

Culture #2 Early Christianity

Environment: Coastal region of Turkey

Location: Constantinople - the imperial Capital of the Roman Empire, Europe largest and wealthiest city. Previously the capital had been Rome, Italy.

Subsistence: Emmer (a ancient grain for porridges & breads) figs, milk, game and the meat of domestic animals and wine. (Purcell p.11)

Ethnographic Present 4th ce

Social Structure - Polytheism and Roman imperial cult (to 380) Christianity (from 380) - Patriarchal.

The society at this time was highly unstable do plague, draught, famine and invasions.

Christian origins coming from a Judaic base that was liturgical and considered a heretical. This was initiated by a prophet/messiah following Judaic prophesies, attracting a main body of 12 disciples and numerous followers.

Eventually the teachings of Jesus were taken over by a ruling elite that were highly politically motivated to acquire status with the state and Church.

It eventually split again forming Roman Catholic Church which following the teachings of Paul and what is now known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, which follows the Apostolic teachings, beginning with James the Just.

The hierarchal component of the church is highly complicated but in essence began with Apostle Peter being declared the 'rock' or foundation of the Church, and given the keys to the gates of heaven by Jesus. Thus the first pope that all following popes would claim title to. Followed by bishops priests, deacons.

World View Ideology - The new Christians in Rome believes itself to be the only true church of Jesus, other Christ-believing churches are false. Doctrine was originally established as Imperial requirements of the Emperor Constantine and the power of salvation rested no longer through Jesus but through him. He had saved the Christians by ensuring their freedom within the Roman Empire. (In that there was no longer a challenge to the divinity of the Roman emperor.) Three churches were built 312 -327 ce one is St John Lateran.

At Nicaea God was then redefined as three persons father, son, and the Holy Ghost. Doctrine of the trinity was now established. Jesus was now God and no longer 'son of God' and was no longer a threat to the Roman Empire. In creating mystical beings of both Jesus and his mother Mary this fit in with what Rome already had - plenty of gods.

In 390 Jesus was reintroduced as 'son of God' in the Apostles' Creed written in Greek - timing was on its side as Rome was to be attacked and fall into decline. (Shearing 2004)

Body of Material on Chants in this culture - As mentioned earlier the church developed from the Jewish forms of liturgical practices. Variations developed over time with the additions of prayers and elements built upon local traditions.

The common language spoken was Greek, Latin developed later in the 'Roman province of Africa'.

'Gloria in Excelisis Deo' and 'Te Deum' were a few of the earliest. Little is known about the melodies that were used as prayers and texts were

both read and sang - musical notation was not used at this time.

St. Ambrose developed hymns sung in a metred (*meter refers to the rhythmic and syllabic structure of a piece of poetry*ⁱ) form, similar to the marching sound of the Roman soldiers.

Nearly a century later Pope Gregory compiled the songs and chants. Gregorian chants came out of these beginnings then followed by the Benedictine monasteries.

From the official Catholic website they say that little is known of the actual musical style of the 4th century, but what is known is that there seems to have two forms of singing. The responsorial - a solo singing which the congregation joined with a refrain - like 'Amen' and antiphonal - an alternation of two choirs.ⁱⁱ

It is also speculated that due to the pagan nature of the use of musical instruments they were not used. Historical it should be noted that the within all cultures there is an evolution to the use of instruments. First came percussion, the pipe (flute) then string. (Guild, p.13)

i <http://metricalpsalms.homestead.com/index.html>

ii <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12144a.htm>