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Liturgical Crossroads between Europe, Middle East, and Africa: The Musical Repertoire of the Benedictine Community at Abu Ghosh, Jerusalem¹

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Introduction

The first Benedictine monastery in the Holy Land, on the Mount of Olives, is said to date to Charlemagne's time. Like many Christian churches and communities, the Benedictine presence in Jerusalem remained dependent on the vicissitudes of the city's turbulent history. Following France's negotiations with the Sublime Porte in the 16th century, the Benedictines took part in the protection of Catholics in the Ottoman Empire, including Jerusalem, alongside the Franciscans. This Benedictine commitment to Jerusalem was reaffirmed at the beginning of the 20th century by the foundation of two new monasteries, one on Mount Zion and the other at Abu Ghosh, a village on the outskirts of the city.

In this chapter, I offer a description of the setting, mission, structure, and liturgy of the Abu Ghosh Benedictine, outlining several hypotheses in the process. The first is that the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities—which constitute the essence of Jerusalem—make it a unique space for the study of musical interactions, both potential and actual, between these populations; the liturgical

music at Abu Ghosh is an instructive case study for interactions between Christian and Jewish communities in particular. The second is that Benedictine musical practice is especially complex in its diversity and in its capacity to reimagine borders, as the repertoire at Abu Ghosh will demonstrate.

Benedictine Monasticism in Global Perspective

Among the various Christian monastic orders in the West, the Order of St. Benedict has enjoyed the greatest success and the widest sphere of influence over the centuries.² By the 6th century, this monastic current had spread throughout Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and later, the American, African, and Asian continents.³ There are many reasons for such success. One of them is Benedict's ambition to propose an alternative to the monastic model of the Desert Fathers, in which asceticism was the principle followed to attain spiritual fulfilment. In contrast, Benedict's *Opus Dei* ("Work of God") outlines a community life and material conditions that offer, at both individual and collective levels, the means to cultivate personal and spiritual development: this is accomplished through prayer, chant, study, obedience, work, sleep, food, wine, and recreation.

Another major reason for the continuity of Benedictine monasticism is the history of circulation that has spread its monastic model throughout the world. In conjunction with its political, diplomatic, and ideological entanglements—including the support of Popes and monarchs for the diffusion of European Catholicism, complicity in colonial regimes, and ambitious projects for the protection of Catholics throughout the world—Benedictine monasticism's global circulation has opened up spaces for interreligious dialogue. Its distinctive organizational structure has also

fostered intense autonomy among Benedictine congregations as they engage in such dialogue around the world.

For centuries, Benedictine monasticism was not subject to any centralized order. The Benedictine Confederation, established in 1893 by Pope Leo XIII, has since then brought together all of the communities established on five continents, yet this grouping into a Confederation did not change the structural autonomy of the order and its components. Thus, a whole galaxy of more or less related congregations crystallized around the figure of St. Benedict and his rule. These congregations represented, not only diverse historical, geographical, and cultural origins, but also specific doctrinal choices as well as distinctive ways of engaging with surrounding communities, all of which are reflected in their liturgical and musical practices.

The two monasteries mentioned above, the German Hagia Maria Zion of Jerusalem and the French Saint Mary of the Resurrection of Abu Ghosh, make for particularly enlightening examples. They were the product of diplomatic negotiations between Germany and France, and have since been elevated to the rank of abbeys. Their rituals, prayers, and songs bear witness to their specific origins, affiliations, and outlooks. The first is the Benedictine St. Otilian (St. Odile) Congregation. Although it was separated from the German-speaking Beuronese Congregation and placed under the supervision of the Benedictines in Rome in the 1950s, it has retained strong ties to German monasteries, in particular to that of Königsmünster. The Liturgy of St. Otilian in Jerusalem is identical to that practiced in Germany, the only major difference being the use of the official languages of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem—Arabic and French—at Pentecost services conducted by the Patriarch. The second, the Abbey of Saint Mary of the Resurrection in Abu

Ghosh, is a French ramification of the Italian Benedictine Olivetan (Santa Maria de Monte Oliveto Maggiore) Congregation. The present French community was established there in 1976, with a historical and musical profile strikingly different from that of their German brothers.

A Brief Geo-History of the Site

Abu Ghosh is an Arab-Israeli village, currently part of the Jerusalem District. Its dominant position on the access road to the Holy City from the West has made it a strategic site over the centuries. One hilltop dominating the contemporary village has been identified as the biblical *Kiryat-Yearim*, where, according to 1 Samuel 7:1-2, the Ark of the Covenant remained in the house of Abinadab “for twenty years” preceding its transfer to Jerusalem. Excavations conducted by Israeli and French archaeologists since 2017 have begun to reveal the strategic importance of the hilltop as a border fortress between the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah (Finkelstein *et al*, 2018). It later became a military outpost for the Romans and subsequently a Byzantine monastery dedicated to Eleazar, the priest in charge of the Ark. It is now the property of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition, a Catholic community, who built a convent there in 1906 and the Church of Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant in 1924.

In the 12th century, the Crusaders changed the old Arabic name of the lower “Village of the Grapes” (*Qaryat al-Inab*), as Abu Ghosh was then known, to *Fontenoid*—marking the presence of a spring. This spring and its proximity to Jerusalem inspired the Franks to identify it as Emmaus, the place of the encounter of Christ with two disciples after his Resurrection (Luke 24:13-35), though other places in the region were already identified with the event (Ehrlich, 1992, Gadrat-

Ouerfelli & Rouxpetel, 2018). Whether or not Abu Ghosh is the biblical village of Emmaus, the Crusaders left their intangible trace there in the form of a remarkable church, decorated with frescoes in Byzantine style, which slowly deteriorated following the return of Islamic rule at the end of the 13rd century. Some of these frescoes have nevertheless survived the centuries. The Benedictines live this story every day in their services.

In the 16th century, the Abu Ghosh clan took possession, giving its name to the village and setting the stage for contemporary ethnic, religious, and political dynamics there. During the 18th and 19th centuries, they were granted control over access to Jerusalem and authorized to collect taxes from all travellers and pilgrims passing through (Kark & Oren-Nordheim, 2001). The family claims Chechen origin, which was recently recognized by the Chechen government and, indeed, by President Ramzan Kadyrov himself: Kadyrov visited Abu Ghosh in 2014 to inaugurate the largest mosque in modern Israel, funded mainly by his government. The Abu Ghosh family remained neutral during the Israeli-Arab wars, as well as later on, during the *Intifadas*.

The Church of the Franks, the spring and the domain around, were all granted to France in 1873 by the Sultan Abd Ül-Aziz with the help of the very Francophile Turkish diplomat, Khalil Pacha (Vogüe, 1912:77-78). In 1899, some Benedictine monks from La Pierre-qui-Vire Abbey (Normandy) came to restore the church. They cleaned out the crypt housing the spring, built a convent next to it, and consecrated the church in 1907 as the Church of the Resurrection of Abu Ghosh. In 1955, gravely ill, the last Benedictine monk went back to France to die and was replaced by French Lazarists for some time. In 1976, French Benedictines returned: originally from Le Bec-Hellouin Abbey (Normandy), they were joined by some neighbouring Benedictine nuns of Sainte-

Françoise-Romaine a year later. In 1999, the monastery of St Mary of the Resurrection became an Abbey, part of the Benedictine Olivetan Congregation (Delzant, 2018:24). Currently it numbers nineteen consecrated persons: twelve nuns and seven monks who, as I argue below, have engaged creatively with the site's history of multiple, intersecting claims and communities in order to build a unique monastic life to which their sacred musical practice bears witness.

Missions of Saint Mary Abbey

Life at the Abbey rests on four essential pillars as formulated in the Rule of Saint Benedict: prayer, work, brotherhood, and hospitality. Apart from personal time for prayers, meditations, and the *Lectio Divina* (Spiritual Reading), community daily life is punctuated by the Liturgy of the Hours, the Mass, and five religious services: Matins, Lauds, None, Vespers, and Compline. Although living in two separated spaces inside the monastery, monks and nuns gather three times a day at church for Lauds, the Mass, and Vespers. As in many other monastic congregations, work plays a significant part in the daily life of the community as well. Since the monastery does not have any external employees for housework, it is up to the monks and nuns to perform the personal and collective tasks of cooking, cleaning, washing, etc. Between lunch and Vespers, they focus on their respective crafts: the monks make ceramics, liqueurs, and posters while the nuns produce embroidery, candles, cards, and icons, all of which is sold in the monastery shop.

Fraternity is the driving force behind the community project. The monks and nuns of Abu Ghosh Benedictine do indeed live as brothers and sisters. They share times between them, in or out of the Abbey. On some occasions, the community leaves for the desert, Jerusalem, or other places to

follow in the footsteps of Christ and to gather with other Christian communities. The heart of the Abbey's mission is, however, its connection with Judaism. Monks and nuns not only live in the Holy Land, the land of Jesus: they live in the land of Israel and share the history and the daily life of the People of the Bible. This was the project of Dom Paul Marie Grammont, the Abbot and re-founder of the Le Bec-Hellouin Abbey and one of the pioneers of ecumenism—when he decided to renew a Benedictine community in Abu Ghosh. Eschewing proselytism, he affirmed the need “to recognize the stone from which we were hewn”⁴ and to bear witness to this fraternal relationship through prayer—especially through the Psalms. This message was strongly embodied by the figure of Father Jean-Baptiste Gourion, born a Jew in Algeria, Abbot of the monastery of Abu Ghosh (1999-2005), then Auxiliary Bishop of the Hebrew-speaking Catholic community in Israel.⁵

Since its creation, projects of meeting, welcoming, and sharing with its Jewish brothers and sisters have been at the heart of the Abbey's mission, as proclaimed on its website: “To be present in the place where the unity between Church and the Synagogue was torn apart”⁶ As a mark of particular attachment to Jewish-Christian dialogue within its walls, the Aron-Jean-Marie Lustiger Memorial, named after the Jewish-born former Cardinal of Paris, was inaugurated in 2013 at the initiative of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France (CRIF).

This fraternity also manifests itself in the hospitality provided by the monastery, not only to Christian pilgrims, but also in welcoming members of Israeli society—tourists and groups of soldiers—for whom visits to the site are organized. This provides the monks and sisters an opportunity to explain to local visitors about the Jewish roots of Christianity.

While there is a significant number of Catholic monasteries and churches in the Holy Land that cultivate close relations with local Muslim populations, this is not the nature of Abu Ghosh Abbey, whose primary mission is to foster Jewish-Christian links. Daily relations between members of the Abbey and the Muslim community of Abu Ghosh (e.g. shopkeepers, craftsmen) are clearly cordial and the Abbey maintains productive relations with village authorities on an *ad hoc* basis, such as exchanging visits on the occasion of local events or religious festivities. Like the village, the Abbey also maintains neutrality with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, it appears that no monk or nun has attempted to learn Arabic, in contrast with their concerted efforts to learn Hebrew. In addition, the Arabic language and Islamic musical repertoires are not represented in the Abbey's liturgy, to the extent that the Friday morning service is moved by an hour so as not to coincide with the *adhan*, or Islamic call to prayer, that emanates from an amplified minaret adjacent to the Abbey wall. The Abbey's mission of Jewish-Christian dialogue, shaping its liturgical music, thus emerges as a dynamic act of cultural and spiritual identity formation against the background of a Chechen Muslim village.

Kiryat-Yearim and *Fontenoid*, Israel and the Holy Land, Judaism and Christianity, a mixed-gender Benedictine community of Brothers and Sisters, a French-speaking community in contact with Catholic communities around the world: all of these conditions contribute to the community's creative engagement with sacred music at the cultural and religious crossroads of Abu Ghosh Benedictine.

Liturgical Music at Abu Ghosh Benedictine

An aspect of the Abu Ghosh Abbey that shapes its distinctive musical and liturgical practice is the history of its founding, which continues to resonate in a particularly diverse monastic community: three monks and three nuns come to renew a monastery together in a rare example of a mixed-gender monastic community, which today also includes a number of German and Congolese members alongside their French brothers and sisters. Thus the Abbey benefits from a choir resounding with male and female voices, which is quite exceptional in a monastic setting: this offers a considerable range of repertoires, from the purest male-female monody to the richest polyphony. In this choir of voices there is also considerable musical skill. Music always being an important part of the mission of the community, it is very fortunate that some of the monks and nuns received musical education in their childhood. That is why they are capable of enriching the liturgy with compelling instrumental accompaniment on the kora, the organ, and the psalterium, while a reduced choir of especially skilled vocalists—a *schola*—sometimes performs alone certain polyphonic works that are too complex to be performed by all. Ultimately, Abu Ghosh Benedictine is a singing community, praising God under the guidance of its choirmasters, continually developing its musical skills—by learning from visiting professional choral conductors, or when monks and nuns return to the Abbey from musical sessions abroad with new musical materials in hand.

Prayers are mostly in French based on a variety of written sources. The texts of the Psalms are read in the French translation of the late Dominican Raymond-Jacques Tournay (2004), whose work is particularly well adapted for Psalmody. Except for Matins, for which there is no music at all,

prayers are mostly sung during the other Hours and Services. The Our Father prayer at Vespers and the Gospel for feast masses are always sung. Community performance of the prayers is quite complex, depending on the hour, the day, and the year. It may alternate between solo performance by the person leading the service and performance by the monks' or nuns' choir. Most often, the two choirs respond to each other: usually one monk sings the antiphon, followed by the other monks; the nuns continue the following verse or verses; and at the next chant, it is the sisters' turn to sing and the monks' turn to respond.

The community shows great attachment to concentration in prayer. When a text takes a particularly long time to execute, it is customary to interrupt it by standing up and saying or singing praise, usually a Gloria. The psalmody can then be resumed. One of the essential components of collective prayer at Abu Ghosh Benedictine is the silence punctuating songs and prayers. This silence is of variable length, but long enough to allow each individual and all together to meditate, to become imbued with the spirit of the celebration taking place. This silence is a prayer in itself. It is up to the Abbot or to the person leading the ceremony to interrupt the silence by banging on his chair, at which point everyone stands up.

The musical repertoire of the Abbey is of great diversity, drawing from several sources: Gregorian chant, of course; the music of French liturgical composers and settings adapted from other Catholic communities; local Jewish liturgical music; Israeli Folk music; and West African musical sources as well. This diversity of sources is embodied in a variety of styles: psalmody and hymnody, monody and polyphony, modal and tonal, all performed on a particularly rich instrumentarium: one or two flutes, one or two koras, an organ, a psalterium, and percussion—whether played solo,

as an ensemble instrument, or as vocal accompaniment. In the following, I will first take the diversity of languages used in the Abbey as a framework for describing and analysing this musical diversity. I will then devote a section to West African musical influence, which is not attached to any particular language of prayer and rather manifests in performance practices on the *kora*.

Latin

In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 5 March 1967, the Vatican published the “Instruction on Music in the Liturgy” (*Musicam Sacram*),⁷ reminding Catholics of the foundations of the Catholic liturgy and its music. First, the liturgical language: “the use of the Latin language, with due respect to particular law, is to be preserved in the Latin rites” (47). Second, the musical repertoire: “Gregorian chant, as proper to the Roman liturgy, should be given pride of place, other things being equal” (50a). Third, the instrumental accompaniment: “The pipe organ is to be held in high esteem in the Latin Church, since it is its traditional instrument, the sound of which can add a wonderful splendour to the Church’s ceremonies and powerfully lift up men’s minds to God and higher things” (62).

Notwithstanding these considerations and recommendations, Latin gradually disappeared from parishes around the world. Likewise, with several exceptions, for Gregorian chant. That repertoire is now mainly relegated to the true professionals in the monasteries. There are two main reasons for this: the first is paradoxically to be found in the text of *Musicam Sacram* itself, which, while recalling the pillars of the Catholic liturgy also envisaged the use of other languages, other musical repertoires, and other musical instruments for the rite. The second reason lies in the apparent

complexity of this thousand-year-old tradition, the music and words of which were no longer understood either by the faithful or even by the majority of the clergy. In any case, the Gregorian “tradition” has undergone many evolutions and changes since the Carolingian period.

For more than a century, driven by a spirit of restoration, the Abbey of Solesmes (France) has been the ultimate reference in this field, giving a new rhythm to Latin prosody and spreading a considerable number of “Gregorian melodies” for the Church (Landron, 2014). This restored tradition, inspired by the experience of the Abbey of Solesmes and of Le Bec-Helloin, is the one practiced at Abu Ghosh. The repertoire is performed in the daily mass and is a major presence in solemn religious ceremonies: the Introït, the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Hallelujah, the Credo, the Offertory, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei, and the Communion. All are sung in the Latin Gregorian tradition of Solesmes. As an illustration, taken from the *Graduel Romain*⁸ (1979:236), the following version in monastic neumatic notation of the Hallelujah is performed by the monks between the two Lectures for the Mass of the Ascension of the Lord (Year B):

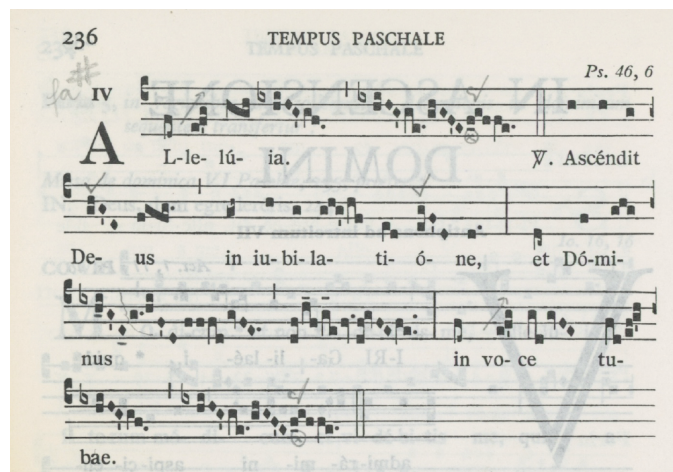


Fig. 1 © Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes

French

The revolution of the Second Vatican Council, which affected Catholics throughout the world, was the massive adoption of the vernacular language to the detriment of Latin. The same phenomenon is being introduced, if more gradually, in monasteries. In the prayers and song prayers of the Abu Ghosh Abbey, French prevails.

According to the traditional monastic Rule, the 150 psalms of the Bible are recited/sung in a two-week cycle. The Abu Ghosh Abbey, however, decided not to use the entire corpus of Psalms for its Liturgy, feeling that limited selection allowed for more time, enabling deeper concentration on the biblical poems. The distribution of the psalms throughout the liturgical calendar follows, as far as possible, the principle of matching the text to its liturgical function. The same applies to the use of the eight Tones of the Psalmody, according to the mood each Tone is empirically supposed to convey at the monastery (joy, sadness, solemnity, etc.). As already mentioned, the translation of the Psalms in use is that of Raymond-Jacques Tournay. As the Abbey uses a unique set of Tones, the prosody adopted to sing the Psalms is also unique to Abu Ghosh monastery. Each psalmody is systematically introduced on the Psalterium of Italian manufacture⁹, giving the first notes of the Tone to the community.

Each Tone is composed of six melodic units, each of which is devoted to a verse of the Psalm. When a Psalm text is divided into fewer verses, e.g. three or four, only the three or four final melodic units are used. To give an example, the 1st Tone is as follows:



Fig. 2.1

For Ordinary Time, Psalm 143 (H. 144) is sung on the melody of this 1st Tone. If its first verse is divided into three textual units,¹⁰ the singers will use the last three melodic units for its psalmody:

Fig. 2.2

In addition to psalmody, the French repertoire of the Abbey is made up of hymns and songs taken from many sources: the great liturgical composers from before or after Vatican II (such as Père Gelineau), repertoires shared by Benedictine, Trappist, and Cistercian congregations, songs from new communities (such as these of Taizé in France or Keur Moussa in Senegal), and especially the compositions of Brother Philibert Zobel and his sister, Sister Marie-Cecile Zobel, from the Le Bec-Hellouin Abbey.

Hebrew

The Hebrew language is used exclusively in the prayers, hymns, and psalms for the None service each day. Hebrew is also employed every other week for Friday morning Mass and for Sunday Lauds. Since its first attempts in the 1980s, the use of the language at Abu Ghosh has evolved greatly, partly because the community has made progress in its knowledge of the local language and partly because the experience of Hebrew has grown significantly in the local Catholic milieu. The objective of the composers of the community coming from the tradition of Gregorian chant

was not to "make it Jewish," but to find the best compromise between the Gregorian and Hebrew traditions. In doing so, the community clearly recalls the meaning of its presence in Israel, namely, its desire to return to the Jewish sources of its faith, its aspiration to deepen its ecumenical mission through the Jewish-Christian dialogue in contemporary Israel, without losing or abandoning its proper Christian identity. For the community, to be Christian is to love one's Jewish brother, not to become one. It is this testimony of closeness that monks and nuns demonstrate when welcoming Jewish visitors. The latter are moreover often pleasantly surprised to discover, through the Abbey's musical and liturgical practice, part of the Jewish heritage inscribed in Christian faith and rite: in particular, the intensive use of the Book of Psalms and the daily use of Hebrew in a Christian liturgical context.

The adaptation of Hebrew texts to a monastic musical aesthetic shaped by Gregorian chant and French sacred music raises the difficulty of finding a suitable prosody. Psalm 119 (Hebrew Ps.118), the longest of the Book, occupies a central position in Benedictine monasticism. In Abu Ghosh, its sung recitation is divided over two weeks at the office of None. The melody, a psalmody, remains the same for every part of the psalm:

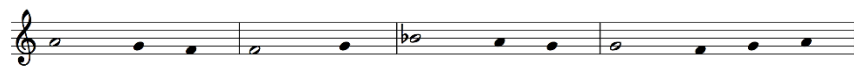


Fig. 3.1

It is then up to the community to adapt the text of each verse as well as possible, as shown in the following verse 119, 17 (H. 118, 17) sung by the soloist (S), then verse 119, 18 (H. 118, 18) as answered by the choir (Ch):

S
 Gmol al av - de - cha e - chyah ve she - me - ra de - vo - re - cha

Ch
 Gal ey - nay ve - a - bi - ta ni - fla - ot mi to - ra - te - cha

Fig. 3.2

In the Book of Psalms, Songs of Ascent (*shirei hamaalot*), a set of fifteen Psalms originally dedicated to the annual biblical pilgrimages to the Temple of Jerusalem are of great importance at the Abbey. These psalms (from psalm 120 [H. 119] to psalm 134 [H. 133] are mostly performed for the Hour of None,¹¹ in which they form the major part of the structure. They are sung every day throughout the week, in groups of three, each with its proper melody. Since 2015, a new set of melodies has been recomposed for them by the monastery and published by it in a printed booklet:

OFFICE DE NONE

Abbaye Bénédictine d'Abu Gosh

© Abbaye Sainte Marie de la Résurrection - Abu Gosh - Octobre 2015

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Psaume 119 (H 120) - תהלים פרק קכ

1 Shir ha - ma - ta - lot el A - do - nay ba - isa -
 Pse - me des mon - téés Vers le Sei - gneur dans ma
 ra - ta li qa - rat - ti va - ya - ta - ne - ni 2. A - do -
 de - tres - se j'ai appe - lé et lui m'a répondu Seigneur
 nay hat - si - la naf - shi mi - v - fat she - qer mi - la -
 se - cours mon â - me de la lèvre menteuse de la
 shon re - mi - ya 3 ma yi - ten le - Ka u - ma yo -
 largine trompeu - se Que le d'ur ne - ra - il que l'a -
 sif laK la - shon re - mi - ya 4. Hit - sei gib -
 joutera - Fil lan - gue trompeu - se Les lâchetés d'un
 bar she - nu - nim (in ga - Ha - lei re - ta - mim 5. o - ya
 héros a - vec des bar - ses de ge - nêt Malheur
 li ki gar - ti me - sheK sha - Kan - ti (in
 à moi car j'ha - bile à Mashek je - de - meure aux
 o - ho - lei qe - dar 6. ra - bat sha - Ke - na - lah naf -
 ter tes de Qe - dar De - puis trop long - temps mon âme a

Fig. 3.3

Last, but not least, the most revealing sources of inspiration in this field are the repertoires of Jewish liturgy (regardless of community origin) and of Israeli folk music, borrowed, adapted, and repurposed in a Christian context, like medieval *contrafacta*. To give an example, when singing Psalm 150, the sisters perform a melody used for major Jewish religious holidays.¹² In the Israeli case, only verses 5 and 6 are sung, the first serving as a couplet, the second as a chorus. As the sisters sing the psalm in its entirety, they sing verses 5 and 6 in the original, but had to adapt the text of the first four verses to the melody of the couplet, as shown in the following example (verses 1 & 2):



Fig. 3.4

Singing in Tongues

Father Paul André Grammont, Abbot of the Abbey of Le Bec-Hellouin and driving force of the Benedictine renaissance in Abu Ghosh, was very much involved in ecumenical dialogue, especially with the Church of England. In the early 1970s, he witnessed with great interest the birth of Catholic charismatic movements, inspired by Protestant Pentecostal experiences. At that time, some Roman Catholics rediscovered the fundamental founding act of the Church through the feast of Pentecost, i.e. the acts and messages as transmitted by the Holy Spirit to the Apostles on the 7th Sunday after Easter, in particular the mission of Prophecy through the gift of tongues (Act

of the Apostles, 2 4,17). The emergence of Charismatic Movement, “a church that is not churchy” (Walter & Hunt, 1998:220) though within the Church, has brought new life to world Catholicism. For its followers, the return to the Charisms by the gifts “of tongues”, of “discernment of the spirit”, of “healing” as lived out personally and collectively in the prayer assemblies visibly compensated for the “ecstatic deficit” (Cox, 1996) in contemporary parish traditions. Monastic communities have contributed to this new spirit of spirituality and, in return, bear witness to it, especially through their liturgical music repertoires. In Abu Ghosh, this is manifested in a particularly remarkable song of praise, performed “in tongues” at the end of daily Vespers.

This song is linked with the last Kyrie in a collective polyphony that starts and ends in a whisper. In between, the polyphony is made up of a profusion of melodic lines. From this moving core, a soprano voice emerges here and there without constituting a melody. In fact, there is no melody. The whole thing lasts not more than a minute. According to the community, this song of praise is improvised, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The analytical framework needed to understand this inspired polyphony has not yet been fully developed, mainly due to the reluctance of the community to accept any musical experimentation in a liturgical context. A first analysis, however, reveals its major operating principles (Tourny, 2020). To sum it up, there is not one but three songs of praise in use throughout the liturgical calendar: one for Ordinary Time, the second for Sundays and Feasts, and the third for the month of Advent before Christmas. Although these three songs belong to the same polyphonic category, they differ slightly from one another in their incipit, in the use of melodic scales, and in their ambitus. Each “language” of the tongues is specific to each monk or nun, differing from one to

another. Asking them to explain their idiosyncratic performances, their answers are always the same: it depends on heavenly inspiration; each singer adapts their voice to the singing of their neighbours and to that of the choir as a whole. As this singing in tongues has been practiced for years, however, the realizations vary little from one day to another in practice.

In this case, the monks and nuns have not simply incorporated another language into the liturgy: they have borrowed from the global Charismatic movement another way of *conceiving* language altogether; a way of reimagining its role within the liturgy, itself deriving from spiritual currents across the Mediterranean and beyond. Even as the community of Abu Ghosh Benedictine draws inspiration from its Latin foundations, its Jewish heritage, and its Israeli surroundings, these daily moments of polyphonic glossolalia telescope the community's practice across the Atlantic.

West African Sonorities

Among the numerous questions raised by the long presence of Catholic missions outside of Europe, one was that about music: what kind of liturgical music should be used? In fact, this question became central to evangelizing missions around the world, whether Catholic or Protestant. Although one cannot generalize due to the great variety of cases, there are many common points regarding the difficulties encountered—both for missionaries and for the local people concerned—and regarding the methods used in attempting to solve them. For the missions, there was a strong temptation to limit or even prohibit local musical traditions that were considered primitive or licentious (Mc Lean, 1986; Rappoport 2019) and to impose their own sacred music, considered “true”. In the context of colonization of souls and spirits, many took this step. The

missionary work accomplished throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shows an ever-increasing attention to local cultures, yet these questions are still being asked in missionary contexts around the world. One of them is that of the compatibility of Western sacred music with local musical aesthetics. Another is that of the translation of biblical texts into the vernacular, an obstacle that only an emic translation might overcome (Marck, 2012). It is generally through hymnody and recourse to oral tradition that a dialogue may be established, resulting in new repertoires created by missionaries and by local populations as well (Charton & De Bernardi, 1998).

In 1955, the papal encyclical *Musicae sacrae disciplina*¹³ (“*On Sacred Music*”) encouraged the development of popular hymns in the local language in non-formal masses. Three years later, *De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia*¹⁴ (“*Instruction on Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy*”) stressed the importance of traditional European and local hymns in mission countries as a tool for evangelization (Landron, 2014: 134). In 1967, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council formalized this recommendation, which, in fact, was already being implemented in the field.

It was precisely during this transitional period that nine monks from the Abbey of Solesmes were sent to a place near Dakar, Senegal, to establish the monastery of Keur Moussa. One of them, Brother Dominique Casta (d. 2018), was to devote his life to liturgical composition, adapting many traditional Wolof songs to Gregorian metrics, and introducing the kora, the balafon, and various local percussion instruments. His prolific work contributed to the success and recognition of the monastic project of Keur Moussa, eventually becoming a source of inspiration for other Catholic communities in Africa and elsewhere, including Abu Ghosh. Under his impulse, the numerous

studies carried out on the traditional Mandinka *kora* in association with two other Brothers coming from Solesmes, Brother Michel and subsequently with Brother Luke, made it possible to stabilize the tuning of the instrument thanks to the addition of guitar mechanics and to create chromatic versions of the *kora* capable of accompanying any liturgical chant.¹⁵

In this context, a kind of “African musical flavor” entered Abu Ghosh with the introduction of two *koras* into its liturgical instrumentarium. However, it is important to note that the use of these “African” instruments at the Abbey is done in a singular way since the function of these instruments changes there. For if the use of cora is part of the missionary project of the Abbey of Keur Mussa - a tool to get closer to the local population with local instruments - this is not the case in Abu Ghosh. Indeed, if the introduction of the instrument in Abu Ghosh may recall the links forged by the community with that of Keur Moussa, the motivation for its use here is mostly of an aesthetic nature: the sound of the instrument, the softness of its playing to support the singing and its adaptability to the acoustics of the Romanesque church. In other words, far from any missionary spirit, this instrument of “African origin” participates in the culture of the Abbey and in the singularity of its “sound”.

For years, sister Christine-Marie, has been in charge of two koras, one in Bb, the second in chromatic tuning. Introduced to the playing of the instrument by the same Brother Luke from Keur Moussa during his sabbatical year at Abu Ghosh, it is she who accompanies certain liturgical hours, notably Psalm 150 for Lauds, the end of Sunday Vespers, and the Gospel of the solemn Sunday Mass. On the latter occasion, the instrumental playing is based on five basic chords:¹⁶

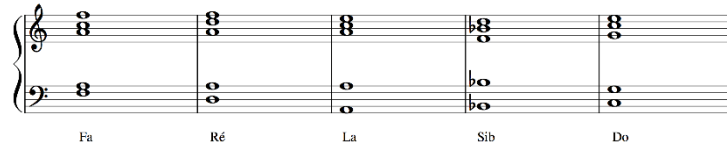


Fig. 4.1

These five musical chords in Mandinka local mode of Fa (*silaba*), are mostly played in arpeggios in the picking style of the Kora, linked together by passing notes. As an example, chord 1 is frequently played as follows (following transcriptions by the Author):



Fig. 4.2

All of the chords are used in a quite fixed organization for the accompaniment of the sung recitation of the Gospel by the officiant, in the way of the Abbey. From one Gospel to another, the melodic line remains the same, and it is up to the instrument to adapt to the prosody. As a short example, the opening of the Gospel according to St. John 15 (9-17):

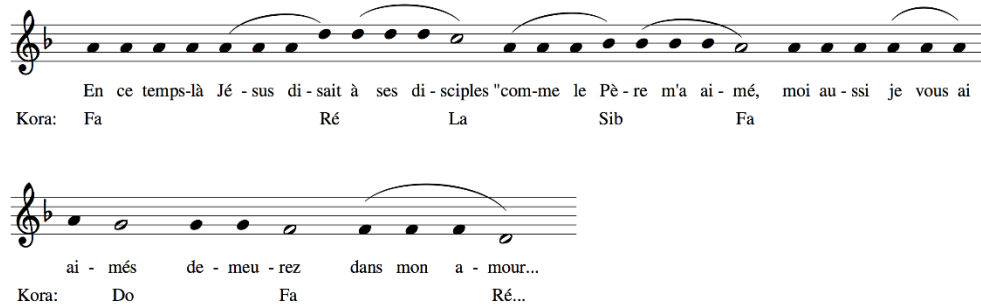


Fig. 4.3

Conclusion

Since the second half of the 20th century, the Roman Church—like many other religious institutions—has undergone profound institutional and ideological changes: the reassessment of the concept of the European Mission in Africa (Varoqui, 2006), the arrival of priests from West Africa and from Eastern Europe (mainly from Poland) to fill the shortage of priests in Europe, the emergence of new demands and expectations from the believers themselves, among others. Ultimately, the universal Church has been transformed by its encounters with national, local, community, and individual practices. The Second Vatican Council confirmed this atmosphere of flux and creativity, provoking a genuine revolution in the understanding of the Catholic rite and of the place of the faithful within it.

Music has been profoundly implicated in these processes, serving as a dynamic field of cultural and spiritual identity formation in Catholic liturgical practice throughout the world. It is a situation that could be summed up thus: tell me what you sing, I will tell you who you are. Some communities struggle to maintain the artifacts of the past (The Latin, Gregorian, Organ trilogy), others rediscover them (Swain, 2018), while still others create new repertoires, inviting new sounds and instruments into their churches in response to increasingly complex social and cultural surroundings.¹⁷

The St. Mary of the Resurrection Abbey in Abu Ghosh is an illuminating case study: the Abbey's multilingual and polystylistic liturgical repertoire constitutes a creative response to the challenges of contemporary Catholicism—a response that begins from the premise of interreligious dialogue.

Its singularity lies in the profound biblical and geo-historical connections to Abu Ghosh, Jerusalem, and the Holy Land which the Abbey's music reimagines within the framework of Jewish-Christian encounters both historical and contemporary. In this respect, liturgical music at Abu Ghosh Benedictine is a promising point of comparison for future research on music in Catholic communities, not only in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, but in sites of historical religious encounter across the Mediterranean. All roads may lead to Rome and, in our case, to Jerusalem, yet the voices of St. Mary of the Resurrection resound at a liturgical crossroads in Abu Ghosh.

Notes

¹ I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Benedictine community of Abu Ghosh for its ever-warm welcome. For the writing of this article, I express my special thanks to Brother Jean-Michel, Brother Olivier, Sister Marie-Madeleine and Sister Christine-Marie for their listening, patience and expertise. Many thanks to H el ene Tourny, Simha Arom, Herv e Roten for their help, and to Jackie Feldman for the reviewing and the English correction of the manuscript.

² In the 530s, Benedict of Nursia built an abbey upon the hill of Montecassino (Lazio, Italy), founding the project, which culminated ten years later with the writing of the Rule. The Rule of St. Benedict was based on the three essential principles of prayer, study of Sacred Scripture, and manual work. Along with the figure of the abbot (head of the monastery) and the role of the community, they shaped Benedictine life as a whole. Inspired by the Rule of the Master, an anonymous monastic document from the 6th century, Benedict insists on the permanent quest for the Divine Presence. From theory to practice, the first two sections of his Rule give primacy to doctrine and liturgy, making the Divine Liturgy the priority of monastic life. See Fortin, 1999.

³ For an overview of the international spread of the Benedictine movement, see the official website of the Order <https://www.osb.org/> and an article published on the subject in the Catholic Encyclopaedia: <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02443a.htm>, (last access September 2020)

⁴ Quotation from "Our Vocation according to Father Abbot Paul Grammont", website of the Abbey, <https://abbaye-abugosh.info/en/vocation-holy-land/>, (last access September 2020)

⁵ The Hebrew-speaking Catholic community is a Vicariate placed under the authority of the Latin Patriarchate of the Holy Land. It is organized into small communities (local *kehillot*) established in all the major cities of Israel, <https://www.catholic.co.il/>, (last access September 2020)

⁶ Quotation from "Our Vocation for the Holy Land is a Path", website of the Abbey, <https://abbayeabugosh.info/en/vocation-holy-land/>, (last access September 2020)

⁷ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_instr_19670305_musicam-sacram_en.html, (last access September 2020)

⁸ *Graduel Romain*, Les  ditions de Solesmes, 1979

⁹ <http://www.lucapanetti.com/images/psalterium.jpg>, (last access September 2020)

¹⁰ “Blessed be the Lord my strength / Which teacheth my hands to war / And my fingers to fight,” King James Version.

¹¹ With the exception of Psalms 131 (H.130), 133 (H.132), and 134 (H.133), which are used for Compline.

¹² For one of its numerous interpretations, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMCSwrTNhM>, (last access September 2020)

¹³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_25121955_musicae-sacrae.html, (last access September 2020)

¹⁴ <https://adoremus.org/1958/09/instruction-on-sacred-music/>, (last access September 2020)

¹⁵ For a description of that project (in French), see: <http://www.abbaye-keur-moussa.org/lakora.html?lg=fr>, (last access September 2020)

¹⁶ Instrumental playing is notated. A French-language kora method and rhythmic psalmody method have been developed for beginners by Lisette Biron, France. See: <http://www.vente-et-cours-kora-abbaye-keur-moussa.com/>, (last access September 2020)

¹⁷ “The International Conference on Sacred Music” was held in Rome in March 2017, under the direction of the Pontifical Council for Culture, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Musica Sacram*. The collective statement published within the framework of the Conference, titled *Cantate domino canticum novum* (“Sing to the Lord a New Song”), is fairly critical of trends in sacred trends since Vatican II: <http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2017/03/international-declaration-on-sacred.html#.XsQA6Sngq8U>, (last access September 2020)

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