

# STEPHEN HEADLEY

## Dimensions of Prayer. St. Sabas in the Judean désert

Stephen Cavanna Headley was born in Pennsylvania in 1943. He earned a B.A. degree in Oriental Studies (Chinese and Sanskrit) from the Columbia University (1969) and continued his studies in Paris with a diploma in Sanskrit philology at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (1972) and a doctorate in social anthropology at the Sorbonne in 1979. In the mean time, he also studied theology at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and at the St Sergius Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris.

He worked at the French National Center for Scientific Research between 1981-2008, between 1998 and 2008 he was working with a research team founded by the anthropologist Louis Dumont.

Between 1973 and 2005 Headley did extensive fieldwork in central Java, while between 2006 and 2010 he taught in Moscow and undertook field work on parish life.

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I want to suggest that today the most important inheritance of these two hundred years of monastic life in Judean desert is the monastic *typikon* of St. Sabbas. If it later influenced the cathedral rite in the imperial city of Constantinople, the Sabaite hymnography of Jerusalem at the time as later enriched by the Studite tradition, was guaranteed an indelible place in Orthodox *ordo*'s, both parish and monastic. This liturgical code of monastic life, normative for many centuries, but even more broadly outside the monasteries where the quality of their prayer was transmitted through Sabaite hymnography in urban settings. The coryphée of this immense poetic gift of the monasteries of "St. Sabas" to urban parishes throughout the Orthodox world was St. John of Damascus (c. 675/6 –749), theologian, poet/musician, who came to Palestine and maybe to St. Sabas, where he lived and composed the three great canons of the Christian year"