Jost Gippert

Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective

Ne in tuo palimpsesto
Nostrum nomen semper esto[1]

The present volume unites eighteen papers read during two workshops at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures in Hamburg in October 2021[2] and July 2023.[3] With a total of thirty-eight contributions covering written artefacts from Europe, Asia, and Africa, and even a modern artistic approach[4] to what has been called 'palimpsest' since Antiquity, the workshops addressed this phenomenon from a nearly global perspective, examining many different manuscript cultures using different languages and scripts as well as writing supports and inks. This broader perspective made it immediately clear that the very concept of 'palimpsest' needs revising, particularly with respect as to whether it necessarily means, as suggested by a recently published definition, a 'manuscript whose text was erased' and then had 'another layer of text [...] written over the previous one', thus representing a 'writing surface that has been reused for the purpose of writing'.[5] In other words, the question is whether both the removal of a first layer and its overwriting by a second one are essential for a global understanding of the term.

Even though the quoted definition agrees by and large with what has come to be the common interpretation of the term today, it is important in this context that 'palimpsest' reflects, via Latin *palimpsestus*, the Greek word παλίμψηστος, which is compounded of the adverb πάλιν ('again') with ψηστός, the past partici-

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1 'Pater noster', Plemp 1618, 23.

2 'Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective', organised by Jost Gippert, José Maksimczuk, and Thies Staack. For more information, see <https://www.vk.uni-hamburg.de/uploads/event/pdf_en/63968/CSMC_Workshop_Removed_and_Rewritten.pdf>.

3 'Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective II', organised by Jost Gippert, José Maksimczuk, and Hasmik Sargsyan. For more information, see <https://www.vk.uni-hamburg.de/uploads/event/pdf_en/91514/CSMC_Workshop_Removed_and_Rewritten_II.pdf>.

4 Performance *Intervention Palimpsests* by Axel Malik, 8 October 2021, 17:15–18:00.

5 Denis Salgado, 'Manuscripts 101: What Is a Palimpsest?', <https://www.csntm.org/2023/11/29/manuscripts-101-what-is-a-palimpsest/>.

ple of the verb ψάω meaning 'to rub' or 'to scrape off'. The suggestion is, therefore, that the denomination initially focused on erasure rather than overwriting. This understanding is clearly attested by a chemical treatise, preserved in a third-century papyrus, which describes the production of chemical tinctures that can be used to whiten pearls. It reads (see Fig. 1):[6]

Αὐτῇ δὲ καὶ χάρτας γεγραμμένους πάλιν ψᾶ,[7] ὥστε δοκεῖν μηδέποτε γεγράφθαι. Λαβὼν ἀφρόνιτρον τῆξον εἰς ὕδωρ. Εἶτα κατὰ τὸ γεγενῆσαν νίτρωμα προσέμβαλε γῆς ἐμπάσα(ς) ὠμῆς μέ(ρος) α′ καὶ γῆς κιμωλίας μέ(ρος) α′ καὶ γάλα βόϊον, ὡς πάντα μιγέντα γενέσθαι γλοιώδη, καὶ προσμίξας σχίνου χυλοῦ κατάχρισον πτερῷ. Καὶ ἐάσας ξηρανθῆναι, εἶτα ἀπολέπισον, εὑρήσεις λευκά. Ἐὰν δὲ κατὰ βάθους ᾖ κιρρά, πάλιν ἐπίχριε, ἐὰν δὲ εἰς χάρτην, μόνα τὰ γράμματα χρῖε.

With the following (tincture you can) also rub inscribed papyrus sheets again so that they seem never to have been inscribed. Take some sodium bicarbonate and dissolve it in water. Then, when the soda solution has formed, add one measure of totally raw dirt, one measure of Cimolian earth (white clay) and cow's milk, so that it all becomes glutinous, and after mixing in mastic juice, apply it with a feather. After letting it dry, peel it off again, and you will find (the pearls) white. Should it still be deeply ochre, anoint it again, but if it is for a papyrus, daub only the letters.

The only available attestation of the compounded term παλίμψηστος in Ancient Greek yields a similar picture. We find it in the treatise on philosophers and rulers (*Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*) of the historian Plutarch (first to second century CE), according to whom Plato, when visiting Sicily in order to influence her tyrant, Dionysius, found the ruler 'ὥσπερ βιβλίον παλίμψηστον ἤδη μολυσμῶν ἀνάπλεων καὶ τὴν βαφὴν οὐκ ἀνιέντα τῆς τυραννίδος' ('like an erased book that is covered all over with stains and (yet) does not lose the dye of tyranny'; see Fig. 2).[8] Adding the notion of 'being overwritten' would be rather misleading in this image.[9]

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6 Papyrus graecus Holmiensis, p. γ, ll. 20–30. Greek text after Lagercrantz 1913, 6–7; the translation is mine (for other English translations, cf. Caley 1927, 982; Schmidt 2007; Trachsel 2021).

7 Lagercrantz (1913, 6) has 'αὕτη … ψᾷ', which would mean that it is the reagent itself that rubs; the construction assumed here (with a dative in instrumental function and the second-person singular imperative) seems preferable (in the sense of 'with this reagent you can rub'). As Fig. 1 shows, no diacritics are used in the papyrus.

8 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 776–779 (text 28). The passage is found in, among others, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter: BnF), grec 1672, fol. 549va, ll. 35–37 (see Fig. 2) and grec 2076, fol. 401[v], ll. 9–10. With the spelling παλίψηστα, the term is attested in one more work of Plutarch's (*De garrulitate*), in the phrase ὥσπερ παλίψηστα διαμολύνοντες ('like polluted palimpsests'; 504 D, ll. 10–11), which is less decisive for our question.

9 Cf. the translation by Harold North Fowler: 'like a book which is erased and written over' (Fowler 1936, 47).
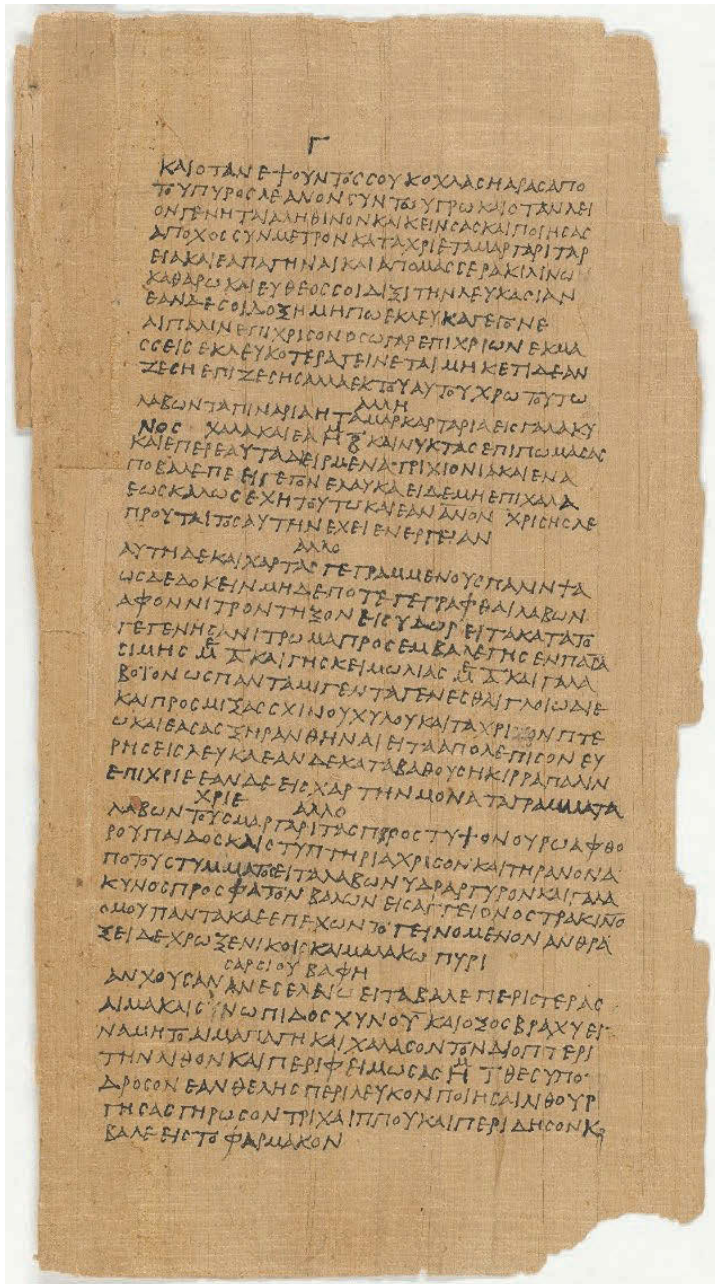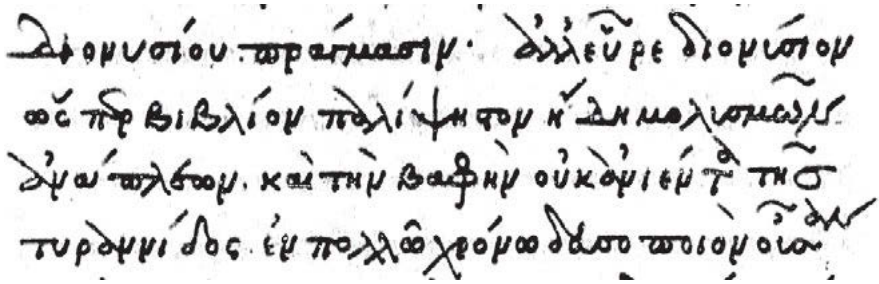
Fig. 1: Papyrus graecus Holmiensis, p. γ; © Library of Congress, Washington DC; <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668051>.

Fig. 2: Paris, BnF, grec 1672, fol. 549va, ll. 34–37; © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10723269h/f582.item>.

In contrast, reuse was clearly involved when the Roman rhetor M. Tullius Cicero (first century BCE) ridiculed his nephew, the lawyer Trebatius, for using a palimpsested papyrus for a letter to him (see Fig. 3):[10]

Nam quod in palimpsesto, laudo equidem parsimoniam, sed miror quid in illa chartula fuit quod delere malueris quam haec <non> scribere, nisi forte tuas formulas: non enim puto te meas epistulas delere ut reponas tuas.

For as to (your letter being a) palimpsest, I do praise your parsimony but I wonder what might have been on that scrap of papyrus which you preferred to erase rather than to write it out, if not perhaps your (legal) forms? For I cannot imagine that you would delete my letters so that you could substitute your own.
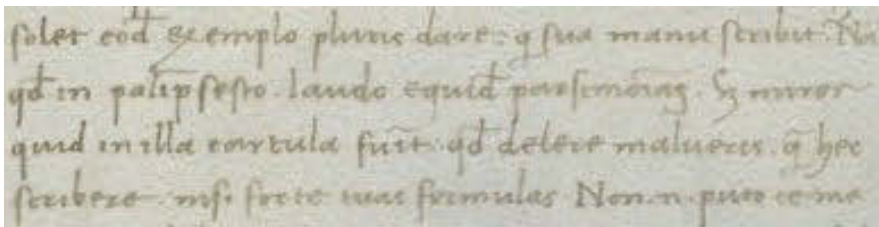
Fig. 3: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek (hereafter: SBB), Ms. Diez. B Sant. 73, fol. 93^v, ll. 21–24; © Staatsbibliothek, Berlin; <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN1724158309&PHYSID=PHYS_0190>.

The idea of reuse is also prevalent in an invective poem of Cicero's coeval Catullus (see Fig. 4), which includes a nice illustration of scroll production of the time:[11]

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10 Cicero, *Ad familiares* VII, 18. See Stolte 2005 for a discussion.

Suffenus iste, Vare, quem probe nosti,	That Suffenus whom you, Varus, know very well,
homost venustus et dicax et urbanus,	is an attractive man, and witty and erudite.
idemque longe plurimos facit versus.	The same also produces by far more verses than anyone else.
puto esse ego illi milia aut decem aut plura	I think he has ten thousand or more written out
perscripta, nec sic ut fit in palimpsesto[12]	in full and not, as it happens, noted down on a palimpsest:
relata: chartae regiae, novi libri,	imperial papyrus sheets, newly tied together,
novi umbilici, lora rubra, membranae,	with new scroll staffs, red leather straps, (and) parchment wrappers,
derecta plumbo, et pumice omnia aequata.	all ruled with lead and smoothed with pumice.
haec cum legas tu, bellus ille et urbanus	When you come to read these, that handsome and erudite
Suffenus unus caprimulgus aut fossor	Suffenus reappears just as a goatsucker or peasant
rursus videtur	
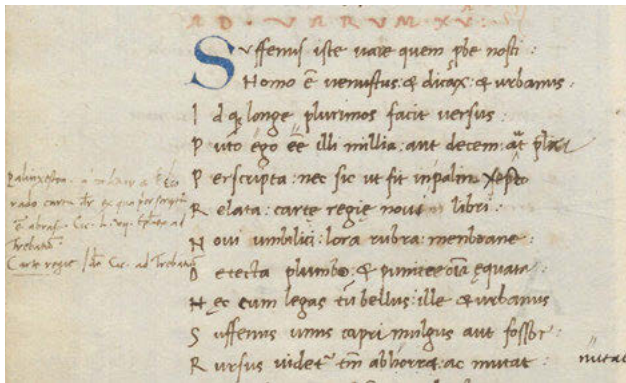
Fig. 4: Berlin, SBB, Ms. Diez. B Sant. 37 (Codex Datanus), fol. 14ᵛ, ll. 6–17; © Staatsbibliothek, Berlin; <https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dc/1002517877-0038/full/,4000/0/default.jpg>.

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11 Catullus, poem 22. Cf. the edition and translation by Francis Warre Cornish in Cornish, Postgate and Mackail 1918, 26–27 and the discussion of the meaning of 'in palimpsesto' in Roberts and Skeat 1983, 16.
12 Note that in the manuscript Berlin, SBB, Ms. Diez. B Sant. 37 (the so-called Codex Datanus; see Lachmann 1861, 14, n. 7), fol. 14ᵛ, the word was emended to *palinxesto* by a later hand, which also added the etymology 'palinxeston. a πάλιν et ξέω' in the margin with reference to Cicero's letter (see Fig. 4). The original reading was obviously *palmisepto* as in Paris, BnF, latin 14137, fol. 6ʳ (see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52000994w/f15.item>); Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ott.lat. 1829, fol. 6ᵛ, l. 2 (see <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Ott.lat.1829>); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon. Class. Lat. 30, fol. 6ᵛ, l. 2 (see <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/c645f804-d10b-45e4-8a14-c9b22676b87d/surfaces/425528ac-bbfd-48de-aef8-ecb695022fae/>). On the question of whether we should rather expect the accusative plural form *palimpsestos* here, see Cornish in Cornish, Postgate and Mackail 1918, 26, n. 1.

The question of whether the focus of palimpsesting is on the erasing or the over-writing – and, accordingly, whether the term 'palimpsest' itself presupposes both processes or only the first one – has often been thematised. In his contribution to the present volume, Ted Erho decidedly adopts the definition of a palimpsest as

> a codex containing at least one quire in which a text from a discrete manuscript has been erased and written over in a way that includes at least part of a principal text of the newly produced manuscript as overtext[13]

thus eliminating

> certain cases casually or erroneously referred to as such, especially with respect to flyleaves, for which other explanations including fading, water damage, or erasure without deliberate overwriting, are more applicable.[14]

Such a definition may seem too rigid for other scholars, especially with the restriction to 'at least one quire'. In any case, the problem of uncertainty in the use of the term 'palimpsest' can easily be overcome by using *codex rescriptus* for codices that were actually overwritten, as proposed long ago by Elias Avery Lowe in his survey of Latin palimpsests.[15]

Several other questions come up here. One is the question of the writing supports most successfully used for palimpsesting. In the antique examples, it is clearly papyrus, styled χάρτη in Greek and *chart(ul)a* in Latin, the latter word borrowed from the former. In more recent times, however, the term 'palimpsest' has mostly been associated with parchment codices, even in connection with the antique examples mentioned above.[16] This tendency can be nicely seen in the treatment of the term in humanists' writings dealing with the rhetor's heritage. For instance, in the 1570 edition of his *Ciceronian Thesaurus of Latin Words*, Antonius van Schore defines *palimpsestvm* as 'Charta in qua scripta deleri possunt' with reference to the passage referred to above. In the 1597 edition of the same work, the definition extends to include the German translation *Perment / Eselshaut / darein man schreibt / und doch dasselbig kan wider außleschen* ('Parchment, donkey's skin on which one writes and can yet extinguish it again'),[17] thus showing

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13 See Ted Erho's contribution to the present volume, 394.
14 See Ted Erho's contribution to the present volume, 394.
15 Lowe 1964, 68 [1972, 481].
16 While David R. Shackleton-Bailey (2001) translates Cicero's *chartula* as 'paper', Henry A. Sanders (1938, 99–100) takes the rhetor's use of 'palimpsest' explicitly as evidence for assuming that the support was parchment. See Hulley 1943, 85 with n. 1 and, further, Roberts and Skeat 1983, 16.
17 van Schore 1570, [460]; van Schore 1597, 645.

that *charta* was already perceived as meaning 'parchment'. In contrast to this understanding, the contemporary definition by Alexander Scot takes *tabulae* into account, which probably refers to wax tables; it runs: 'Palinestvm,[18] *vel* Palimp-sestvm, *vel potius*, Palimpsestos, *charta, seu tabula, in qua cum aliquid scriptum est, deleri, abradique commode potest, rursusque scribi. delet(um) etiam Vlpianus Iurisconsultus vocat*' ('Palinestum, or Palimpsestum, or rather Παλίμψηστος, a leaf or table in which, if something is written, it can easily by deleted and erased, and again [over]written. It is also called "deleted" by Ulpian the jurist').[19]

In the present volume, most of the contributions deal with palimpsested parchment codices. The only other support that is thematised is paper, which is in the focus of the contributions by Darya Ogorodnikova and Khaoula Trad, concerning palimpsesting traditions in Islamic contexts in West Africa, and by Halle O'Neal, on Japanese traditions. For the question of palimpsested epigraphical artefacts, the presentation read by Kaja Harter-Uibopuu during the 2021 workshop was a very promising starting point;[20] it would surely be worthwhile devoting a special volume to this topic.

Another question often raised with respect to palimpsests revolves around the methods of erasing applied in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. To put it more concretely, whether the use of ψάω in the denomination of palimpsests points to 'rubbing' or even 'scraping off' the older text, or whether a mere 'washing off' might also be implied. As a matter of fact, traces of scraping are often discernible in palimpsested parchment leaves, and the different degrees of readability (or retraceability) of the erased texts may depend on the method applied to remove them. In addition, different procedures may have been responsible for the fact that some inks disappeared more readily than others. This is especially true of red inks, as used in titles and rubrics, which often left no traces while the surrounding blackish or brownish inks of the main text did. In the present volume, this question is addressed in the contributions by Eka Kvirkvelia and Jost Gippert. Discussing different possible ways

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18 The quotation from Cicero's letter adduced by the author contains this form (*palinesto*).

19 Scot 1588, 616. Ulpian is likely Gnaeus Domitius Annius Ulpianus, a Roman jurist of the end of the second to beginning of the third century; the reference is probably to his sixty-eighth *Liber ad edictum*, a commentary included in chapter 43.5 of the *Institutiones Iustiniani* entitled *De tabulis exhibendis* ('On the presentation of tables'), where he writes: *Sed et si deletum sine dolo sit testamentum* ('But even if the will is deleted without guile'). See *Corpus iuris civilis*, 683a (43.5.1.11). The sixteenth-century edition by Gregor Haloander has *dolo* ('with guile'), thus changing the content remarkably (see *Digesta*, 1882; *Pandectae*, 1189).

20 Kaja Harter-Uibopuu, 'Palimpsests in Greco-Roman Funerary Epigraphy', presentation on the workshop 'Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective', 7 October 2021; see the abstract in <https://www.vk.uni-hamburg.de/uploads/event/pdf_en/63968/CSMC_Workshop_Removed_and_Rewritten.pdf>.

in which a *scriptio superior* might vanish, Ogorodnikova and Trad put forward examples in which the ink of the lower layer in West African palimpsests faded away without the intervention of a human agent. It must be stressed here that research into these questions has so far only been based on the visual appearance; systematic analyses into the material aspects of palimpsests are still wanting.

Another general question is what relation exists between the erased layer and the one written atop. In general, it is assumed that the older layers of palimpsests were removed because they had become obsolete and lost any importance for the scribe of the new layer. This explains why we find so many palimpsests with different languages and scripts in their lower and upper layers. For instance, Lowe's list of Latin palimpsests contains twenty-one items with non-Latin undertexts (in Gothic, Greek, and Hebrew) and ten items with Latin texts overwritten in other languages (Anglo-Saxon, Arabic, Coptic, Gaelic, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, and Syriac).[21] In the contributions to the present volume, several such combinations are mentioned or dealt with, among them Latin and Greek under Slavonic (Heinz Miklas), Greek over Armenian (Jost Gippert and Zisis Melissakis), Greek over Ethiopic (Ted Erho), Greek over Georgian (Bernard Outtier), Georgian over Armenian (Erich Renhart and Hasmik Sargsyan), Caucasian Albanian under Georgian (Hussein Mohammed, Mahdi Jampour, and Jost Gippert), Syriac over Armenian (Emilio Bonfiglio and Hasmik Sargsyan), Arabic over Armenian (Hasmik Sargsyan), Syriac under Arabic, Georgian, Hebrew, and Greek (Grigory Kessel), and Christian Palestinian Aramaic under Arabic, Georgian, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac (Christa Müller-Kessler). A peculiar example of Greek over Latin is the palimpsest from Mount Athos dealt with by Stefan Alexandru; its lower layer contains, apart from liturgical text materials, musical notations in the so-called four-line staff. A similar Latin palimpsest with an Armenian overtext has recently been detected in the collection of the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (hereafter: Matenadaran) at Yerevan; the last three lines of the undertext in the palimpsest codex Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 3822 (see Fig. 5) represent the verses *<O> quam gloriosum est regnum in quo <c>um Christo gaudent omnes sancti, amicti <s>tolis albis sequuntur agnum quocum<que> ...* ('O, how glorious is the kingdom in which all saints rejoice with Christ; clad in white surplices they follow the Lamb wheresoever'), from a chant (antiphon) for All Saints.[22]

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21 Lowe 1964, 81 [1972, 492–493].

22 *CAO* 4063; see <https://www.cantusindex.org/id/004063>. The upper layer of M 3822 consists of the Armenian liturgical collection named *Mashtots*; it was written by a bishop named Meliksēt in the thirteenth century (see Yeganyan, Zeytunyan and Antabyan 1965, 1091). The multispectral images of the codex were produced at the Matenadaran in the course of the Development of
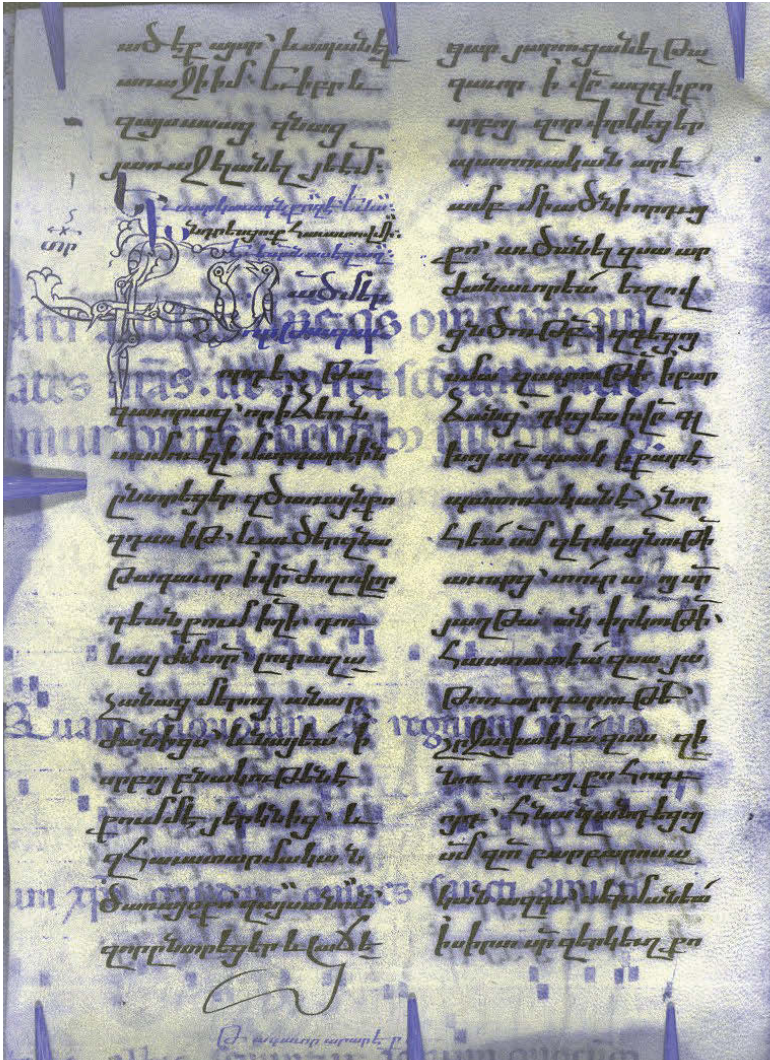
Fig. 5: Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 3822, fol. 175ᵛ: Latin undertext with musical notations overwritten in Armenian (pseudo-colour rendering of multispectral image); © Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan / DeLiCaTe project.

It is easy to conceive that in such cases the undertext was erased because it was of no importance (and often even incomprehensible) for the cultural community that intended to reuse the writing support for its own purposes. However, the same reason also can be assumed for many palimpsests whose lower and upper layers are in the same language. In these cases, the undertexts may have become obsolete because of altered religious practices (this is true, for example, of biblical lectionaries that had to be adapted to changing liturgical prescriptions, as in the case of the turn from the Jerusalem-based rite to the Constantinopolitan-based one that occurred in the Georgian Church during the eleventh century),[23] or, simply, due to changing practices of reading and writing which manifest themselves in, for example, the switch from majuscules to minuscules in Christian book production in Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, and other languages with alphabetic scripts. Even though the conditions and results of such changes must be examined individually for every single tradition, clear tendencies are observable across languages and scripts.

If we exclude minor erasures and additions that scribes applied in correcting their own texts (or texts written by other scribes), cases of a discernible – and intentional – interrelation of an erased layer with its overwriting remain rare in the production of parchment-based palimpsests. A remarkable such case, however, is the reuse of large ornamental and polychrome initials that either were deemed too beautiful to be erased or resisted erasure because of the inks they contained and were therefore integrated into the overwritten layer, either unaltered or adapted to fit the 'new' context. Several examples of this sort have been reported among Latin palimpsests in Germany[24] and Iceland.[25] In a similar way,

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23 See Eka Kvirkvelia's contribution to the present volume for palimpsested Georgian lectionaries of the Jerusalem rite. A case of liturgical content erased and overwritten by similar content is dealt with in Gippert 2014, 168.

24 Three manuscripts from Germany (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Theol. lat. qu. 376, fols 42[r] and 208[v]; Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Hs 880, fol. 1[r]; and ibid. 1016, fol. 188[v]) are thematised in Knaus 1972. Hanna Wimmer (email of 27 March 2024) further notes Jena, Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Ms. El. f. 39, fol. 64[v] (see <https://collections.thulb.uni-jena.de/api/iiif/image/v2/HisBest_derivate_00003067%2FBE_0937_0120.tif/full/!1200,1200/0/default.jpg>) and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. germ. oct. 48, fol. 79[v] (see <https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dc/796239517-0172/full/,1200/0/default.jpg>).

25 The psalter manuscript Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 618 4to, fols 1[r], 27[v], 61[v], 77[v], 93[r]; see Lárusson 1951; Westergård-Nielsen 1977; and Lorenz 2022. A total of four examples were introduced by Tom Lorenz in his paper 'Recycling vs Modification: Modes of Palimpsestation in Icelandic Manuscripts' read at the conference 'Studying Written Artefacts: Challenges and Perspectives' at the University of Hamburg on 29 September 2023; see the abstract in <https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/uwa2023/programme/abstracts.pdf>.

the title page of the Armenian Gospel manuscript M 6424 of the Matenaradan in Yerevan, a palimpsest copied in the year 1451 in minuscules over a parchment codex containing the Pauline Epistles written in majuscules, exhibits an extremely long initial letter which was adapted from the lower layer, itself the initial page of the Epistles codex: the Պ = *P* in the name of Paul introducing the Letter to Romans ('Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus') was changed into a Գ = *g* in the word *girk'* ('book') as the first word of the heading of the Gospel of Matthew ('Book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ'). In addition, the complete title of the Epistle as contained on the page, written in characters of different sizes, remained unerased and unaltered, thus appearing mixed line by line (without any textual coherence) with the overwritten beginning of the Gospel (see Fig. 6, where the 'lower' text appears in majuscules contrasting with the minuscules of the 'upper' text).[26] In the present volume, more intrinsic interrelations (and even interactions) between lower and upper layers of palimpsested manuscripts are discussed in the contributions by Alba Fedeli, Darya Ogorodnikova, and Khaoula Trad on practices of Qur'anic studies manifesting themselves in Arabic palimpsests and by Halle O'Neal on Japanese 'letter sutras'.

When it comes to palimpsests, we normally take two layers into account: the erased one as the 'lower layer' (or *scriptio inferior*) and the overwritten one as the 'upper layer' (or *scriptio superior*). However, there are cases of more than just two layers being involved, implying that erasure was undertaken more than once in the lifetime of the palimpsest. In our volume, this phenomenon is addressed in the contributions by Heinz Miklas (on a Slavonic palimpsest with undertexts in Latin, Greek, and Slavonic in Glagolitic script), Christa Müller-Kessler (on a Georgian palimpsest with undertexts in Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Greek and an Arabic one with undertexts in Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Syriac), Grigory Kessel (on various palimpsests with Syriac undertexts), and Mariam Kamarauli and Jost Gippert (on a Georgian palimpsest with undertexts from different stages of the same language). These constellations make it necessary to reconsider the terminology: given that the dichotomies of 'undertext' or 'lower layer' and 'overtext' or 'upper layer' are not sufficient here, the contributions propose designations such as 'lowest' and 'middle layer' as well as *scriptio ima* (or *infima*) and *scriptio media*.

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[26] The images of the codex were produced at the Matenadaran in the course of the DeLiCaTe project (see Jost Gippert's contribution by to the present volume). For further details, see Gippert forthcoming b.
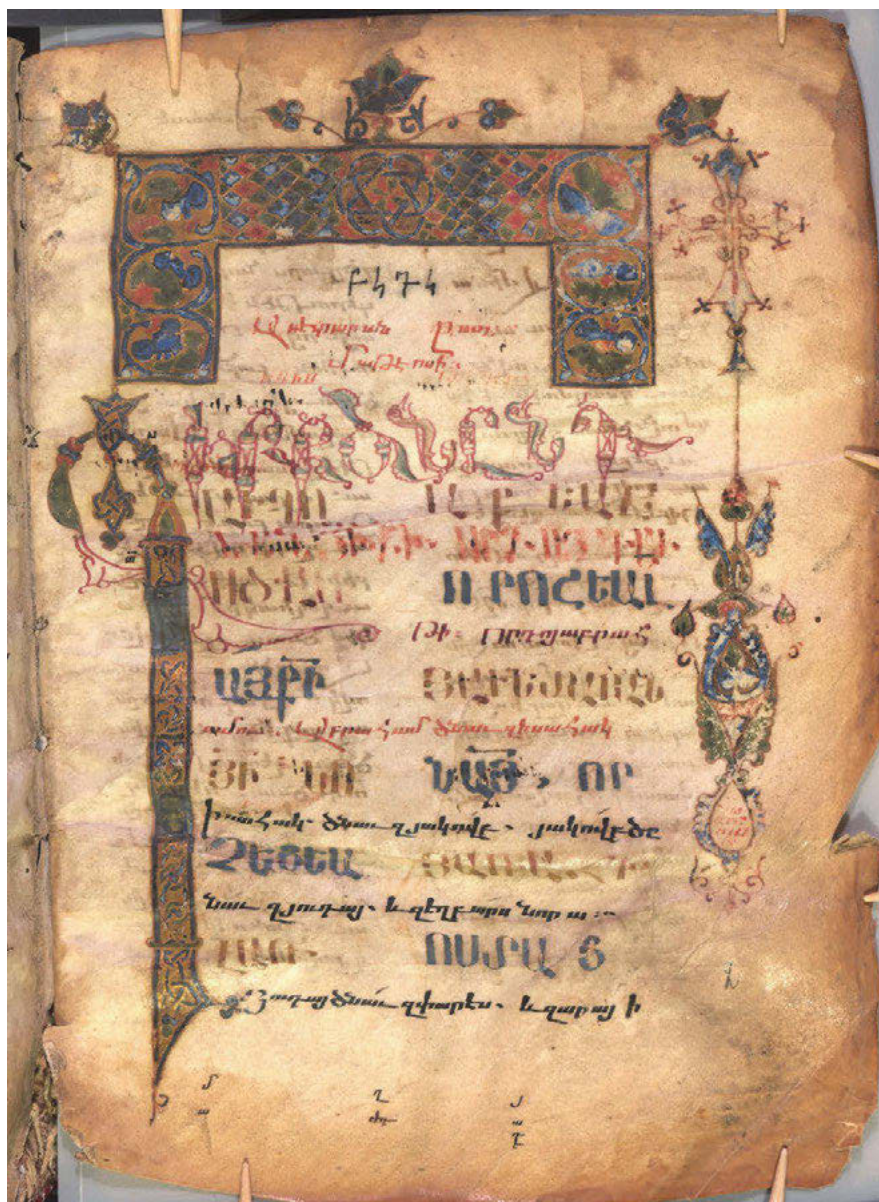
Fig. 6: Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 6424, fol. 2ʳ: Matthew 1:1 written over Romans 1:1, with the initial letter adapted and the lines of the Epistles text unerased between those of the Gospel text; © Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan / DeLiCaTe project.

The accumulation of several undertexts, in the sense of lowest, middle, and upper(most) layers, appearing on one and the same page must not be confused with the coexistence of different layers that stem from different erased codices and are distributed across the quires of the palimpsested volume but are not written one over the other. For instance, the Georgian codex no. 2 of the Austrian National Library, Vienna, consisting of 135 palimpsested folios with Georgian undertexts, comprises erased material that was written by at least fourteen hands and probably stems from the same number of codices, with biblical, hagiographic, homiletic, and hymnographic texts contained in them.[27] In the present volume, the question of the 'number of *codices antiquiores* that furnished the writing material' for palimpsests is taken up by Grigory Kessel, who distinguishes two groups among Syriac palimpsests: those composed of up to five underlying manuscripts, and those which include a larger number of originals. It is notably the latter group that involves multilingual settings, with undertexts in 'Syriac, Greek, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Arabic (with both Christian and Islamic content), Armenian, Hebrew, Coptic, and Latin'.[28]

The very process of dismantling codices for erasure and then reuse also often led to different parts of them being integrated into different *codices rescripti*. For instance, one quire of one of the original codices reused in the Georgian palimpsest of Vienna has been detected in another palimpsest that is today preserved in the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts in Tbilisi.[29] Similarly, in his contribution to this book, Bernard Outtier introduces a single palimpsest folio from Mount Athos that was inserted into the Greek manuscript Paris, BnF, Coislin 285. At the same time, the fragile structure of palimpsested codices not infrequently leads to their further disintegration, resulting in their being scattered as *membra disiecta* across different places. A good example are the remnants of the Syriac *codex rescriptus* with Armenian undertexts dealt with in Emilio Bonfiglio's contribution, as are the various fragments of palimpsests in Christian Palestinian Aramaic with Georgian overtexts applied by the Georgian monk Ioane Zosime at St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in the tenth century, which are described by Christa Müller-Kessler.

The coexistence of two or more chronologically distinct layers in palimpests has a bearing on the question of their dating. While for the upper layers a dating is often provided in the form of scribes' colophons, the erased lower layers are

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27 See Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, xviii–xix.

28 See Grigory Kessel's contribution to the present volume, 192.

29 Tbilisi, Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, A-737, fols 134–141; see Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, xviii and 6-1.

usually deprived of such information,[30] and thus a dating can be attempted only on the basis of palaeographical and linguistic features. Among such features, it is not only letter shapes that can be taken into account but also additional ones such as the use of abbreviations, punctuation marks, and word dividers – features that are addressed in the contributions by Alba Fedeli (on Arabic), Emilio Bonfiglio and Erich Renhart (on Armenian), Mariam Kamarauli (on Georgian), and Zisis Melissakis (on Greek).[31] Another type of palaeographic information can be drawn from layout-specific aspects of the underwriting, such as the use of enlarged initials, indicating the beginning of larger text units; peculiar character shapes or sizes that appear in titles; and, more generally, the application of different inks for markup. Such phenomena take focus in the contributions of Emilio Bonfiglio (on the Armenian palimpsest of the Schøyen Collection), Jost Gippert (on the Armenian-Greek palimpsest of Paris), and Eka Kvirkvelia and Mariam Kamarauli (on Georgian palimpsests). Linguistic features that can play a role in dating lower layers are notably available in palimpsests from the first centuries of Georgian literacy, that is, the fifth to ninth centuries CE, with three periods distinguishable via the appearance of certain prefixes; this topic is dealt with in the contributions by Mariam Kamarauli, Jost Gippert, and Eka Kvirkvelia. The question of to what extent similar criteria can be established for Armenian is the focus of the paper by Hasmik Sargsyan and also treated in Erich Renhart's article.

Another feature of palimpsests that may be crucial for the question of dating is the discernibility of paracontent in the lower layers. This phenomenon may concern both textual and non-textual materials, the former including, among other things, marginal and interlinear notes and numberings relating either to the structure of the main text (as in the case of Ammonian section numbers or Eusebian canon numbers in biblical manuscripts) or to the structure of the palimpsested codex itself (as in the case of quire or folio numbers).[32] A special case is the preservation of remnants of illuminations or miniatures in the lower layers of

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30 As an exception, we may note the palimpested flyleaves of the Armenian manuscript M 3938 of the Matenadaran in Yerevan which contain just the colophon of a former Gospel codex; cf. Gippert forthcoming a, 3.3.
31 These features have been used, for example, in establishing the chronological relation between the different undertexts of the Georgian palimpsest of Vienna; see Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, xxvi–xxxi.
32 See Gippert 2023, 131–133 as to the insight gained from the discovery of quire numbers for the reconstruction of the Caucasian Albanian codex palimpsested in Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. NF 13 and 55.

palimpsests, which has been reported here and there;[33] among the contributions of the present volume, one such case is dealt with in Heinz Miklas's paper on Slavonic palimpsests from Mount Sinai. Another case is mentioned in Hasmik Sargsyan's account of the palimpsested flyleaves of Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 4435; the miniature in question shows the Christ's entry on a donkey into Jerusalem,[34] here embedded in the context of lectionary readings concerning the Holy Week (but not overwritten!).

For quite some centuries now, research into palimpsests has mostly focused on the decipherment, reading, and editing of the removed lower layers. To enhance the readability of the often all-too-well erased older texts, several methods have been developed, the first being the application of chemical reagents that usually allow the faded-out characters reappear for a short period of time but cause irreparable damage to the palimpsest, resulting in blueish or brownish stains that make legibility even worse than before. In the present volume, the history of such attempts is portrayed comprehensively in Emanuel Zingg's contribution. Since the twentieth century, advanced methods of photographing have emerged, beginning with imaging in ultraviolet light and more recently consisting of sophisticated applications of multispectral imaging (MSI), which are based on the comparison of several images taken in different regions of the light spectrum, from ultraviolet via visible light up to infrared. Several projects have used this latter method in the preparation of scholarly editions since the beginning of the twenty-first century,[35] and many of the contributions of the present volume are based on this technology. A perspective on the future development of artificial intelligence-based methods for analysing images of palimpsests and reconstructing their content is introduced in the paper by Hussein Mohamed, Mahdi Jampour, and Jost Gippert.

Of the eighteen contributions in this volume, three provide a comprehensive survey of the palimpsest heritage in the manuscript culture they are dealing with (Ted Erho on Ethiopic, Grigory Kessel on Syriac, and Christa Müller-Kessler on Christian Palestinian Aramaic); the others mostly touch upon individual artefacts or collections, certain genres, or general approaches to the decipherment and

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33 See, for example, Kasotakis 2023, 390–392 on the image of a plant detected in the lower layer of Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, arab. NF 8, fols 16ᵛ and 17ʳ.

34 See Hasmik Sargsyan's contribution to this volume, Fig. 1b.

35 The first edition that was based on MSI was that of the Georgian palimpsest of Vienna (Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007), followed by the edition of the lower layers in Caucasian Albanian and Armenian of Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. NF 13 and 55 (Gippert et al. 2008; Gippert 2010). An online edition of the Greek Archimedes Palimpsest was launched in October 2008; see <https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0014/ArchimedesPalimpsest/>.

rendering of palimpsests. The internal order of the contributions in the book is by and large guided by the age of the artefacts under concern, beginning with Antiquity and ending up in more recent times, and tries to keep thematically related traditions together. We hope that the given mixture of topics and approaches provides a better understanding of the phenomenon of removing scripts and reusing the writing support and will instigate other scholars to share their efforts at making these 'hidden' treasures from the history of writing accessible and understandable.

Formal matters

The contributions to the present volume deal with materials in various languages and scripts, from Arabic, Aramaic, Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Latin, and Old Church Slavonic up to Syriac. To cope with the different systems of transcription that are spread over the corresponding scholarly traditions as well as libraries and catalogues, we decided to use a simplified English transcription for all terms which are known from, or identifiable via, English reference works, as well as for authors' names. Non-Latin scripts are usually only reproduced in quotations from original texts; the same is true for scientific transcription systems which are here and there applied in rendering names and special terms, especially when the actual sounding is thematised. Online sources are quoted via persistent Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) wherever available; all other web addresses (URLs) were last accessed on 12 June 2024 if not indicated otherwise.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the contributors of this volume who, alongside their many other duties, were ready to provide their articles in a remarkably short period of time so that the book can now go into the press, exactly one year after the second workshop entitled 'Removed and Rewritten' took place. Our

Abbreviations

CAO = *Corpus Antiphonalium Officii*, compiled by René-Jean Hesbert, 6 vols, Rome: Herder, 1963–1979.

Corpus iuris civilis = *Corpus iuris civilis.* Editio stereotypa altera, volumen primum: *Institutiones*, ed. Paulus Krueger; *Digesta*, ed. Theodorus Mommsen, Berlin: Weidmann, 1877.

Digesta = *Digestorum seu pandectarum libri quinquaginta*, ed. Gregor Haloander, vol. 3, Nuremberg: Petreius, 1529.

Pandectae = *Iuris civilis pandectarum seu digestorum libri quinquaginta*, ed. Gregor Haloander, Basel: Guarin, 1570.

SBB = Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

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