performed by the icon in 1967. According to local oral tradition, it wept for three days before the Six Day War in 1967, a war that dramatically changed the fate of the Old City of Jerusalem and that of its native population, including the Christian Greek Orthodox Arab-speaking community to which the chapel of St. James belongs⁴⁰. But this is a topic for another paper.

37 Cust, *Status Quo* 15.

38 As mentioned above, some pilgrims recorded seeing the image to the right of the Great Entrance in Hagia Sophia.

39 Boullata, *Art* 47.

40 I would like to take this opportunity to thank George Kamar, the Mukhtar at St. James Cathedral, for his repeated generous help during my research.



Fig. 7 The Back Room of St. James Chapel today, Church of the Holy Sepulchre. – (Photo A. Keshman W.).



Fig. 8 The Icon of the Theotokos venerated today as the one who prevented St. Mary the Egyptian from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, St. James chapel. – (Photo A. Keshman W.).

To conclude, in this paper I suggested that the tradition associated with a certain (not necessarily the same) icon of the Theotokos that worked a miracle on St. Mary of Egypt moved within the Holy Sepulchre complex at least five times during its existence (and once to Constantinople and back). I argue that the location of the image's veneration can help one identify the main entrance to the church at a specific point in time and *vice versa* that the image should be sought in the vicinity of the main entrance. Locating the image facilitates a better understanding of the chronology of architectural changes that took place in the Holy Sepulchre complex throughout its history. As the main entrance moved, so did the image – from the eastern portal of the Constantinian Martyrium to Modestus' southern portal, then to the western entrance during the Crusader renovation and then back to the southern Holy Gate during Ottoman Rule, and finally to the Patriarch's Way behind St. James chapel, emphasising its veneration today primarily by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and its Arab-speaking congregation. Its present-day status remains to be studied.

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Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

Maria die Türhüterin – Über die Geschichte der wundertätigen Ikone der Theotokos im Komplex des Heiligen Grabes

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Verehrung einer als wundertätig angesehenen Ikone der Jungfrau Maria, die seit dem frühen Mittelalter in der Grabeskirche bezeugt ist. Angeblich soll die Ikone die Heilige Maria von Ägypten daran gehindert haben, die Schwelle der Kirche zu übertreten, bis sie alle ihre Sünden bereut hätte. Die vorliegende Analyse zeigt auf, wie diese hagiographische Tradition, die neben anderen heiligen Orten und Reliquien in der Kirche verkörpert ist, einige Schwierigkeiten in der Architekturgeschichte der Grabeskirche erklären könnte. Gleichzeitig zeigt sie, dass mittelalterliche Traditionen noch immer im heutigen Kirchengebäude weiterleben.

Mary the Doorkeeper – On the History of the Miraculous Image of the Theotokos in the Complex of the Holy Sepulchre

In this paper I present a tradition preserved within the Holy Sepulchre church since the early Middle Ages, which involves the veneration of an icon of the Virgin Mary considered miraculous. According to numerous accounts, it was this image that prevented St. Mary of Egypt from crossing the threshold of the church until she had fully repented her sins. I argue that this hagiographical tradition that was embodied among other holy places and relics of the church could help to clarify certain difficulties relating to the architectural history of the Holy Sepulchre complex, and at the same time illustrate how medieval traditions are still alive within the modern day edifice.

Marie la gardienne de la porte – Sur l'histoire de l'image miraculeuse de la Théotokos dans le complexe du Saint-Sépulcre

Cet article étudie la vénération d'une icône de la Vierge Marie, considérée comme miraculeuse, qui se perpétue au Saint-Sépulcre depuis le début du Moyen Âge. L'icône aurait empêché sainte Marie l'Égyptienne de franchir le seuil de l'église avant d'avoir regretté tous ses péchés. Cette analyse montre comment cette tradition hagiographique, incarnée dans l'église avec d'autres reliques et emplacements saints, pourrait aider à clarifier certaines questions touchant à l'histoire architecturale du Saint-Sépulcre. Elle révèle en même temps que les traditions médiévales continuent d'exister dans l'édifice actuel.

Traduction: Y. Gautier