

## **Palimpsests and Related Phenomena across Languages and Cultures**

# **Studies in Manuscript Cultures**



Edited by

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## **Volume 42**

# **Palimpsests and Related Phenomena across Languages and Cultures**

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Edited by  
Jost Gippert, José Maksimczuk and Hasmik Sargsyan

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Jost Gippert

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

*Ne in tuo palimpsesto  
Nostrum nomen semper esto*<sup>1</sup>

The present volume unites eighteen papers read during two workshops at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures in Hamburg in October 2021<sup>2</sup> and July 2023.<sup>3</sup> With a total of thirty-eight contributions covering written artefacts from Europe, Asia, and Africa, and even a modern artistic approach<sup>4</sup> 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’.<sup>5</sup> 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 *παλίψηστος*, 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](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](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):<sup>6</sup>

Αὐτῇ δὲ καὶ χάρτας γεγραμμένους πάλιν ψᾶ,<sup>7</sup> 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 βόιον, ὡς πάντα μιγέντα γενέσθαι γλοιώδη, καὶ προσμίξας σχίνου χυλοῦ κατάχρισον πετρῶ. Καὶ ἐάσας ξηρανθῆναι, εἶτα ἀπολέπισον, εὐρήσεις λευκά. Ἐὰν δὲ κατὰ βάθους ἢ κισρρά, πάλιν ἐπίχριε, ἐὰν δὲ εἰς χάρτην, μόνα τὰ γράμματα χριε.

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 ‘ὡσπερ βιβλίον παλίμψηστον ἤδη μολυσμῶν ἀνάπλεων καὶ τὴν βαφήν 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).<sup>8</sup> Adding the notion of ‘being overwritten’ would be rather misleading in this image.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> 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).

<sup>7</sup> Lagercrantz (1913, 6) has ‘αὐτῇ ... ψᾶ’, 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.

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

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the translation by Harold North Fowler: ‘like a book which is erased and written over’ (Fowler 1936, 47).



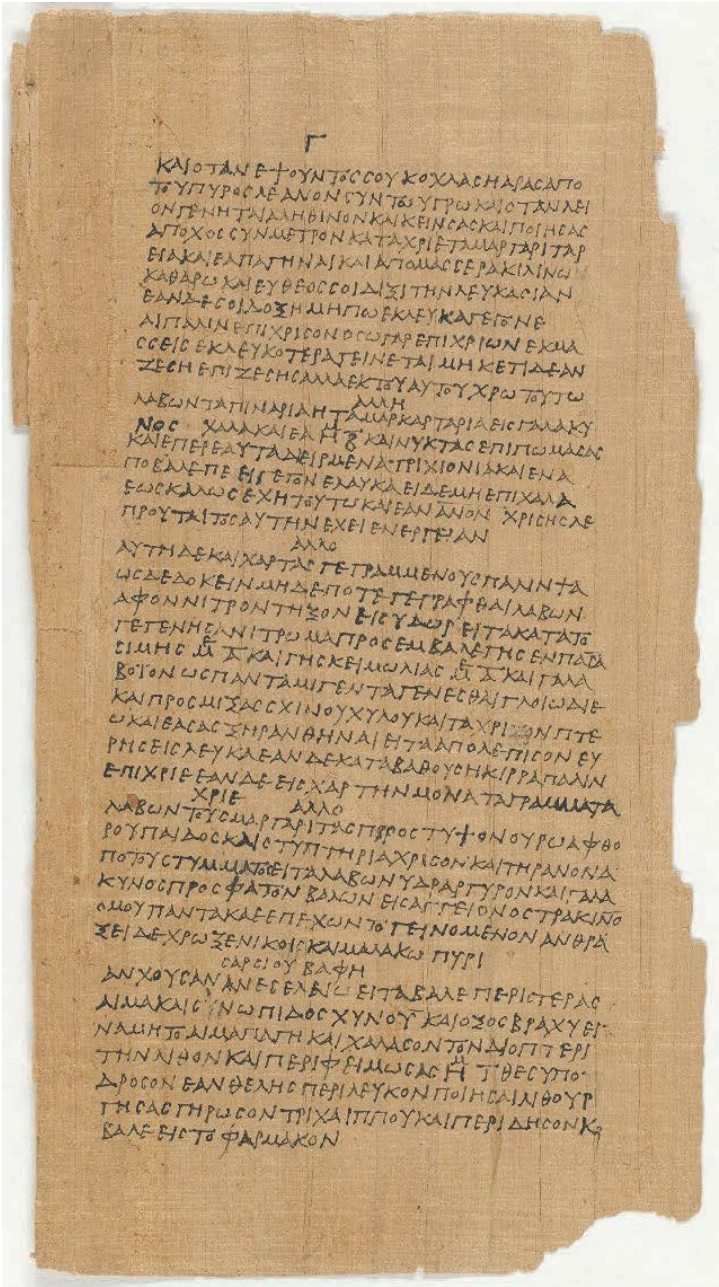
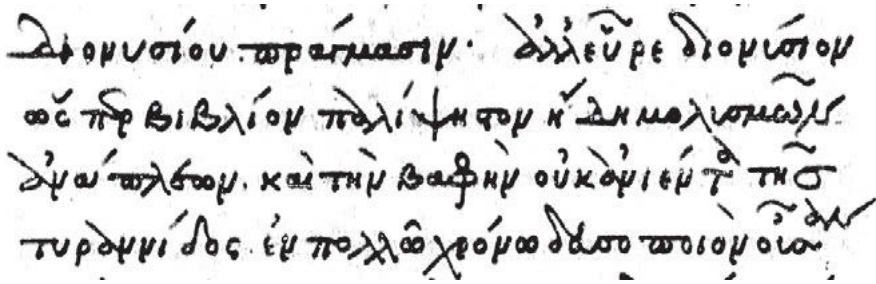


Fig. 1: Papyrus graecus Holmiensis, p. γ; © Library of Congress, Washington DC; <<https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668051>>.

Γ

ΚΑΙ ΟΤΑΝ ΕΤΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΟΥ ΚΟΧΛΑΣ ΗΡΑΣΑΤΟ  
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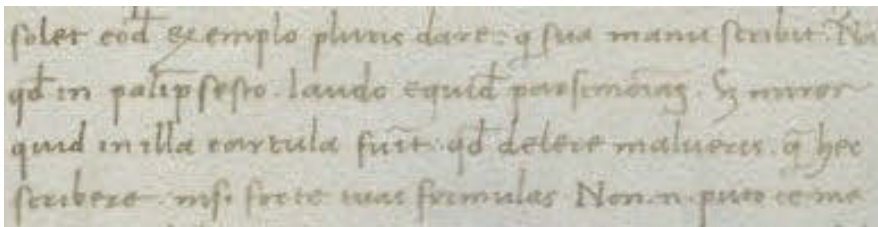


**Fig. 2:** Paris, BnF, grec 1672, fol. 549<sup>va</sup>, ll. 34–37; © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10723269h/f582.item>>.

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):<sup>10</sup>

*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<sup>v</sup>, ll. 21–24; © Staatsbibliothek, Berlin; <[https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN1724158309&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0190](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:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cicero, *Ad familiares* VII, 18. See Stolte 2005 for a discussion.

*Suffenus iste, Vare, quem probe nosti,  
homost venustus et dicax et urbanus,  
idemque longe plurimos facit versus.*

*puto esse ego illi milia aut decem aut plura  
perscripta, nec sic ut fit in palimpsesto*<sup>12</sup>

*relata: chartae regiae, novi libri,  
novi umbilici, lora rubra, membranae,  
derecta plumbo, et pumice omnia aequata.*

*haec cum legas tu, bellus ille et urbanus*

*Suffenus unus caprimulgus aut fossor  
rursus videtur*

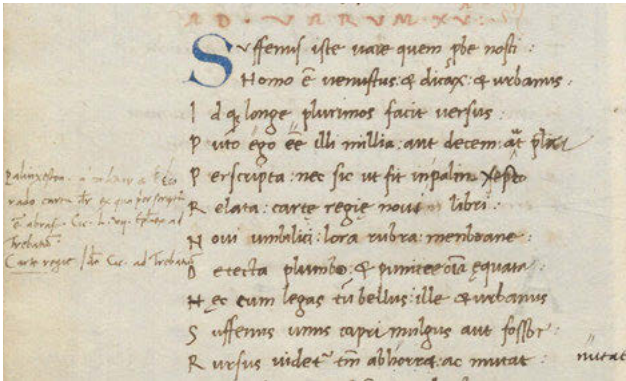
That Suffenus whom you, Varus, know very well,  
is an attractive man, and witty and erudite.  
The same also produces by far more verses than  
anyone else.

I think he has ten thousand or more written out  
in full and not, as it happens, noted down on a  
palimpsest:

imperial papyrus sheets, newly tied together,  
with new scroll staffs, red leather straps, (and)  
parchment wrappers,  
all ruled with lead and smoothed with pumice.

When you come to read these, that handsome  
and erudite

Suffenus reappears just as a goatsucker or peasant



**Fig. 4:** Berlin, SBB, Ms. Diez. B Sant. 37 (Codex Datanus), fol. 14<sup>v</sup>, ll. 6–17; © Staatsbibliothek, Berlin; <<https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dc/1002517877-0038/full/1,4000/0/default.jpg>>.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Note that in the manuscript Berlin, SBB, Ms. Diez. B Sant. 37 (the so-called Codex Datanus; see Lachmann 1861, 14, n. 7), fol. 14<sup>v</sup>, 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. 6<sup>r</sup> (see <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52000994w/f15.item>>); Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ott.lat. 1829, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>, l. 2 (see <[https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Ott.lat.1829](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Ott.lat.1829)>); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon. Class. Lat. 30, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>, l. 2 (see <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/c645f804-d10b-45e4-8a14-c9b22676b87d/surfaces/425528ac-bbfd-48de-ae8f-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 overwriting – 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 oertext<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> 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 aufleschen* (‘Parchment, donkey’s skin on which one writes and can yet extinguish it again’),<sup>17</sup> thus showing

<sup>13</sup> See Ted Erho’s contribution to the present volume, 394.

<sup>14</sup> See Ted Erho’s contribution to the present volume, 394.

<sup>15</sup> Lowe 1964, 68 [1972, 481].

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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,<sup>18</sup> vel Palimpsestvm, 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 be deleted and erased, and again [over]written. It is also called “deleted” by Ulpian the jurist’).<sup>19</sup>

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;<sup>20</sup> 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 retracability) 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 Kvirkevelia 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 Annianus 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).

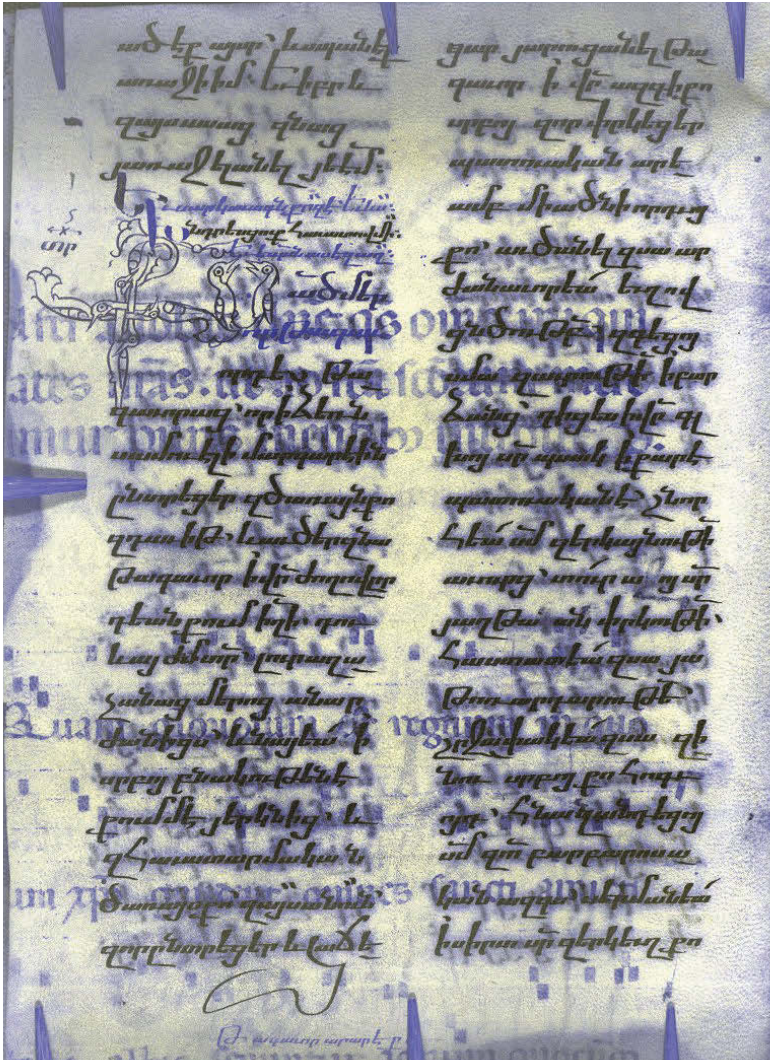
**20** Kaja Harter-Uibopuu, ‘Palimpsests in Greco-Roman Funerary Epigraphy’, presentation on the workshop ‘Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective’, 7 October 2021; see the abstract in <[https://www.vk.uni-hamburg.de/uploads/event/pdf\\_en/63968/CSMC\\_Workshop\\_Removed\\_and\\_Rewritten.pdf](https://www.vk.uni-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).<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Lowe 1964, 81 [1972, 492–493].

<sup>22</sup> 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.

Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe) project (see Jost Gippert's contribution to the present volume).

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),<sup>23</sup> 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<sup>24</sup> and Iceland.<sup>25</sup> In a similar way,

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23 See Eka Kvirkevelia’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<sup>r</sup> and 208<sup>v</sup>; Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Hs 880, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; and *ibid.* 1016, fol. 188<sup>v</sup>) 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<sup>v</sup> (see <[https://collections.thulb.uni-jena.de/api/iiif/image/v2/HisBest\\_derivate\\_00003067%2FBE\\_0937\\_0120.tif/full/!1200,1200/0/default.jpg](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<sup>v</sup> (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<sup>r</sup>, 27<sup>v</sup>, 61<sup>v</sup>, 77<sup>v</sup>, 93<sup>r</sup>; 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>>.

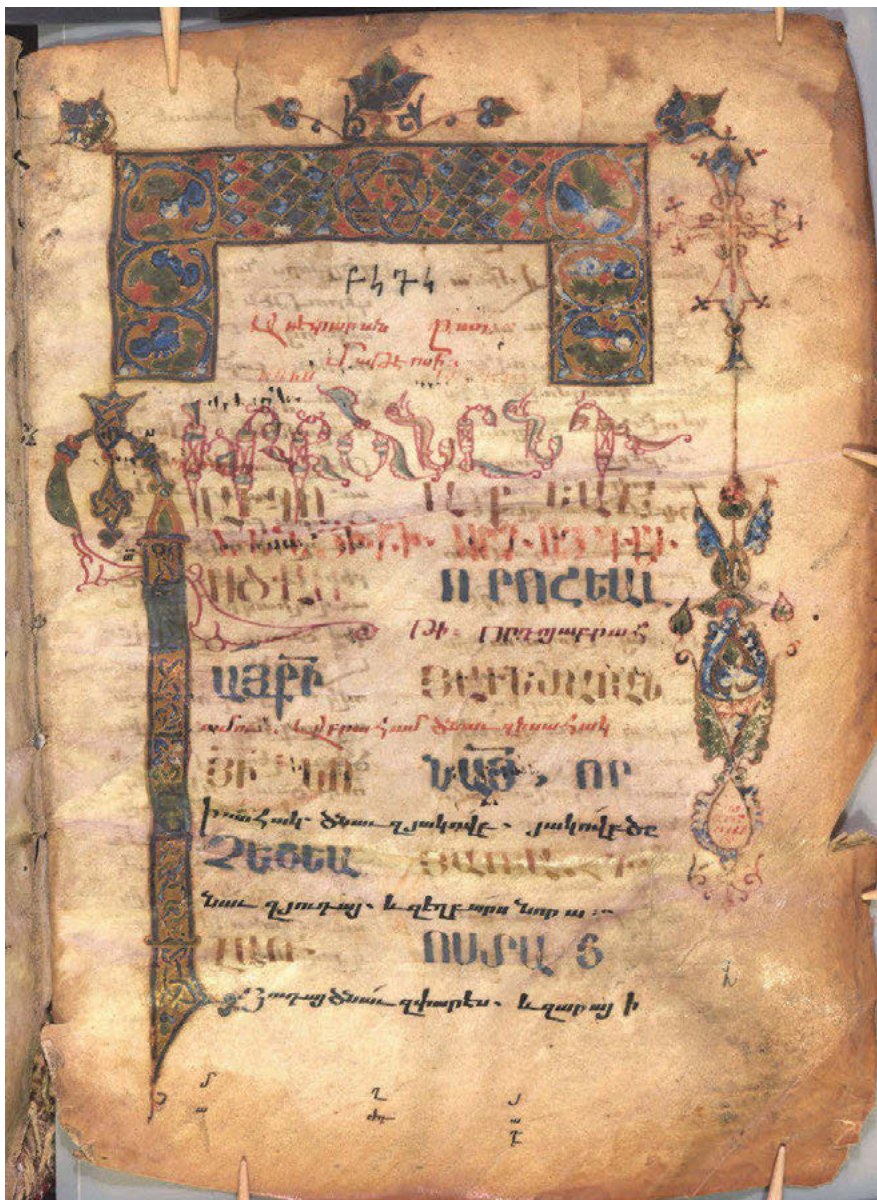


the title page of the Armenian Gospel manuscript M 6424 of the Matenadaran in Yerevan, a palimpsest copied in the year 1451 in minuscules over a parchment codex containing the Pauline Epistles written in majuscules, exhibits an extremely long initial letter which was adapted from the lower layer, itself 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).<sup>26</sup> 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 'over-text' 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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<sup>26</sup> 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. 2<sup>r</sup>: 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.<sup>27</sup> 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’.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> 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 palimpsests 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,<sup>30</sup> 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).<sup>31</sup> 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).<sup>32</sup> 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 palimpsested 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, Sarjeladze 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;<sup>33</sup> 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,<sup>34</sup> 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,<sup>35</sup> 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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<sup>33</sup> 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 16<sup>v</sup> and 17<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> See Hasmik Sargsyan's contribution to this volume, Fig. 1b.

<sup>35</sup> 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.

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## 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:

Petreyus, 1529.

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

Guarin, 1570.

SBB = Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

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Emanuel Zingg

# Written Sources on the Use of Reagents in the Palimpsests Veronenses XV, XL, and LXII: Towards an Archaeology of Destruction

**Abstract:** The three palimpsests Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, Veronenses (hereafter: Veron.) XV, XL, and LXII contain rewritten bifolios of late antique copies of works by Gaius, Vergil, Livy, and other classical Latin authors. Because they are very old, and in some cases the only, witnesses of the manuscript tradition of these works, they have attracted the attention of scholars since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when chemical reagents were the only means to make the washed-off letters visible again. Scholars applied a great variety of reagents to them and attested to their use in an unusually open way in private letters and print publications. These three codices are thus ideal objects for a case study on the use of and thoughts on chemical reagents in nineteenth-century palimpsest research. Although this widespread technique did enormous damage to outstanding cultural heritage in many Western European libraries and thus has had a significant impact on the field, it has not yet been widely explored via a historical approach based on written sources.

## 1 Introduction

The Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona houses three manuscripts for which erased and reinscribed parchment pages of late antique Latin manuscripts were used. In this way, Gaius's *Institutes* have been preserved as undertexts in Veron. XV (13); a Vergil with scholia, a Livy, a Latin translation of Euclid's *Elements*, and an introduction to and summary of the Platonic dialogues are preserved in Veron. XL (38); and the Codex Iustinianus is preserved with the Greek *Scholia Veronensia* in Veron. LXII (60). Although none of these deleted copies are complete (in the case of the Gaius, almost complete), they are nevertheless of outstanding importance due to their great age and, accordingly, their prominent position in the stemma of the respective text tradition. Some of the undertexts – Gaius, the scholia on the

Codex Iustinianus as well as those on Vergil, the Euclid translation, and the treatise on Plato's dialogues – are even entirely or largely the only extant witnesses.<sup>1</sup>

Since Barthold Georg Niebuhr's visit to the library in 1816, the discovery, study, and edition of these three palimpsests in the nineteenth century was closely linked to German studies on Roman law and the rise of the *Historische Rechtsschule* (German Historical School of Jurisprudence).<sup>2</sup> All three palimpsests, however, also share the fate of having been subjected to intensive and repeated chemical treatment to make the underlying text more visible, leading to a severe darkening of the entire treated surface, if not to its actual destruction.

The present article provides an overview of the history of reagent use on the palimpsests Veron. XV, XL, and LXII from a historian's viewpoint. It is based on a compilation of testimonies written by men who were involved in what, today, can only be described as very regrettable damage to first-rate cultural heritage.<sup>3</sup> Although the use of chemicals in palimpsest research was widespread in the nineteenth century, in many cases today we can only make assumptions about where, when, and by whom reagents were used because the users did not comment on this aspect of their research in their publications or because we do not know on which texts tinctures were tried without any mention at all. The documentation for the three Veronese palimpsests discussed here, by contrast, is particularly favourable and can serve as an informative case study for the handling of palimpsests at the time.

Among recent research contributions on the topic, I would like to highlight Felix Albrecht's overview of the most important reagents and their consequential damage to palimpsest manuscripts,<sup>4</sup> as well as the edition and explanation of nineteenth-century sources by legal historians, particularly Mario Varvaro.<sup>5</sup> However, Albrecht focuses on the chemical composition of the agents, not on the

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1 Giuliani 1888, 79 [1993, 79]: '[...] i tre nostri più famosi *palinsesti* ai N. XV, XL, e LXII [...]' ('[...] our three most famous *palimpsests* nos. XV, XL and LXII [...]'). For a description of the three manuscripts, see Spagnolo and Marchi 1996, 64–67, 90–92 (with colour plate between pp. 64 and 65), 119–120. On Veron. XV, see recently in great detail Ammirati 2020. On Veron. XL, see also Mommsen 1868, 153–156.

2 On the connection between the Historical School and the discovery of Gaius, see, for instance, Vano 2008.

3 In the appendix at the end of this article, I translate the most important of these sources dealing with the application of reagents or the mixing of tinctures. I cite them using 'source' numbers: S1, S2, etc.

4 Albrecht 2012 and 2015. See also the remarks on the use of reagents all over Europe in Lo Monaco 1996, 709–717.

5 Varvaro 2009a; 2009b; 2012a; and 2012b.

sources, and does not look into the situation in Verona, while Varvaro, in contrast, is mainly interested in the history of the discovery of Gaius. Therefore, sources on the use of reagents in the Biblioteca Capitolare were published in a scattered manner and are not easily accessed. My focus lies on the use of reagents in all three Veronese manuscripts (Veron. XV, XL, and XLII) and I treat the sources in a systematic, albeit concise, way.

The researchers working in Verona often spoke quite blatantly about the use of chemicals, which were the most modern – and only – way to make the erased texts visible again.<sup>6</sup> Pages that were chemically treated only once, in the nineteenth century, are often still quite well preserved today. Their undertext is much more legible than that of untreated pages, and thus one can understand why the reagents were so popular. Repeated application, on the other hand, proved problematic, especially where different products were used which, in combination, dyed the parchment surface almost black. Even if, as we shall see, the sources warn against repeatedly applying reagents on the same spot, we have to reckon with the possibility that they were applied not only by different researchers over the course of the century but also by one and the same person in rapid succession.<sup>7</sup>

In the written sources on the decipherment of the Veronese palimpsests, the application of primarily five reagents in common use in the nineteenth century is discussed, namely:

1. Oak gall tincture (*Galläpfeltinktur*); based on gallic acid ( $C_7H_6O_5$ ) and ethanol ( $C_2H_5OH$ ).
2. Normal liver of sulphur tincture (*Schwefelleber*); a solution of potash or potassium carbonate ( $K_2CO_3$ ) and sulphur (S) that results in a mixture of mainly potassium polysulphide ( $KS_{2x}$ ), potassium sulphate ( $K_2SO_4$ ), and hydrogen sulphide ( $H_2S$ ). The whole is also called ‘hydrogen sulphide of potash’ after its components.
3. Volatile liver of sulphur tincture (*flüchtige Schwefelleber*); based on ammonium hydrogen sulphide ( $NH_4SH$ ).
4. Giobert’s tincture; based on potassium hexacyanoferrate(II) ( $K_4[Fe(CN)_6]$ ), which is also called ‘yellow prussiate of potash’, and hydrochloric acid ( $HCl_{(aq)}$ ).
5. Hofmann’s first tincture; based on potassium sulphocyanate or thiocyanate ( $KSCN$ ) and hydrochloric acid. It is named after August Wilhelm Hofmann (1818–1892), professor of chemistry at the University of Berlin, who suggested its use (S19).

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<sup>6</sup> For example, August Wilhelm von Schröter (1824) does so in a long essay that offers the first overview of the history of palimpsest research (S1).

<sup>7</sup> Göschen confirms this approach in S2.

6. Hofmann's second tincture; based on ammonium thiocyanate (NH<sub>4</sub>SCN) and hydrochloric acid.<sup>8</sup>

The hydrochloric acid, which was often added (as in 4, 5, and 6), served to clean the corroded surface of the remains of erased ferrous inks and thus to strengthen the reaction with the reagents.<sup>9</sup>

The tincture based on oak gall and ethanol (1), which stains the parchment light to dark brown depending on the strength and number of repetitions, is the oldest reagent and was likely originally used mainly by archivists to retrieve text on worn documents.<sup>10</sup> It was a widely used tincture and is primarily associated with Angelo Mai (1782–1854), who founded systematic palimpsest research in 1814 by editing previously unknown fragments of Cicero's speeches *Pro Scauro*, *Pro Tullio*, and *Pro Flacco*, which he had discovered in the Milan palimpsest Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 57 sup., and who was by far the most productive scholar in this field.<sup>11</sup> The first attempts to read palimpsest manuscripts in the eighteenth century largely abstained from using oak gall tincture and were not very successful.<sup>12</sup>

The enormous upswing that palimpsest research took in its golden decade, between 1814 and 1824, which led to a considerable number of highly significant new discoveries of ancient Latin and Greek texts, to which August Wilhelm von Schröter's (1799–1865) overview impressively bears witness,<sup>13</sup> is mainly due to the use of reagents – largely, but not exclusively, oak gall tincture. Some scholars had

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**8** On the composition and production of the first five reagents and their effects on the palimpsests, see Wattenbach 1896, 310–315; Posse 1899, 4–5, n. 1; Kögel 1913, 133–135; Albrecht 2012, 148–160; Albrecht 2015, 31. See also Rabin et al. 2015. The sixth is little known.

**9** In S3, Peyron states his failure when trying to treat the palimpsest Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Taur. D IV 22 with an oak gall tincture without hydrochloric acid.

**10** See the oldest known recipe in Canepari 1619, 179.

**11** Mai probably used this reagent exclusively; see Timpanaro 1980, 227, 229–230; Lo Monaco 1996, 694–696; Albrecht 2012, 149. A number of recipes are listed in Varvaro 2014b, 86–87, n. 3. I am not aware of Mai ever having described his own recipe in a publication, but he reveals it, together with instructions for use, in a letter to Amedeo Peyron (3 November 1814; edited in Pesce 1997, 91, no. 19). Varvaro also refers to a different preparation Mai learned from a Veronese pharmacist and perhaps used in Veron. XL. On Mai's dynamism as a palimpsest researcher, see Timpanaro 1980, 230–233; Lo Monaco 1996, 674–675.

**12** For the study of palimpsest manuscripts and the use of oak gall tincture before 1813, see Timpanaro 1980, 227–229, 248–262; Lo Monaco 1996, 665–672. The Benedictines of the Congregation of Saint Maur were an exception who used this tincture in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 12161; see *Nouveau traité de diplomatique* 1757, 52–53, 144–145, 150–154 and *Nouveau traité de diplomatique* 1759, 458–459, n. 1 (with their recipe).

**13** Von Schröter 1824–1826.

a decided preference for one product, as Mai did for oak gall or Amedeo Peyron (1785–1870) for Giobert's tincture, which bears the name of the Torinese chemistry professor Giovanni Antonio Giobert (1761–1834), who developed the recipe on behalf of Peyron in March 1820 (S4).<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Bluhme (1797–1874) turned to Peyron when he studied the Veronese palimpsests,<sup>15</sup> and as late as 1869, Giuseppe Cozza-Luzi (1837–1905) sought Peyron's advice regarding Giobert's tincture (S7 and S8).

## 2 The use of reagents to study the three Veronese palimpsests in the nineteenth century

Based on the sources known to me, the following stages of reagent application can be reconstructed in the three palimpsest manuscripts Veron. XV, XL, and LXII. Attempts at reading these palimpsests without (as far as I am aware) the use of reagents are given within parentheses.

**1816:** Niebuhr discovers the only, and almost completely, preserved copy of Gaius's *Institutes* in the palimpsest Veron. XV.<sup>16</sup> He also studies two loose leaves that have been known for some time and kept separately, the first of which, a folium, he correctly attributes to Gaius (Veron. I appendice, fr. III) and the second of which, a bifolium of a different format, contains the text of an unknown jurist (Veron. I appendice, fr. IV).<sup>17</sup> These two leaves are not palimpsests. Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779–1861), who did not work in Verona but had only second-hand infor-

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**14** It is quite possible that Giobert knew Blagden's essay mentioned by Peyron in S4, which had also been published in an Italian translation (Blagden 1788). It was actually Blagden who discovered Giobert's tincture, as he describes the effects of hydrochloric acid and potassium hexacyanoferrate(II), which he calls 'phlogisticated alkali', when they are applied on pale inks in parchment manuscripts. Lo Monaco 1996, 709–713 does not seem to be aware of that. On Blagden's terminology, cf. Eklund 1975, 34. For the date of Giobert's invention, see Cipolla 1907, vol. 1, 19.

**15** In S5, Bluhme 1836 (one also frequently finds the spelling Blume) shares the recipe for Giobert's tincture and gives improved instructions for its use. He had received it directly from Peyron with a view to his planned, but never undertaken, Gaius edition, as can be seen from a letter to Peyron (S6).

**16** The Gaius originally consisted of fifteen quaternios and one quinio, of which three written folios and the last, blank one are lost; see Göschen 1820, XXXIII–XXXIV.

**17** The two loose leaves are described in Spagnolo and Marchi 1996, 50. For the location of the leaf Veron. I appendice, fr. III in the Gaius text, see Göschen 1820, XXVII–XXVIII.

mation, namely from Niebuhr, succeeds in attributing the palimpsest text in Veron. XV to Gaius.<sup>18</sup>

**Reagent used:** An oak gall tincture that Niebuhr had mixed in a hurry – he was only stopping by in Verona for two days. The reagent was apparently used without the knowledge of the library staff.<sup>19</sup> In Niebuhr's opinion, the normal liver of sulphur would have been more suitable, as would a tincture containing potash, probably that known under Giobert's name.<sup>20</sup> Niebuhr therefore already had knowledge of this reagent four years before Giobert's 'discovery', presumably thanks to Charles Blagden's (1748–1820) essay (1787). Strangely, according to Immanuel Bekker (1785–1871), Niebuhr did experiment with alkali-based reagents, to the detriment of the palimpsest (S9b). Both tinctures recommended by Niebuhr, the normal liver of sulphur as well as Giobert's tincture, contain potassium and are therefore alkaline. Of course, it could be that Bekker made a mistake here and assumed that Niebuhr had used tinctures that Niebuhr had only conceived of, whereas he and Johann Friedrich Ludwig Göschen (1778–1837), at least with regard to the normal liver of sulphur, had certainly tried them out. In the Gaius Palimpsest, however, the normal and the volatile liver of sulphur did not improve legibility and attacked the parchment, according to Göschen (S11).

**Pages treated with the reagent:** Veron. XV, fol. 91<sup>rv</sup>.

**Resultant edition:** Niebuhr in von Savigny 1817, 140–146, 150–158, 165–168.

**1817:** Together, Göschen, Bekker, and Moritz August Bethmann-Hollweg (1795–1877) read the entire Gaius Palimpsest between the end of May and mid October on behalf of the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin.<sup>21</sup> On this occasion, Bekker discovered fragments from Vergil, Livy, and an unidentified

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**18** Von Savigny 1817. The story of the discovery is also described in Bevilacqua Lazise 1817, 10–25. On the exchange among German scholars, which led to a series of articles immediately after the discovery, see Vano 2008, 101–139.

**19** See Bekker in S9a. According to their own accounts, Bluhme, at least on his first visit to Verona, and Studemund, too, sometimes secretly used reagents in other libraries. See Bluhme's letter to Göschen (1 July 1821; edited in Varvaro 2009a, 246–248) and Studemund's letter to Mommsen (22 April 1866; edited in Varvaro 2012b, 304).

**20** Niebuhr's letter to von Savigny reporting the discovery (4 September 1816) is reprinted with some rearrangements and minor omissions in von Savigny 1817, 130–135. Of particular interest is the passage translated below in S10 based on the original wording. In his letter to the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften dated 23 September 1816, Niebuhr again refers to hydrogen sulphide of potash as the reagent of choice for the reading of Gaius, and on 9 April 1817 he gives von Savigny advice on how to obtain it in Verona or, if necessary, Venice (letters edited in Vischer 1981, 69–79, here 71, and 178–179, here 178). See also Göschen 1820, XII–XIII; Varvaro 2014b, 87–88.

**21** On their method, see Varvaro 2011, 249–252.



mathematical treatise in Veron. XL,<sup>22</sup> as well as long fragments of the *Corpus iuris civilis* with Greek scholia in Veron. LXII.<sup>23</sup>

**Reagent used:** Oak gall tincture, after experiments with normal and volatile liver of sulphur in the Gaius and other Veronese palimpsest manuscripts, as Göschen writes in S11.<sup>24</sup> The recommendation of volatile liver of sulphur seems to trace back to Friedrich Stromeyer (1776–1835), professor of chemistry in Göttingen, who had experimented with it (S12).<sup>25</sup>

**Pages treated with the reagent:** Systematic use of oak gall tincture throughout Veron. XV with the cathedral chapter's permission (S13), following negotiations (S14).<sup>26</sup>

**Resultant edition:** Göschen 1820 (*editio princeps* of Gaius).<sup>27</sup>

**1817:** At the end of October or in November 1817, Mai studies Veron. XL. He probably made the decision to visit Verona when he learned of the presence of the German scholars during the summer, but he did not meet them there.<sup>28</sup>

**Reagent used:** Oak gall tincture.<sup>29</sup>

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22 Bevilacqua Lazise 1817, 26.

23 Göschen also studied another fragment of a legal text, the Justinian *Institutes*, in Veron. XXXVIII (36).

24 In two letters to Niebuhr (6 and 26 July 1823; edited in Varvaro 2009b, 448–449, n. 49), Bluhme suspects an experiment with a liver of sulphur reagent in Veron. XV (so one must conclude from Varvaro 2014b, 88; Varvaro 2009b, 448 indicates Veron. LXII), conducted by Göschen and Bekker, which ate away the letters.

25 Giuliani 1888, 193 [1993, 195] obviously draws on Ignazio Bevilacqua Lazise's account in S12, but the reader gets the wrong impression that Göschen primarily used volatile liver of sulphur and oak gall tincture only if necessary. On Stromeyer, see *NDB* 2013, vol. 25, 578–579 (Claus Priesner).

26 The correspondence between the academy of Berlin and the Biblioteca Capitolare is collected in Veron. DCCCCLXXXIII, fasc. VI.

27 On the history of the *editio princeps* of Gaius, see von Schröter 1824–1826, 25/26, 293–302; Vano 2008, 141–187; Varvaro 2009b; Briguglio 2012, 131–181; Varvaro 2012a. Von Schröter 1824–1826, 25/26, 297–299 emphasises in particular that with this edition palimpsest research has been raised to a completely new scholarly level compared to Mai's work, whose great merits he unquestionably acknowledges and launches into a hymn-like praise (see S15). The only shortcoming that von Schröter 1824–1826, 25/26, 300–301 complains about is that Göschen's *editio princeps* does not offer a text 'mit allen Fehlern und Maengeln' ('with all its errors and defects') (p. 300), i.e. no diplomatic transcription.

28 On Mai's edition of the Vergil scholia, see Mai 1818, IV–V, n. 1; Lo Monaco 1996, 696, n. 149; Baschera 1999, 18–22. Mai's handwritten copy, which formed the basis of his edition, is preserved in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 9555, fols 1–93.

29 In Mai 1818, III, Mai – quite against his habit, see Timpanaro 1980, 229 and Lo Monaco 1996, 694–696 – admits the use of a reagent in Veron. XL (in Latin): 'Ibi mox artificiali et notissima mihi aliisque iamdiu ad complures paginas adhibita ablutione [...]' ('There, an artificially produced solution, long known to me and others, was soon applied on several pages [...]'). Although neither there nor in Mai 1835, VIII–IX does he comment on the type used, it may be taken as certain that it

**Pages treated with the reagent:** Probably all pages of the Vergil manuscript and the Euclid translation, and perhaps also others, especially from Livy.<sup>30</sup> Mai did not coat the central text block of the Vergil manuscript, where the Vergil text appears in *capitalis rustica*, with reagents.<sup>31</sup>

**Resultant editions:** Mai 1818 (*editio princeps* of the *Scholia Veronensia* on Vergil); Mai 1835.

**1821, 1822, and 1823:** During three stays in Verona, Bluhme studied the three palimpsests, making the first mention of the philosophical treatise in Veron. XL.<sup>32</sup> In 1823, he was assisted by Christian Johann Caspar Maier (1799–1835).<sup>33</sup>

**Reagents used:** Experiments with oak gall and liver of sulphur reagents, potassium hydrogenoxalate (KHC<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>),<sup>34</sup> straight (although certainly highly diluted) hydrochloric acid,<sup>35</sup> and Giobert's tincture.<sup>36</sup> Bluhme prefers oak gall reagent mixed with Giobert's tincture. He already remarks upon the (too) strong darkening of the palimpsest after treatment with oak gall, the ineffectiveness of its repeated application, and the damage caused by Giobert's dangerous reagent, which he recommends be applied only on the harder hair side.<sup>37</sup>

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was oak gall tincture, his favourite reagent. Bluhme 1864, 451–452 believes, without mentioning a specific case, that Mai even dabbed palimpsests with saliva, since the glint on the erased writing caused by moisture alone could contribute to its decipherment.

**30** Mai 1846, XXXI–XXXII speaks in a brief, roundabout way of Vergil and Livy as well as in more detail of the Euclid translation, which he calls 'fragmenta mathematici latini' ('fragments of a Latin mathematician') (p. XXXI). In this context, he also mentions his handwritten copy of Euclid (as already in Mai 1828, LXV), which is preserved in Vat.lat. 9555, fols 96<sup>r</sup>–100<sup>v</sup> and was used by Geymonat 1964 for his *editio princeps*.

**31** As stated by the second editor of the Vergil scholia, Heinrich Keil, in Keil 1848, XII.

**32** Blume 1824–1836, vol. 1, 261–264.

**33** On Maier, see Bock 2015, 250–254; Bock 2017; Varvaro 2018.

**34** Called *sal d'acetosella* by Bluhme; see Varvaro 2014a, 398. I know of no other use of this salt as a reagent in palimpsests studies.

**35** On the effect of hydrochloric acid as a reagent, see Kögel 1913, 134. Its use for restoring yellowed printed matter was first recommended by Jean-Antoine Chaptal in 1787.

**36** Bluhme did not always have permission to use reagents. See his letter to Göschen (1 July 1821; in Varvaro 2009a, 246–248), in which he describes how his colleague Ulrich Friedrich Kopp distracted the Veronese librarian while he secretly applied reagents.

**37** See Bluhme's letters to Göschen (1 July 1821; edited in Varvaro 2009a, 246–248) and Niebuhr (Verona; edited in Varvaro 2009b, 504–505, n. 243); Blume 1824–1836, vol. 1, 262 as well as S5. This can be understood as an indirect and unfortunately not very optimistic response to Göschen, who had hoped to obtain precisely this effect; see S16 and also Varvaro 2011, 251. Von Savigny, too, had placed his hopes in the darkening; see S14. On Bluhme's use of reagents, see also Bluhme 1864, 450–452 (who mentions tannin as another reagent but does not recommend its use because of its

**Pages treated with reagents:** Probably systematic application throughout the Gaius Palimpsest, which was Bluhme's main focus (S18). Use of oak gall and Giobert's tincture in Veron. LXII<sup>38</sup> as well as in the Livy of Veron. XL.<sup>39</sup>

**Resultant edition:** Bluhme's papers were used by Göschen, who had commissioned Bluhme to travel to Verona, for his second edition of Gaius, published in 1824.<sup>40</sup> The subsequent editions of Gaius up to Krüger and Studemund 1877 were not based on independent study of the *codex unicus*.<sup>41</sup> Emil Herrmann and Paul Krüger used the copy of the text of the Codex Iustinianus in Veron. LXII made by Bluhme and Maier for their own editions.<sup>42</sup> Bluhme later passed his copy of the Greek scholia on the Codex Iustinianus, which are only attested in the palimpsest Veron. LXII, to Karl Eduard Zachariae von Lingenthal (1812–1894), who based his *editio princeps* on it.<sup>43</sup> Information on the extent of the Livy fragments, some variant readings on fol. 294<sup>r</sup>, and the text of the few Greek scholia on Livy are published in Blume 1828.

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poor efficacy); Bock 2015, 255–258; and especially Varvaro 2014a, 394–412. Niebuhr strongly recommended Bluhme conceal the damage caused by Giobert's tincture in the Gaius; see S17.

**38** Krüger 1874, VII speaks of '[membrana] quae gallae infuso et Giobertino quod dicitur remedio olim temptatae et ex parte misere pessumdatae erant' ('[palimpsest pages] which had once been treated and partly miserably ruined by the oak gall solution and Giobert's so-called remedy').

**39** For all three manuscripts, see Bluhme's letter to Göschen (1 July 1821; edited in Varvaro 2009a, 246–248), for the Livy, see also pp. 35–37 in this article.

**40** See Göschen 1824, LXXI–LXXVI; Varvaro 2011, 253–254; Manthe 2019, 237, 249–250. A part of Bluhme's papers was lost. He suspected (in Bluhme 1864, 447–448) that a postal official opened the dispatch in October 1822 during the European princes' Congress of Verona, and that it had aroused suspicion because the Gaius facsimiles resembled secret writing and because Bluhme, in an enclosed letter, spoke of Justinian's Greek Constitution (i.e. a decree written in Greek by the emperor) in Veron. LXII at a time when revolution was taking place in contemporary Greece, and thus it was destroyed.

**41** The Gaius editions of the nineteenth century have been repeatedly discussed, most recently by Manthe 2019 and Di Marco 2020. Also in the twentieth century, certain editors dispensed with the autopsy of Veron. XV; see Colella 2020.

**42** Varvaro 2014a, 400.

**43** Zachariae von Lingenthal 1850, 90–91.



**Fig. 1:** Veron. XL (38), fol. 294<sup>r</sup>: Livy; moderate use of oak gall reagent and Giobert's tincture (image processed by Damianos Kasotakis, EMEL).

(Around 1847: Heinrich Keil [1822–1894] studies the Vergil scholia in the Veron. XL under generally difficult conditions.<sup>44</sup>

**Reagents used:** None.

**Resultant edition:** Second edition of these scholia in Keil 1848, 69–107.)

<sup>44</sup> See Keil 1848, XII–XIII; Giuliani 1888, 220–221 [1993, 222–223].

(1853: Otto Ribbeck [1827–1898] is the first to study the Vergil text in Veron. XL, also under difficult conditions.

**Reagents used:** None.<sup>45</sup>

**Resultant edition:** A study of the Vergil manuscripts in Ribbeck 1854 was followed by a complete edition of Vergil's works in Ribbeck 1859–1868.<sup>46</sup>)

(1857: August Wilhelm Zumpt [1815–1877] studies the Livy text in Veron. XL.

**Reagents used:** None.

**Resultant edition:** Having been forbidden to publish the Livy text, Zumpt published a study of this manuscript and left a copy to the library, which Theodor Mommsen [1817–1903] used.<sup>47</sup>)

(11 October 1858: Sönnich Detlef Friedrich Detlefsen [1833–1911] briefly looks at the Livy in Veron. XL.

**Reagents used:** Probably none.

**Resultant edition:** Publication of two facsimiles of 'Quat. XV f. 2 v' and 'Quat. XV f. 7 r' in Detlefsen 1859.<sup>48</sup>)

**First half of the 1860s:** Arnold Herrmann (1837–?) works as a tutor in Verona and studies the Vergil scholia in Veron. XL.

**Reagents used:** Unknown, but Gian Battista Carlo Giuliani (1810–1892) testifies to their use.<sup>49</sup>

**Pages treated with reagents:** Unknown.

**Resultant edition:** Herrmann 1868–1870.<sup>50</sup> This is the third edition of the Vergil scholia after Mai 1818 and Keil 1848 and the last of the nineteenth century based on autopsy.<sup>51</sup>

**1866, 1867, 1868, and 1869:** Wilhelm Studemund (1843–1889), the leading scholar in palimpsest studies in the second half of the nineteenth century, repeatedly visits Verona for the purpose of rereading the Gaius Palimpsest, supported by

45 See Ribbeck 1859–1868, *Ergänzungsband*, 226–227; Giuliani 1888, 221–221 [1993, 223–224].

46 See in particular the readings given in Ribbeck 1859–1868, *Ergänzungsband*, 273–277.

47 Zumpt 1859, 16; Mommsen 1868, 156. On Zumpt's visit to the library, see also Giuliani 1888, 227–230 [1993, 229–232].

48 On Detlefsen's visit, see also Giuliani 1888, 227–228 [1993, 229–230].

49 Giuliani 1888, 238, 254–255 [1993, 240, 256–257]: '[...] con qualche legger tocco di reagente chimico [...]' ('[...] with a slight touch of chemical reagent [...]') (here p. 238 [240]).

50 In advance, Bücheler 1864 and 1866 had already reported on Herrmann's work.

51 On the history of the editions of the Vergil scholia, see Baschera 1999, 15–29.

Mommsen (1867) and Krüger (especially in 1868, briefly also in 1869 and 1873).<sup>52</sup> In March 1867, Studemund also studies the Euclid translation and the philosophical fragments in Veron. XL.<sup>53</sup> Studemund probably read them with the help of the same reagents he used for the Gaius. The binding of Veron. XV is cut open, and henceforth the bifolios are kept unbound.<sup>54</sup> Veron. XL and LXII are also cut open.<sup>55</sup>

**Reagents used:** The description of the reagents used by Studemund, Mommsen, and Krüger in the sources is confusing for two reasons.<sup>56</sup>

Firstly, the terminology of the manuscript description is problematic, because Studemund clumsily refers to the hair pages as ‘inner pages’ (*paginae interiores*) and the flesh pages as ‘outer pages’ (*paginae exteriores*). This terminology derives from the arrangement of the two sides of the parchment in the bound book in observance of Gregory’s law that each layer begins with a flesh side, but it is counter-intuitive when one considers the skin of the animal.<sup>57</sup> Giuliani misunderstood it and assumed that Studemund used the reagent he applied to the hair side on the flesh side and vice versa.<sup>58</sup>

Second, the information Studemund gives regarding the reagents he used in Verona is not easy to understand. We must begin with his description of the chemical aids he used in Gaius, namely, normal liver of sulphur on the flesh side and potassium or, alternatively, ammonium thiocyanate on the hair side (S19).<sup>59</sup> Using

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52 For details on Studemund’s work on Gaius, see Briguglio 2012, 208–223, especially 220–221 on the exchange with Mommsen and 212–214 on his view that Studemund had also acted as a Prussian spy during his first stay in the midst of the Third Italian War of Independence of 1866, which could at least partly explain his good relationship with the anti-Austrian librarian Giuliani. He had to flee Verona after only one month. Giuliani became a personal friend of Studemund’s and Mommsen’s; see Zivelonghi 1994, 224–226; Varanini 1994, 123. On Krüger, see Krüger 1874, III. Krüger’s ample archive, which I was unable to consult, is now in the Law Library of Congress in Washington DC, see Hessler 2011.

53 Giuliani 1888, 246–247 [1993, 248–249].

54 Giuliani 1888, 246 [1993, 248].

55 Mommsen 1868, 157; Krüger 1874, VII.

56 Briguglio (in 2012, 210–212 and 2013, 28–32) is unaware of the problem in his account of the use of reagents in Gaius. On Studemund’s use of chemicals in Gaius, see also Varvaro 2012b, 296–318.

57 Studemund himself noticed – apparently only during printing and thus too late – that his terminology was clumsy, and he criticises it in Studemund 1874, XIII, n. d, where he uses the alternative terminology ‘softer’ (*molliores*) instead of *exteriores* and ‘firmer’ (*tenaciores*) instead of *interiores*.

58 Giuliani 1888, 241–242 [1993, 243–244].

59 The passage shows that Studemund was already aware of ammonium thiocyanate, although Kögel 1913, 135 thinks he is the first to detect its potential use as a reagent, personally preferring it to potassium thiocyanate. On Studemund’s account of Bluhme’s use of reagents, see Varvaro 2014a, 409–412, who speaks of a ‘campagna propagandistica’ (‘propagandistic campaign’) with the purpose of increasing his own performance and blaming Bluhme for the disastrous consequences of the reagents.

two different reagents for the hair and flesh side has, as far as scholars working in Verona are concerned, a parallel only in Bluhme's warning against the use of Giobert's strong tincture on flesh sides.<sup>60</sup> Potassium thiocyanate was recommended by Hofmann and I call it therefore Hofmann's first tincture. Studemund wanted to use it on a palimpsest in the Vatican Library, but was denied permission. Nevertheless, he reveals the recipe in a publication on that manuscript, although he actually applied it only later, namely to the Veronese palimpsests.<sup>61</sup> We also know that Studemund sent an order for tincture ingredients to Mommsen in Berlin.<sup>62</sup> The situation was the following: Studemund's third stay in Verona to study Gaius is coming to an end, and he requests an express shipment of 'sulphuretted ammonia' (*Schwefelammonium*), hydrochloric acid, ammonia salt, and oak gall tincture to replenish the supplies he needs for Hofmann's tincture. It is obvious that the oak gall tincture has nothing to do with Hofmann's and appears on Studemund's list only because he was apparently running out of it as well. I note in passing that its use by Studemund in Verona is not attested elsewhere. Now, Studemund says that he needs the other ingredients for Hofmann's tincture, but it is obviously not the variant containing potassium thiocyanate; rather, it is what I call Hofmann's second tincture described above (6), containing ammonium thiocyanate ( $\text{NH}_4\text{SCN}$ ).<sup>63</sup> Finally, Studemund writes that he still has enough *Ferrocyankalium*, which must mean potassium hexacyanoferrate(II), for Giobert's tincture. It is questionable whether Studemund regularly used Giobert's tincture in Gaius, for its use by Bluhme was maligned and Studemund himself, who thoroughly appreciated it, had reservations about its conspicuous blue colour, which made it unpopular with librarians.<sup>64</sup>

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**60** See p. 28 in this article. Krüger 1898, 826 explicitly says that, judging from his own experience, he cannot confirm Studemund's advice. As for Bluhme, he later merely stated that hair sides are easier to read than flesh sides and warns that one should be particularly careful when using reagents on the latter, which are softer and therefore more exposed to the destructive effects of reagents (Bluhme 1864, 452).

**61** This is the passage which Studemund refers to in S19 (Studemund 1868, 546, n. 1): '[...] 1 teil schwefelcyanalium in 15 teilen brunnenwassers mit hinzufügung weniger tropfen salzsäure [...]' ('[...] 1 part potassium thiocyanate in 15 parts spring water with the addition of a few drops of hydrochloric acid [...]').

**62** For the text of the letter (28 August 1868), see Varvaro 2012b, 314–315, n. 108.

**63** Already in 1866, in view of his first study of Gaius (22 April 1866; edited in Varvaro 2012b, 304), Studemund had asked Mommsen by letter to send him reagents, which Mommsen obtained at the Simon'sche Apotheke on Spandauer Straße in Berlin; see Varvaro 2012b, 311, n. 101.

**64** See Studemund's letter to Mommsen (22 April 1866; edited in Varvaro 2012b, 304). However, Giuliani in S22, at least, does not object to the blue colouring of Giobert's tincture.

Studemund's use of reagents was brought up by Krüger, his colleague and collaborator on the Gaius edition, in an 1898 letter to the *École nationale des chartes*, long after Studemund's death. We do not know what occasion prompted the letter, but one can assume it was related to the Conference of St Gallen, organised in the same year on the initiative of the prefect of the Vatican Library, Franz Ehrle, and under the presidency of Mommsen, at which the librarians of leading European manuscript collections discussed, among other things, conservation measures for palimpsests damaged by chemical reagents and which testified to the professional world's now critical attitude towards these agents.<sup>65</sup> The letter must thus be read as an apology. In it, Krüger mentions the use of the reagent first recommended by Hofmann (i.e. Hofmann's first tincture), then by Studemund for the 'interior side of the parchment' (i.e. the hair side), in the Veronese Gaius; describes its application and effect; and then defends the use of hydrochloric acid. Krüger explains that, although hydrochloric acid is also a component of Giobert's harmful tincture, it does no damage when mixed as follows: fifteen parts water to one part yellow prussiate of potash to one part hydrochloric acid (S21). Krüger's letter, at least in the form in which the *École nationale des chartes* printed it, is not easy to understand. It should be emphasised that the recipe Krüger provides is not that of any of Hofmann's tinctures, the use of which he himself recommends, but that of a variant of Giobert's tincture, which is admittedly considerably weaker than the tincture used by Bluhme in the Gaius Palimpsest.<sup>66</sup> Krüger thus seems to defend the use of both Hofmann's and Giobert's tincture and to recommend the same mixing ratios for both. He himself had previously used them in Veron. LXII.<sup>67</sup> He likewise speaks in favour of hydrochloric acid, on condition that it be weakly concentrated. This remark is reminiscent of a letter addressed to Mommsen, in which Krüger writes that Studemund had used hydrochloric acid successfully in the Gaius.<sup>68</sup> Because Studemund himself never mentions the use of mere hydrochloric acid (i.e. not in combination with other chemicals) in the sources known to

<sup>65</sup> On the Conference of St Gallen (30 September–1 October 1898), see Ehrle 1898, esp. 19–21; Ehrle 1899, esp. 30–31, 35; Posse 1899; Ehrle 1909, esp. 246 (S20).

<sup>66</sup> In view of the difficult source situation, it is not surprising that Briguglio 2012, 211 avoids commenting precisely on the composition of Hofmann's tincture: 'costituito da una complessa miscela' ('composed of a complex blend'). For Bluhme's stronger recipe for Giobert's tincture, see S5.

<sup>67</sup> Krüger 1874, VII (in Latin): '[...] adhibui kalium ferrocyanatum et sulphocyanatum cum acido muriatico eum in modum mixta, quem Studemundius in annal. Philolog. 1868 pag. 546 descripsit' ('[...] I drew on potassium ferrocyanatum [i.e. Giobert's tincture] and sulphocyanatum [i.e. Hofmann's first tincture] mixed with hydrochloric acid in the manner described by Studemund in *Philologische Jahrbücher* 1868, p. 546').

<sup>68</sup> 12/13 Mai 1868; the passage is edited in Varvaro 2012b, 314.



me, one might be inclined to interpret Krüger's remark in his letter to Mommsen as an inaccurate description of the use of a small amount of hydrochloric acid in combination with other chemicals, as is the case in Hofmann's tinctures. However, because Krüger perhaps speaks again about the use of mere hydrochloric acid in his letter to the *École nationale des chartes*, and because Bluhme, too, experimented with it in Verona, as we have seen above on p. 28, the use of this reagent in Gaius by Studemund is quite conceivable.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, Giuliani reports that he authorised Studemund to use reagents and reveals their composition. According to him, Studemund used 'a part of ammonia (*ammoniaca*), dissolved in 15 parts of pure water with a few drops of hydrochloric acid' for the flesh sides and 'sulphurated ammonia' (*ammonio solforato*) for the hair sides.<sup>70</sup> I have already noted that Giuliani confused the flesh and hair sides. The recipe he indicates for the flesh sides is thus Hofmann's second tincture, which Studemund used on the hair sides. Next, it is remarkable that Giuliani speaks of sulphurated ammonia instead of potassium sulphate (which would be *solfato di potassio* in Italian, normal liver of sulphur) for the hair sides, the use of which Studemund himself indicates in the preface to his apographum of the Gaius for the flesh sides. Furthermore, Giuliani's description of Hofmann's second tincture does not contain sulphur. Shortly afterwards, Giuliani also discusses the reagents used by Mommsen in the *Livy of Veron. XL (S22)*. Since Mommsen himself does not speak about his use of reagents, Giuliani is our only source. Apparently, Mommsen worked in two steps, first applying potassium hexacyanoferrate(II), which is a component of Giobert's tincture, then Hofmann's second tincture, seemingly applying both indiscriminately to the flesh as well as the hair side. The information Giuliani gives may be perfectly correct; however, we must bear in mind that Bluhme, too, showed a particular interest in the Verona *Livy* and that the blue colouring of many of its pages may therefore be, at least partially, a consequence of his work, as we know that Giobert's tincture was among his 'remedies'.

**Pages treated with reagents:** Wherever deemed necessary in the Gaius Palimpsest (*Veron. XV*) and in the Euclid translation and the philosophical fragments of *Veron. XL*, fols 315, 318–319, 322–323, 326, 331, 334–336, 338, 341, 343–344.

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<sup>69</sup> Mere hydrochloric acid as a reagent is not discussed in Albrecht 2012 or 2015.

<sup>70</sup> Giuliani 1888, 241–242 [1993, 243–244].



**Fig. 2:** Veron. XL (38), fol. 334<sup>v</sup>: philosophical treatise; heavy use of oak gall reagent and Giobert's tincture (image processed by Damianos Kasotakis, EMEL).

**Resultant editions:** Studemund 1874;<sup>71</sup> Krüger and Studemund 1877. Due to Studemund's early death, the edition of the fragments of the Euclid translation re-

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<sup>71</sup> This publication is not an edition but merely contains Studemund's apograph of the Gaius text, which according to unanimous scholarly opinion is the best; see e.g. Briguglio 2013, 12, 18–28.

mained unfinished.<sup>72</sup> Studemund's documentation on Euclid was presumably destroyed during the Siege of Breslau in February and April 1945.<sup>73</sup> Studemund also looked at the philosophical text, but we do not know what resulted from this.<sup>74</sup>

**April–June 1867:** Mommsen studies the Livy palimpsest in Veron. XL.

**Reagents used:** Free use of reagents with Giuliani's permission. Mommsen does not specify the types of chemicals applied.<sup>75</sup>

**Pages treated with reagents:** Wherever deemed necessary in the Livy palimpsest (Veron. XV, fols 267–314, 316–317, 320–321, 324, 332–333, 337, 339–340, 342).

**Resultant edition:** The Livy fragments in Veron. XL, being the oldest textual witness for this author and containing extended passages from the third to the sixth book, were published as an apograph in Mommsen 1868.

**1868, 1869, and 1873:** Krüger studies the palimpsest of the Codex Iustinianus in Veron. LXII.<sup>76</sup>

**Reagents used:** Following in Studemund's steps, Krüger uses Giobert's and Hofmann's first tincture throughout Veron. LXII, except on the pages particularly damaged by Bluhme and Maier. Although Krüger denies having applied Giobert's tincture, he uses its main components, potassium hexacyanoferrate(II) and hydrochloric acid, albeit in much smaller proportions.<sup>77</sup>

**Pages treated with reagents:** Wherever deemed necessary in Veron. LXII.

**Resultant edition:** Krüger 1874, an apograph of the palimpsest fragments contained in Veron. LXII, not taking into account the *Scholia Veronensia*, which had already been edited in Zachariae von Lingenthal 1850.

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<sup>72</sup> See Cantor 1894, 526, n. 1.

<sup>73</sup> See *ADB* 1893, vol. 36, 731, s.v. 'Studemund, Wilhelm' (Leopold Cohn) and Fercz 1999, 184. Only a copy of Veron. XL, fol. 338<sup>v</sup> is preserved in Studemund's own hand in a letter to Giuliani (8 March 1879; in May 2022 inserted in the folder of Veron. XL, fols 233–242; unedited). It was not before 1964 that Geymonat published the *editio princeps* of the Euclid without being aware of Studemund's letter to Giuliani; see esp. Geymonat 1964, 13.

<sup>74</sup> See the brief comment based on Giuliani's notes in Veron. MXLIII, fol. 62<sup>r</sup> in Spagnolo and Marchi 1996, 92: 'Ne prese un saggio Gu. Studemund' ('Wilhelm Studemund took a sample').

<sup>75</sup> Mommsen 1868, 157. Mommsen drew on Studemund's chemical preparations; see S22 and p. 35 of this article.

<sup>76</sup> Krüger 1874, III.

<sup>77</sup> Krüger 1874, VII; see also n. 67 of this article. Apparently, Krüger even sent a small bottle of 'tintura azurra' ('blue tincture'), i.e. Giobert's reagent, to Giuliani as a present; see his letter in Veron. DCCCCXXXVIII, busta 1 (23 February 1871; unedited).

**(March 1878 and September 1883:** Studemund visits Verona again in 1878, staying for a short time with Krüger.<sup>78</sup>

**Reagents used:** Studemund implies that he used chemicals only in 1867 and 1868, but not in 1878 and 1883. His comment on his earlier use of Hofmann's tincture is apologetic.<sup>79</sup> Although Giuliani, in his history of the Biblioteca Capitolare, portrays Studemund's use of chemicals as harmless, he was evidently aware of the damage, for as early as 1868, after a heated argument, he temporarily banned Studemund from using them.<sup>80</sup> His apparently fundamentally friendly relationship with Studemund; the very high standing of Mommsen, who procured the chemicals for Studemund and was then already regarded as the world's leading scholar in classical studies; and presumably also concern for his own reputation (for he was the one that had approved the use of the reagents) may have prompted Giuliani to embellish the account in his library history.

**Resultant edition:** Krüger and Studemund 1884, with Studemund's supplements to his apograph edited in Studemund 1874 on pp. XIX–XXXIX.)

### 3 Conclusions

First, I note two minor observations on the scholars, which occurred to me when studying the sources, before I come to the general conclusions.

The scholars studying the three Veronese palimpsests in the nineteenth century were all German, with the exception of Mai. This fact probably made access to the Biblioteca Capitolare relatively easy when Verona belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1815–1866), but access also would have been possible afterwards, when Verona became part of the Kingdom of Italy during the course of the Third Italian War of Independence of 1866, because these researchers were not Austrian.

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<sup>78</sup> Varvaro 2012b, 284.

<sup>79</sup> See S23. On the consequences of the use of potassium thiocyanate (Hofmann's first tincture), see Albrecht 2012, 160: 'If more than one agent was used on one spot [as was the case in the Gaius], the result was disastrous and the text was quite often rendered illegible'.

<sup>80</sup> See Studemund's letter to Mommsen (26 June 1868; edited in Varvaro 2012b, 312–313, n. 104). Varvaro 2012b, 313 cites a letter from Krüger to Mommsen (9 April 1868), in which he reports on a failed chemical test by Studemund, which Giuliani pointed out to him. This test, however, must have taken place in Veron. LXII, not in Veron. XV. Krüger's letter can thus be regarded only as an indirect indication that Giuliani discovered the devastating effect of Studemund's reagents in the Gaius.

Additionally, these scholars were probably all Protestant, with the exception of Mai and Herrmann,<sup>81</sup> and although one might suspect this would have been an issue, especially since the library was owned and managed by the Catholic cathedral chapter, this fact is hardly mentioned in the sources.<sup>82</sup> Apparently, it was not decisive for gaining access to the manuscripts.

Since the three Veron. XV, XL, and LXII are among the most important palimpsests in terms of content and already drew the focus of classical scholars during the golden decade of palimpsest research between 1814 and 1824, they are also among the manuscripts most severely damaged by reagents. It is advisable to consider the use of chemicals in all three palimpsests together because the scholars of the time did not always limit their studies to one manuscript and because occasionally several scholars were working with the same reagents at the same time. This scenario links with the fact that, right from the beginning, research on our palimpsests was driven by a strong Prussian team spirit and intensive scholarly exchange on their content and the ‘remedies’ needed to unveil them among members and friends of the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften. The Gaius project was among the first large and – at the time – modern research ventures that the academy had started to fund after the end of the Napoleonic Wars; it also became one of the key stepping stones on the academy’s path to its leading position over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>83</sup> Yet despite this impressive beginning and more than two hundred years of research, the texts contained in the three palimpsests have been only broadly deciphered so far, as many undeciphered passages remain and the *editio princeps* of the philosophical treatise of Veron. XL is only nearing completion.<sup>84</sup>

The rich written sources on the use of reagents mostly come from the circle of the users themselves. They should be seen against the fact that no other means of improving the readability of erased texts existed at the time. Among themselves, the scholars freely discussed their experiences with the various chemicals in pri-

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**81** On Herrmann’s Catholicism, see his letter to Giuliani in Veron. DCCCCLXXXVII, fasc. XI, busta 8 (17 February 1867; unedited; in Italian).

**82** One exception is Studemund’s letter to Mommsen (22 April 1866; edited in Varvaro 2012b, 304): ‘Was nun nicht erlaubt wird, werde ich heimlich tun, da ich in dem verborgenhalten von reagenz und streichpinsel dank der unliberalität hiesiger pfaffen einige übung habe’ (‘Now, what is not allowed, I will do secretly, since I have some practice in concealing reagent and paintbrush thanks to the illiberality of local clergymen’).

**83** On the academy’s new policy regarding large research ventures after the Napoleonic Wars, see Harnack 1900, 665–680; see also S15.

**84** Gysembergh, Lecerf and Zingg forthcoming; for a first summary of this recently identified new text, see Gysembergh and Zingg 2023.

vate letters. In printed publications they also recorded their use but were often at pains to emphasise the harmlessness of the agents they employed; however, the palimpsests themselves already bore sad witness to the reagents' great destructive power.

In addition to political and scientific pressure in the form of letters of recommendation and reports by professors of chemistry, a particular librarian's general stance regarding reagents and the personal relationships between librarians and researchers, which arose naturally during the – sometimes repeated – stays of several months, played a decisive role. In the first decade after the discovery of the Gaius Palimpsest in 1816, permission was granted only reluctantly and after negotiation, with researchers sometimes using their reagents surreptitiously and without permission. Thereafter, the use of reagents seems to have been prohibited, at least in the three manuscripts Veron. XV, XL, and LXII, and access to these codices was generally made more difficult. Although access restrictions in Italian libraries in those times may have been due to a certain laziness of the staff, it has to be admitted that in the case of the Biblioteca Capitolare, it was to the benefit of the palimpsests and probably also motivated by the already obvious chemical damage.<sup>85</sup> It was not until Carlo Giuliani, the outstanding figure among the Veronese librarians of the nineteenth century, took office in 1856 that more favourable working conditions were again created, which admittedly also brought the opportunity to use chemicals.<sup>86</sup>

The history of research on the three Veronese palimpsests in the nineteenth century is therefore also an account of the serious material damage they incurred, which, although not intentional, was accepted lightly and consciously, as Giuliani already critically remarked towards the end of his life in his history of the Biblioteca Capitolare:

But in the course of the years, one had to note with great regret a completely different effect, even one contrary to what one had thought: if the *Codice Capitolare* [i.e. the Gaius] gradually darkened and then, at least on certain pages, turned into black in a way that no longer allowed a new reading, thus extinguishing all hope of a renewed examination, it seems to me excessive to give a severe and coarse rebuke for this to the Prussian scholars or to the Veronese chapter. Every scholar will find that in this fact a fatal law was repeated, namely, that

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<sup>85</sup> On the library staff of the time, see e.g. Timpanaro 1980, 231–232, 238–239. Von Savigny already remarked in a letter to Göschen after his visit to the Biblioteca Capitolare (19 November 1825; edited in Varvaro 2014a, 409): 'Der Gajus sieht nun jetzt freylich in sehr vielen Stellen so aus, als ob man mit Sorgfalt ein Tintenfaß darüber gegossen hätte' ('The Gajus now certainly looks in very many places as if an inkwell had been carefully poured over it').

<sup>86</sup> On Giuliani, see in general the proceedings of the conference dedicated to him in Marchi 1994 and, in particular, on his poor sensitivity to conservation issues, see Varanini 1994, 141–142.

every difficult and altogether useful undertaking demands its martyrs – and an illustrious martyr of palaeography is what I am wont to call our *Codice*.<sup>87</sup>

In short, however, although this method led to spectacular scholarly results, it is to be regretted from today's point of view. Because these are largely texts that have not been preserved elsewhere, the task was difficult from the beginning, and, today – even with great improvements such as multispectral photography – the destruction caused by the reagents still makes their reading difficult.<sup>88</sup>

The information on the use of reagents contained in the written sources that have been presented in this article is comparatively rich. Nevertheless, it is limited in some respects. Further research, especially the chemical analysis of the inks and reagents present on the palimpsest pages, could probably complete and correct this first attempt at a systematic archaeology of the destruction of Veron. XV, XL, and LXII.

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<sup>87</sup> 'Se col trascorrer degli anni ebbesi a ravvisare con troppo dolore, un effetto ben diverso, contrario anzi a quello che si pensava: se il Codice Capitolare oscuravasi a poco a poco, e poscia, in alcune pagine soprattutto, annerivasi per forma da non consentire più nuova lettura, da togliere ogni speranza di recensione novella, parmi soverchio apporne severo biasimo e crudo, così ai dotti Prussiani, come al Capitolo Veronese. Ogni savio troverà in questo fatto ripetutasi una legge fatale, che qualsivoglia arduo e insieme utile imprendimento richiede i suoi martiri: e martire illustre della Paleografia amo appellare il nostro Codice' (Giuliani 1888, 193 [1993, 195]). On Giuliani's history of the library, see Varanini 1994, 129–134.

<sup>88</sup> On the issue see e.g. Rabin et al. 2015, 34–36.

## Abbreviations

*ADB* = *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 56 vols, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875–1912.

EMEL = Early Manuscripts Electronic Library.

*NDB* = *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 27 vols, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953–.

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## Appendix: A selection of the most important nineteenth-century sources on reagent use in palimpsests cited in this article

All translations are mine.

S1 von Schröter 1824–1826, 23/24, 324:

Jetzt hat man freilich viel wirksamere Mittel [...] und ist mit ihrer Anwendung nicht so aengstlich wie frueher. Sie koennen zwar, waehrend sie die erste Schrift wieder hervorheben die zweite vernichten, wie es Herrn Professor Peyron bei der Handschrift des Julius Valerius ging, unter welchem die von ihm herausgegebenen Bruchstuecke des Codex Theodosianus lagen; aber theils ist dies nicht immer der Erfolg, theils wird niemand Bedenken tragen einen oft gedruckten Kirchenvater u. dergl. zu opfern, um ein Werk des Alterthums zu gewinnen. Laecherlich ist es, wenn Knittel [...] den Gebrauch chemischer Mittel schlechthin fuer unstatthaft erklaert und den Augen des Lesers eine Sehkraft zumuthet, zu welchen die bisherigen Menschenaugen nun einmal nicht geschaffen sind.

Now, of course, one has much more effective remedies [i.e. than the oak gall tincture] [...] and is not so anxious about their use as before. It is true that they can destroy the second manuscript while they are bringing out the first, as happened to Professor Peyron with the manuscript of Julius Valerius, under which the fragments of the Codex Theodosianus, which he edited, were lying; but, on the one hand, this is not always the outcome and, on the other, no one will have any qualms about sacrificing a frequently printed church father and the like in order to gain a work of antiquity. It is ridiculous when Knittel [...] declares the use of chemical means to be absolutely unacceptable and expects the reader's eyes to have a sight the hitherto existing human eyes are not made for.

S2 Göschen 1819, 311:

Ueberdies war es mit dem einmaligen Ueberstreichen noch nicht gethan, sondern wir mußten fortdauernd mit dem Pinsel in der Hand lesen, um während des Lesens die Züge aufs Neue mit Galläpfelauflösung oder auch nur mit bloßem Wasser anzufrischen.

Moreover, it was not enough to smear over once, but we had to read while always having the brush in our hand, in order to refresh the lines anew with oak gall solution or even with mere water while reading.

S3 Peyron 1824, vol. 2, 3–4:

Nam cum scriptorium atramentum constet sulphato ferri, atque galla infusa, ferrum autem progressu temporis ab aëris efficacia oxydetur [...], tum si oxydatio minima esse contingat, facile ferrum affici potest, atque exsuscitari a liquore gallae, neutiquam vero si maxima. Pa-

ria dicantur de Prussiato Ammoniacae, quod utpote minimam acidi Prussici quantitatem in se continens, haud potest ferrum a pertinacissima oxydatione expedire.

For since writing ink consists of iron sulphate [= iron(II) sulphate ( $\text{FeSO}_4$ )] and a solution of oak galls, but the iron oxidises in the course of time by the agency of the air [...], the iron, if the oxidation happens to be minimal, can be easily affected and made to react by the solution of oak galls, but by no means when the oxidation is very strong. Similar things are said of the prussiate of ammonia [= potassium amide ( $\text{KNH}_2$ )?], which, if it does not contain a very small amount of hydrogen cyanide [ $\text{HCN}$ ], cannot free iron from very persistent oxidation.

S4 Peyron 1824, vol. 2, 4:

Adibam itaque collegam meum Giobert Chemiae Professore, virum, in quo nescias, utrum magis suspicias eximiam scientiam, an urbanitatem ames. Nec mora; ipse medicamentum parat. Membranas primum aqua communi lavat; tum intingit in Acidum Muriaticum, quod unicum potest librare [sic] ferrum a maximo oxydationis gradu; illas subinde mergit in Prussiatum Potassae, quod ferro vel caesium, vel viridem colorem inducit pro vario membranarum genere; tandem eas iterum iterumque proluit aqua, ne noxia Acidi Muriatici gutta foliis adhaereat. Huic efficacissimae methodo, quam postea vidimus propositam iam fuisse a Cl<sup>o</sup> Blagden in *Philosophical Transactions*, 1787. part. 2, illud in primis commodum acceptum refero, quod cum superior scriptura nigrum colorem servet, inferior autem caesium aut viridem assumat, facilius altera ab altera distinguitur.

I therefore approached my colleague Giobert, professor of chemistry, a man about whom I do not know whether you should admire more the outstanding knowledge or love the fine behaviour. Immediately he prepares a remedy himself. First he washes the pages of parchment with ordinary water; then he dips them in hydrochloric acid [ $\text{HCl}_{(aq)}$ ], which is the only one capable of freeing the iron from the highest degree of oxidation; then he immediately dips them in [dissolved] prussiate of potash [= potassium hexacyanoferrate(II) ( $\text{K}_4[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]$ )], which gives the iron either a blue-grey or a greenish colouring, depending on the type of parchment; finally he washes them again and again with water, so that no harmful drop of hydrochloric acid sticks to the leaves. It is to this very efficient method, which, as we have seen later, had already been described by Charles Blagden in *Philosophical Transactions*, 1787, part. 2 [= Blagden 1787], that I credit that, while the upper writing retains its black colour, the lower, on the contrary, assumes a blue-grey or greenish one, and the one can be quite easily distinguished from the other.

S5 Blume 1836, vol. 4, 188–189:

Giobert's Tinctur soll nach seiner Vorschrift zusammengesetzt werden aus 6 Teilen Wasser, 1 Teil acidum muriaticum Zooticum, 1/8 prussiat de potasse (Kali Zooticum), allein diese Verhältnisse können nach Umständen und vorsichtiger Probe etwas verändert werden. Bei dem Gebrauche ist vor Allem jedes Reiben zu vermeiden. Peyron hat ganze Blätter in die Tinctur getaucht, und sie gleich darauf in Wasser gelegt; ich habe mit einem Pinsel aufgetunkt, und die Stelle nach wenigen Secunden durch Aufdrücken eines Tuches getrocknet, weil die Tinctur nicht Zeit erhalten darf, das Pergament zu färben, nachdem sie in die Ueberreste der al-

ten Schrift eingedrungen ist. Auch durch die Verbindung mit Galläpfelinctur wird das gefährliche Färben des Pergaments erschwert; doch hüte man sich auch dann noch die Operation zu oft auf derselben Stelle zu wiederholen. Im Laufe einiger Jahre scheint freilich Alles nachzudunkeln.

Giobert's tincture should be composed of 6 parts water, 1 part hydrochloric acid, 1/8 prussiate of potash according to his instructions, but these proportions can be changed somewhat with respect to the circumstances and upon careful trial. Above all, any rubbing should be avoided during use. Peyron dipped whole sheets into the tincture and immediately afterwards put them into water; I dipped with a brush and after a few seconds dried the area by pressing on a cloth, because the tincture must not be given time to dye the parchment after it has penetrated the remains of the old writing. The dangerous staining of the parchment is also prevented by combining it with oak gall tincture; but even then one should be careful not to repeat the operation too often on the same spot. However, in the course of a few years, everything seems to darken.

S6 Letter from Friedrich Bluhme to Amedeo Peyron (17 August 1821; Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Fondo Peyron 226.14, fols 1<sup>r</sup>–2<sup>v</sup>, here fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; unedited):

J'espère que la seconde édition de Gajus vous prouvera, combien je vous dois de m'avoir communiqué l'invention de Mr. Giobert, et combien je pouvois me féliciter de communiquer la même invention aux Mrs. bibliothécaires de Mantoue et de Modène.

I hope that the second edition of the Gaius will show you how much I owe you for having communicated Mr Giobert's invention to me, and how fortunate I was to have been able to communicate the same invention to Messrs librarians of Mantua and Modena.

S7 Letter from Cozza-Luzi to Peyron (19 June 1869; edited in Pesce 1997, 332, no. 242):

Mi sarà cosa gratissima il conoscer meglio il composto de' suoi due acidi innocui allo scoprimento delle dilavate e rase scritte, ed il loro processo e metodo di applicazione. Io ho usato con felice esito l'apparato di acido muriatico e prussiato di potassa nel lavare il cod. palinsesto de' Profeti della Biblioteca di Grottaferrata. Mi dica se vi sia modo di togliere il colore turchino che resta sulle pergamene dopo letto l'antico scritto.

It would be very pleasant for me to know better the composition of your two harmless acids for the discovery of washed-off and erased writings, as well as their preparation and method of application. I have used with happy results a preparation of hydrochloric acid and prussiate of potash when washing the palimpsest codex of the prophets of the library of Grottaferrata [shelf mark E. B. VII]. Please tell me if there is a way to remove the blue colour which remains on the parchment pages after the reading of the ancient script.

S8 Letter from Cozza-Luzi to Peyron (16 November 1869; edited in Pesce 1997, 337, no. 246):

Le sue gentili indicazioni sull'apparato chimico sui palimpsesti saran giovevoli a me e ad altri, ai quali li comunico, bramando dalla sua bella scoperta i maggiori e migliori risultati, per cui debba dimostrarle la riconoscenza anche degli altri per la sua compiacenza.

Your kind advice on the chemical preparation for the palimpsests will be useful to me and to others to whom I communicate it, whereby I hope for the greatest and best results from your beautiful discovery. For this I must express my thanks and also those of the others to you for your kindness.

S9 Letter from Bekker to the Berlin Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (June 1817; edited in Varvaro 2012a, 153–156):

a) Von der Anwendung eines Reagens durfte um so weniger die Rede sein als, ungeachtet der sichtlich veränderten Farbe des Blattes, niemand gemerkt hatte daß Niebuhr dergleichen angewandt, selbst der Archiprete Eucherio nicht, der damals während der Abwesenheit des Bibliothekars, ganz zufälliger Weise, wie es scheint, die Aufsicht geführt hatte: denn der maaß die ganze Entdeckung einem *certo lume fosforico* bei, das N. fleißig in Händen gehabt. Daher haben wir denn die erste Woche unsers hiesigen Aufenthalts, die noch obenein durch Pfingstferien geschmälert wurde, nichts anders thun können als jenes von N. abgeschriebene 97te Blatt des Codex XIII abermals und vollständig abschreiben: was auch gelungen ist, weil die von ihm sehr reichlich aufgetragene Galläpfeltinctur kräftig nachgewirkt hat, so daß für uns manches sichtbar ist, das es für ihn nicht gewesen zu sein scheint.

b) Die alcalinischen Mittel werden als corrosiv geschaut, und wirklich sind einige Stellen, wo N. solche anversucht hat, höflich entstellt.

a) There could be all the less talk of the use of a reagent [i.e. at the beginning of Bekker's visit in Verona in 1817], since, notwithstanding the visibly changed colour of the leaf, no one had noticed that Niebuhr had used such, not even the *Archiprete* Eucherio, who at that time, during the absence of the librarian, quite by chance, as it seems, had been in charge: for he attributed the whole discovery to a 'certain phosphoric light', which N. had diligently had in his hands. Therefore, during the first week of our stay here, which was further curtailed by the Whitsun holidays, we were able to do nothing other than copy the 97th leaf of Codex XIII copied by N. once again and completely. This was a success, not least because the oak gall tincture he applied very generously has had a strong effect, so that many things are visible to us that do not seem to have been visible to him.

b) The alkaline remedies are considered to be corrosive, and indeed some places where N. has tried these out are quite disfigured.

S10 Letter from Niebuhr to von Savigny (4 September 1816; edited in Vischer 1981, 66):

Die besten Reagentien waren zu Verona nicht zu erhalten: ich musste mir selbst schleunig, so unvollkommen wie es gerieth, eine Galläpfelinfusion bereiten, welche so viel leistete, daß sich von den besseren Mitteln (Hydrosulphur von Pottasche u. Prussiat von Pottasche) *alles* hoffen lässt.

The best reagents were not to be obtained in Verona: I had to prepare myself quickly, as imperfectly as it turned out, an infusion of oak galls, which did so much that *everything* can be hoped for from the better agents (hydrogen sulphide of potash [KSH] and prussiate of potash).

S11 Göschen 1819, 311–312:

Versuche die wir mit *Hydrosulfure de potasse* und mit *Hydrosulfure d'ammoniac* an andern Pergamentblättern machten, fielen ganz befriedigend aus, und wir standen daher schon im Begriff, bei dem Domcapitel um die Erlaubniß einzukommen, auch dieser Reagentien uns bedienen zu dürfen; aber wir hielten doch noch für nöthig, jene Versuche zuvor an unserm Codex selbst im Kleinen zu wiederholen, und da versagten sie uns ganz und gar: die ältere Schrift wurde nicht lesbarer als sie es schon durch die Galläpfelauflösung geworden war, und die neue Schrift litt darunter, dergestalt daß wir uns genöthiget sahen, diese anderen Reagentien ganz bei Seite zu setzen.

Experiments we [Göschen and Bekker] made with hydrogen sulphide of potash and with ammonium hydrogen sulphide  $[(\text{NH}_4)\text{SH}]$  on other parchment leaves turned out quite satisfactorily, and we were therefore already on the point of applying to the cathedral chapter for permission to use these reagents as well; but we still thought it necessary to repeat these experiments on our codex itself [i.e. on Veron. XV] on a small scale, and there they failed completely: the older script became no more legible than it had already become through the oak gall solution, and the new script suffered from this, to such an extent that we saw ourselves compelled to set aside these other reagents altogether.

S12 Bevilacqua Lazise 1817, 21:

Avevali da prima accertati il Sig. Prof. Stromeyer di Gottinga d'aver conosciuto col mezzo di replicate, ed esatte esperienze, che qualora gli antichi caratteri d'un Palimpsesto siano difficili a leggersi per essere svaniti od ingialliti, la soluzione di noce di galla è pienamente efficace ad annerirli di nuovo, e che quando anche fossero essi cancellati col lavacro, o rasi dal ferro si fattamente, che nessuna traccia visibile rimanesse di loro, l'idrosolfuro di ammoniaca avvalorato all'uopo dalla soluzione suddetta di noce, è il miglior mezzo di ravvivarli. Dall'esame del Palimpsesto s'avviddero però quei Dotti, che questa sola soluzione bastava a ravvivarne i caratteri.

Professor Stromeyer from Göttingen had assured them [Göschen and Bekker] in advance that he had found out by repeated and exact experiments that if the ancient letters of a palimpsest were difficult to read because they were faded or yellowed, the oak gall solution was fully efficient in turning them black again, and that even if they had been erased in a water bath or erased with an iron in such a way that no visible trace of them remains, the ammonium hydrogen sulphide, enriched if necessary with the above-mentioned oak gall solution, was the best means of reviving them. From the examination of the palimpsest, however, it appeared to the said scholars that this solution alone was sufficient to revive the letters.



## S13 Göschen 1820, XIV–XV:

Praeterea eam esse codicis XIII. condicionem statim intelligebamus, ut in eo enucleando, nisi chemicis remediis adhibitis, frustra consumeremus operam. Igitur ut gallae infuso, quod nobis quidem omnium remediorum unum se probavit, uti liceret, a Reverendissimo Capitulo venia petenda erat.

Furthermore, we immediately realised that the condition of Codex XIII was such that we would struggle in vain to study it exhaustively if chemical aids were not consulted. Therefore, permission had to be obtained from the Reverend Chapter to use the oak gall solution, which proved to be the only suitable means, at least to us.

## S14 Letter from von Savigny to Göschen (14 June 1817; edited in Vano 2008, 145, n. 13):

Gott gebe nur, daß Sie die Erlaubniß zur Chemie bekommen haben, im schlimmsten Fall müßten Sie es durch Mailänder Behörde durchzusetzen suchen. Nicht wahr, wenn Sie die Erlaubniß bekommen, fangen Sie doch damit an, gleich alle Seiten zu bestreichen, damit Sie noch überall die Vortheile des Nachdunkelns genießen?

God grant only that you have obtained permission for the chemistry! In the worst case you would have to try to enforce it through Milanese authorities. If you get the permission, you should immediately start smearing all the pages, so that you can still enjoy the advantages of darkening everywhere. Will you?

## S15 von Schröter 1824–1826, 25/26, 298–299:

Was nun fuer die gelehrte Ausstattung dieser ersten Ausgabe des Gajus gethan ist, haben wir schon bei fruerehen Gelegenheiten durch die Bemerkung andeuten duerfen, daß alle spaeteren Herausgeber von Palimpsesten an ihr gelernt haben. Man kann diese Ausgabe im allgemeinen nur als ein unvergleichliches Muster deutschen Fleißes, deutscher Sorgfalt und Gelehrsamkeit, aber auch eines seltenen Scharfsinnes und hoher Liebe zur Wissenschaft charakterisiren. Das ganze Reich der philologischen und juristischen Literatur hat nichts Aehnliches aufzuweisen. Die Deutschen moegen sich dieser Arbeit ruehmen, kein anderes Volk waere im Stande gewesen sie zu liefern. Und bei aller dieser Vortrefflichkeit die einfache Groeße des Herausgebers, der jeden Schimmer von sich weisend seinen ganzen Reichthum unter fremden Namen auftreten laeßt, mit Selbstverleugnung ueberall nur der Sache dient!

What has been done for the scholarly apparatus of this first edition of Gaius we have already had occasion to indicate by remarking that all later editors of palimpsests have learned from it. In general, this edition can only be characterised as an incomparable model of German diligence, German care and erudition, but also of a rare acumen and high love of erudition. The entire realm of philological and legal literature has nothing similar to offer. The Germans may boast of this work; no other nation would have been able to produce it. And with all this excellence, the simple greatness of the editor, who, refusing every glory to fall upon himself, allows it to appear under someone else's name [the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften is listed as editor on the title page and not Göschen], serving only the cause with self-denial everywhere!

## S16 Göschen 1820, XVII–XVIII:

Perfecta enim editio repetitam requirit codicis XIII. collationem: de cuius fructu ideo potissimum optima spes concipienda est, quia illius infusi, quo ad instaurandos antiquae scripturae ductus imbuiamus, effectus temporis diuturnitate mirifice augetur, unde probabile est, multa, quae oculis percipere nobis nondum licuerit, nunc facili negotio posse agnosci.

The completed edition [Göschen means the one at hand, his own] namely requires a renewed collation of Codex XIII. In its result one must place the greatest hopes above all because the effect of that solution with which we have impregnated the traces of the old script for its restoration is being miraculously reinforced over time, for which reason it is probable that much that was not yet possible for us to grasp with our eyes can now be recognised with easy effort.

## S17 Letter from Niebuhr to Bluhme (17 September 1822; edited in Vischer 1981, 791):

Für alles was Sie im Gaius herausbringen gebührt Ihnen unser aller Dank, und ist Ihnen sicher: was Sie nicht mehr herausbringen können ist ein Unglück, aber nicht Ihre Schuld: wenn es nur *nie bekannt wird* welchen Schaden die Giobertsche Tinctur angerichtet hat.

For everything you bring to light in the Gaius you deserve the thanks of all of us, and you can be sure: what you can no longer bring to light is a misfortune, but not your fault: if only it *never becomes known* what damage Giobert's tincture has done.

## S18 Blume 1824–1836, vol. 1, 262:

Ich glaube aber behaupten zu können, dass ich meine Arbeit mit möglichster Ausdauer durchgeführt habe, und dass daher eine künftige Revision des Gaius verschoben werden mus, bis die Chemie uns ein neues noch wirksameres Mittel erfunden hat.

I believe I can claim, however, that I have carried out my work with the greatest possible perseverance, and that a future revision of Gaius must therefore be postponed until chemistry has invented for us a new, even more effective remedy.

## S19 Studemund 1874, XVII:

In 'exterioribus' paginis kalio sulphurato usus sum, in 'interioribus' auctore Augusto Guilelmo Hofmann Berolinensi eo remedio, quod in annalibus philol. a. 1868 pag. 546 not. 1 accuratius descripsi: hoc igitur qui uti uolet, kalii sulphocyanati (aut ammonii sulphocyanati) grana aqua diluat admixtis paucis guttis acidi muriatici. Illud partim luteolum partim liuidulum colorem relinquit, estque dum madet non bene olens sed admodum asperum; hoc dum dilabitur, litterae emergere uidentur pallidulusque earum color quasi laeta et subrubea incrementa capit, ubi exaruit, uestigio nullo relicto pristina caligo ductibus offunditur. Quibus in remediis adhibendis id unum uidendum est ne parum aquae admisceas: quod ubi neglexeris, fragilis et tabescens membrana subita ruina collabatur sustinerique nullo modo poterit sed foedas aget rimas. Quodsi qua pagina nimis tenuis ad tactum uel remediis Bluhmia-

nis nimis maculata esse uidebatur, neque ulla apparebat spes fore ut meis medicamentis litterae Gaianae nudae et uenustae omni Hieronymianae scripturae uelo tamquam ueste detracta recuperarentur, ad Giuliani uoluntatem me accomodauī, qui uenenis eas solas membranas denuo temptari uoluit, quae adhibendae medicinae uel necessitatem commonerent uel commendarent utilitatem.

On the ‘outer’ pages I used potassium sulphate [ $K_2SO_4$ ]; on the ‘inner’ pages, on the recommendation of August Wilhelm Hofmann from Berlin, I used the means that I described in more detail in the *Philologische Jahrbücher* 1868, p. 546, n. 1: whoever wants to use it should dissolve grains of potassium sulphocyanate [= potassium thiocyanate (KSCN)] (or ammonium sulphocyanate [= ammonium thiocyanate ( $NH_4SCN$ ))] in spring water, adding a few drops of hydrochloric acid. The former [the potassium sulphate] leaves behind a partly yellowish partly bluish colour and, as long as it is moist, does not smell good but rather strong; while the latter [i.e. Hofmann’s tincture] evaporates, the letters seem to emerge and their somewhat pale colour takes on a fresh and reddish tinge; as soon as it has dried up, the old mist lies over the lettering without a trace remaining. In using these means, the only thing to keep in mind is not to add too little water: if you neglect this, the brittle and worn parchment will be destroyed by immediate damage and will not be able to resist in any way, but will draw ugly wrinkles. But if a page seemed too weak to be touched, or too stained by Bluhme’s remedies, and there was no longer any hope that by my means the bare letters of Gaius and the lovely writings of Jerome could be recovered after discarding every covering, as it were, like a garment, I submitted myself to Giuliani’s will, who wanted that only those pages of parchment should be treated anew that either admonished the necessity of applying the tincture or recommended its usefulness.

#### S20 Ehrle 1909, 246:

Ebenso glücklich löste das Komitee seine weitere Aufgabe, auf die staatliche Bewilligung einer entsprechenden Summe hinzuwirken zur Rettung der Handschriften mittelloser Kapitelsbibliotheken. Von den verschiedenen Ländern, welche seit Jahrzehnten alljährlich Scharen ihrer Gelehrten zur Ausbeutung zumal der italienischen Bibliotheken entsenden, fanden sich wenigstens die Regierungen von Oesterreich-Ungarn und Preußen bereit, in anerkannter Betätigung ausgleichender Gerechtigkeit dem Komitee zu dem besagten Zwecke eine beträchtliche Summe zur Verfügung zu stellen und so die Internationalität der wissenschaftlichen Interessen nicht nur im Nehmen, sondern auch im Geben zu betätigen. Diese Gelder kamen zum ersten Mal zur Photographierung der berühmten Gaiushandschrift von Verona, zu deren Ausbesserung und phototypischen Vervielfältigung zur Anwendung. [...] Eine weitere Veroneser Handschrift, die der wichtigen Fragmente de iure Fisci und des Codex Justinianus, (cod. LXII, ol. 60) wurde von S. Eminenz Kardinal Baccellieri schon vor geraumer Zeit der vatikanischen Bibliothek zu ähnlicher Behandlung anvertraut.

The committee [which had been appointed at the Conference of St Gallen] was equally successful in its further task of working towards the state granting of an appropriate sum to save the manuscripts of destitute chapter libraries. Of the various countries which for decades have annually sent swarms of their scholars to exploit the Italian libraries, at least the governments of Austria-Hungary and Prussia were, in a commendable exercise of balancing

justice, ready to make a considerable sum available to the committee for the aforementioned purpose and, in doing so, to exert the internationality of scholarly interests not only in taking, but also in giving. These funds were used for the first time to photograph the famous Gaius manuscript of Verona, to restore it and to reproduce it phototypically. [...] Another Veronese manuscript, that of the important fragments de jure Fisci [which, however, is actually the manuscript Veron. I appendice, fr. IV] and of the Codex Justinianus (cod. LXII, ol. 60), was already entrusted by His Eminence Cardinal Baccellieri to the Vatican Library for similar treatment some time ago.

S21 Krüger 1898, 826:

Ce réactif n'est pas inconnu ; il a été déjà recommandé par Studemund (*Gai institutiones Cod. Veronensis apogr.*, p. xvii ; cf. *Philologische Jahrbücher*, 1868, p. 546, n. 1). Le premier qui en ait recommandé l'emploi est le chimiste berlinois feu W. Hoffmann. Studemund pense que l'emploi en est surtout recommandable sur la face interne du parchemin ; cette observation peut s'appliquer au Gaius de Vérone ; quant à moi, je n'ai point constaté de différence. La teinture s'étend avec un petit pinceau soit mot par mot, soit sur une demi-ligne ou même sur une ligne entière, suivant la grandeur de l'écriture. Le bain des feuilles entières, souvent pratiqué autrefois et qui ne réussit guère jamais, doit être absolument proscrit ici, parce que la réaction d'un rouge vif passe très promptement. Aussitôt lu le passage, on le sèche avec de bon papier buvard ; dans les endroits difficiles j'ai pu, sans affaiblir la réaction, répéter coup sur coup l'application de la teinture. Par ce procédé, j'ai pu lire presque sans lacunes les fragments berlinois de Papinien ... Mon expérience personnelle ne me permet point de partager la prévention de quelques bibliothécaires contre l'acide muriatique, à condition qu'il soit fortement dilué. La peau n'est point atteinte, comme en témoignent les feuilles du Gaius de Vérone et du Code Théodosien de Turin, qui ont été traitées avec la teinture de Gioberti plus forte. – La composition exacte en est : Eau 15 parties, Ferrocyanure de potassium 1, Acide muriatique 1. Si l'emploi par Blume de ce réactif a rendu illisible le Gaius de Vérone, la faute en est à une mauvaise composition ou à une mauvaise application de la teinture.

This reagent is not unknown; it was already recommended by Studemund (*Gai institutiones Cod. Veronensis apogr.*, p. xvii; see *Philologische Jahrbücher*, 1868, p. 546, n. 1). The first to recommend its use was the late Berlin chemist W. Hofmann. Studemund thinks that the use is especially recommended on the inner side of the parchment; this observation may refer to the Gaius of Verona; as far as I am concerned, I have not noticed any difference. The tincture is applied with a small brush either word by word or on half a line or even on a whole line, depending on the size of the writing. The bathing of whole sheets, once often practised and hardly ever with success, must be strictly forbidden in this case, because the reaction, consisting in a vivid red, takes place very quickly. As soon as one has read the passage, one dries it with a good piece of blotting paper; in difficult places I have been able to repeat the application of the tincture time and again without weakening the reaction. Through this procedure I have been able to read the Berlin fragments of Papinian almost without any gaps ... My personal experience does not allow me at all to share the reservations of certain librarians about hydrochloric acid, on condition that it is strongly diluted. The skin is not attacked at all, as witnessed by the leaves of the Gaius of Verona and the Codex Theodosianus of Turin, which were treated with Giobert's stronger tincture. – The exact composition is: 15 parts

water, 1 part potassium ferrocyanide, 1 part hydrochloric acid. If Bluhme's use of this reagent has rendered the Gaius of Verona illegible, the fault lies in poor composition or poor application of the tincture.

S22 Giuliani 1888, 248 [1993, 250]:

[...] usando prima il *prussiato di potassa*, poi bene asciugati i fogli, li toccava leggermente con la soluzione di *ammoniaca*, secondo il metodo adoperato sulle pagine interiori del Gajo dallo Studemund: ne risultò una bellissima tintura *bleu*, efficace a ravvivare lo spento carattere, senza portar guasto alla membrana.

[...] by first using prussiate of potash, then, after the leaves had been dried well, he [Mommensen] touched them lightly with an ammonia solution according to Studemund's method used on the inner pages of the Gaius. This resulted in a very beautiful blue colouring, efficient in reviving the extinguished letters without harming the parchment.

S23 Studemund in Krüger and Studemund 1884, VI–VII:

Ex remediis chemicis, quibus ipse olim annis 1867 et 1868 usus eram, paucis locis codicem leuiter fatigauerat kalium sulphocyanatum mixtum paucis guttis acidi muriatici; nec tamen commissae iniuriae urit me angitue conscientia: sane nusquam grauiores labes contraxit codex in eis locis, quos hoc remedio olim temptaueram; huius enim ope tamquam uelo detracto nudatur antiqua scriptura, eademque intra exiguum tempus denuo operitur et in ueteres tenebras demergitur. Contra non pauci ex eis locis, ad quos legendos olim lentiore ui kalii sulphurati usus eram, anno 1878 et anno 1883 facilius ac plenius legi potuerunt quam anno 1868.

Of the chemical remedies that I myself had once used in 1867 and 1868, potassium sulphocyanate mixed with a few drops of hydrochloric acid had slightly exhausted the codex in a few places; and yet no bad conscience burns or torments me for having done wrong: certainly, the codex has not suffered any worse damage in the places that I had once treated with this remedy. Because with its help the old script is uncovered as if by pulling back a veil, and after a short time it is covered anew and plunged into the old darkness. On the other hand, quite a few of the passages for the reading of which I had once made use of the more inert effect of potassium sulphate could be read more easily and more completely in the years 1878 and 1883 than in 1868.



Zisis Melissakis

# Palimpsest Manuscripts in the National Library of Greece, with a Focus on EBE 192

**Abstract:** The main manuscript collection of the National Library of Greece in Athens (EBE) includes twenty-five partial or complete palimpsests, with folios from older, mainly Greek but also non-Greek, manuscripts. I have studied this material thoroughly in the framework of the project *Rinascimento Virtuale – Digitale Palimpsestforschung*. For some palimpsests, more specific studies have been carried out, but a detailed catalogue is still pending. This paper presents a descriptive summary of all of these palimpsests with the addition of newer research findings. The second part is devoted to the most important palimpsest in the collection, EBE 192, whose oldest layer of writing derives from two manuscripts with philosophical, educational, and legal content.

## 1 Introduction

Twenty years ago, within the framework of the project *Rinascimento Virtuale – Digitale Palimpsestforschung*, I attempted to provide a first account of the palimpsest codices of the National Library of Greece (Εθνική Βιβλιοθήκη της Ελλάδος, EBE). I was able to identify a total of twenty-five palimpsests, the majority of which was already known from the catalogues by Georgios Kremos in 1876, Ioannis Sakkelion in 1892, and Linos Politis in 1991, as well as from the old specialised study by Heinrich Reich in 1882.<sup>1</sup> My research was assisted by the multispectral camera (MuSIS) devel-

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<sup>1</sup> Kremos 1876, nos XL, LV, LVI, LXXXVIII, CX, CXX, CLIII, CXCVIII, CCIX (= respectively manuscripts EBE 177, 192, 193, 842, 864, 874, 452, 880, 485); Ioannis Sakkelion and Alkiviadis I. Sakkelion 1892: same manuscripts plus EBE 78, 139, 223, 347, 637, 1097; Politis 1991 added manuscripts EBE 2048, 2075, 2106, 2107, 2112, 2155, 2471, 2495; Reich 1882: same manuscripts as Kremos, except EBE 842; Melissakis 2003–2004: all the above-mentioned manuscripts – except EBE 2106 and 2495, whose description by Politis is exhaustive – plus EBE 2694 and 2795. This account was first presented during the workshop ‘Ο κόσμος των παλιμψηστων χειρογράφων στις βιβλιοθήκες της Ελλάδος και στις μονές και τα πατριαρχεία της ορθόδοξης Ανατολής’, Athens, 7–11 May 2003 in the framework of the project *Rinascimento Virtuale*. For more on this project, see <<http://palin.iccu.sbn.it>>, accessed on 1 March 2024. The collections of Metochion tou Panaghiou Taphou and Megali tou Genous Scholi, kept in the EBE, have no palimpsest manuscripts. All images used in this article are © Εθνική Βιβλιοθήκη της Ελλάδος, Athens.

oped by Forth Photonics, thanks to which I was able to see, very clearly, specimens of the older level of writing in certain manuscripts. Although my aim was to conduct a detailed study of these manuscripts, in the end the subsequent unavailability of the multispectral camera prevented me from achieving this goal. The only relevant opportunity appeared about ten years later, when, thanks to the support of Jost Gippert and Manuel Raaf, I obtained multispectral photographs of all the folios with a barely discernible text of codex EBE 192. The present study offers a brief presentation of the palimpsest codices in the EBE collection, enriched with comments from their new examination made in the summer of 2023, except for EBE 485 and 842, which are no longer accessible due to their very bad condition. In the second part of the paper, we will dwell more on EBE 192. Unfortunately, the EBE no longer allows the use of a UV lamp for the study of palimpsests, for reasons of their protection, and therefore the new photos that accompany this paper have been taken without it.

## 2 Survey of the palimpsests kept at the EBE

Table 1 presents the whole corpus of palimpsests manuscripts kept at the EBE.<sup>2</sup> It also offers information regarding the dating, content, material and visual organisation of the upper and lower layers.

**Table 1:** Corpus of palimpsest manuscripts at the EBE.

MS EBE	Upper Layer			Lower Layer			
	Date	Content	Support and page	Date	Content	Page and script	Folios
78	14th c.	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 31/32 ll.	10th c.	John Chrysostom	2 cols 31 ll. min. ⇔	1–144
				9th c.?	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 20+ ll. ogiv. †	
139	15th c.	Misc. theological & liturgical	mostly paper 15/26 ll.	8th– 9th c.	Gospel	roll 2 cols ogiv. †	245–246

<sup>2</sup> This table uses the following abbreviations: c. (century), biblic. maj. (biblical majuscule script), cols (columns), ff. (folios), maj. (majuscule script), min. (minuscule script), ogiv. (ogival script), parch. (parchment), pp. (pages), sl. ogiv. (slanted ogival script). The two symbols following indicate the upper and lower script running parallelly (⇔) or vertically (†). Notice that EBE 637 is excluded from the survey because its lower layer comes exclusively from an Armenian codex (see Gippert 2019–2020).



MS EBE	Upper Layer			Lower Layer			
	Date	Content	Support and page	Date	Content	Page and script	Folios
177	14th c.	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 28/33 ll.	8th–9th c.	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 21 ll. sl. ogiv. ⇌	All
192	14th c.	Gospel lectionary	17/23 ll.	9th c. end	Philosophical texts	29/31 ll. min. ⇌	Almost all
				6th–7th c.	Legal texts	22 ll. biblic. maj. ⇌	32 ff.
193	13th & 15th c.	Gospel lectionary	parch. (2 cols 22 ll.) & paper (16 ll.)	7th c.	Gospel	2 cols 28 ll. sl. ogiv. ⇌	pp. 427–430
223	1195	Basil of Caesarea, Ascetics	31/32 ll.	8th–9th c.	Basil of Caesarea	2 cols (ff. 230–287) 31/33 ll. sl. ogiv. ⇌	All
347	1405/1406	Thekaras, Prayers	24/25 ll.	8th–9th c.	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 22 ll. ogiv. †	All
452	12th & 14th c.	John Chrysostom	2 cols 29 ll.	11th c.	<i>Vitae</i> of saints of January	2 cols 30/32 ll. min. ⇌	pp. 233–348
485	13th–14th c.	Hagiographical texts	2 cols 34/47 ll.	10th–11th c.	Gospel	2 cols min. ⇌	ff. 95, 98
				?	Latin text	2–3 mss 1/2 cols ⇌ †	Almost all
637	14th c.	Octoechos Parakletike	2 cols 48/55 ll.	?	Armenian lectionary	2 cols ⇌	ff. 21 sqq.
842	1251/1252	Menaion of November	27/30 ll.	8th c.	Apophthegmata Patrum	2 cols sl. ogiv. †	Almost all
864	14th c.	Menaion of December	2 cols 31 ll.	10th c.	Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Theologian	31 c. ll. min. †	pp. 1–276, 325–388
				10th–11th	Pentekostarion	29 c. ll. min. †	
				11th c.	Triodion	26–28 c. ll. min. †	
874	13th–15th c.	Triodion	parch. (20–30 ll.) & paper (21 ll.)	8th–9th c.	Menaion of December, September, Triodion etc.	29/33 ll. ogiv. ⇌	All parch. ff.
				11th c.	John Damascenus	2 cols 30 ll. min. ⇌	

MS EBE	Upper Layer			Lower Layer			
	Date	Content	Support and page	Date	Content	Page and script	Folios
				10th c.	Kontakarion of January	21 ll. min. ⇄	
				11th c.	Hymns	28 ll. min. ⇄	
				8th–9th c.	Cyril of Jerusalem	2 cols sl. ogiv. ⇄	
880	13th c.	Typikon of Laura of St Sabas	19/20 ll.	mid 10th–11th c.	Philo Judaeus	25–29 ll. min. ⇄	All
1097	13th–14th c.	Misc., mostly grammatical texts	mostly paper 17/20 ll.	10th–11th c.	Basil of Caesarea, Liturgy	roll min. ⇄	ff. 100–101, 131, 140
				11th c.	Old Testament	2 cols 20+ ll. min. ⇄	
				13th c.	Acts of the Apostles	24 ll.? min. ⇄	
				13th c.	Acts of the Apostles	22–26 ll. c. ⇄ same ms with precedent?	
2048	15th c.	Synaxarion for Dec.–Jan.	26–31 ll.	12th c.	Menaion of January	30–40 ll. c. min. ⇄	All
2075	11th, 13th c.	John Chrysostom	2/1 cols 40 ll.	10th c.	<i>Basilica</i>	32 ll. min. ⇄	ff. 211–215
2106	11th, 14th c.	<i>Vitae</i> of saints of December	2 cols 30 ll.	9th c.	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 24 ll. ogiv. ⇄	ff. 31, 38–47, 54, 185/186, 217, 242–254
				6th c.	Gospel	2 cols 20 ll. biblic. maj. ⇄	f. 350
2107	12th, 14th c.	<i>Vitae</i> of saints of November	2 cols 30 ll.	11th–12th c.	Hypomnema to the Gospels	2 cols 36 ll. c. min. ⇄	ff. 21–27, 91–98, 169–176
2112	13th, 14th c.	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 20–22 ll.	9th c.	Gospel lectionary	2 cols 21 ll. sl. ogiv. ⇄	All
				11th c.	Gerontikon (?)	2 cols 29 ll. min. ⇄	f. 156
				11th c.	Menaion of November	27 ll. <i>Perschrift</i> ⇄	f. 149
2155	14th c.	Sticherarion	parch. & paper 40 ll.	10th c.	Photius, <i>Nomocanon</i> (?)	29+ ll. min. ⇄	ff. 218–241

MS EBE	Upper Layer			Lower Layer			
	Date	Content	Support and page	Date	Content	Page and script	Folios
2471	14th (first half?), 12th–13th c.	Panygerikon, <i>Vitae</i> Pentekostarion (?)	paper (parch. pastedown) 2/1 cols 30–34 ll.	11th c.	John Chrysostom	2 cols 34+ ll. min. ⇄	ff. <I>, <α>
2495	13th c.	Gospels	21/22 ll.	13th c.?	Note of possession of the monastery of Lavra (Athos)	min. ⇄	f. 311 (313)
2694	13th c.	Ascetical texts	22/26 ll.	11th–12th c.	Parakletike	24 ll. min. ⇄	ff. 50 sqq.
2795	14th c.	Three liturgies, Liturgical texts	20 ll.	8th c. 8th c.?	Menaion of December (?) Menaion	33 ll. c. sl. ogiv. † 26+ ll. sl. ogiv. ⇄	Various ff. 74, 87

## 2.1 The lowest layers of writing

Most of the lower layers in the EBE palimpsests feature a minuscule script. I identified folios from twenty-two minuscule codices, which were reused in fifteen codices of the EBE,<sup>3</sup> as well as folios from fifteen majuscule codices that were reused in twelve volumes of the EBE.<sup>4</sup> Nine EBE codices have palimpsest folios from more than one older codex (from two to five), either in minuscules only (EBE 864 and 1097), in majuscules only (EBE 2106 and 2795), or in both scripts (EBE 78, 192, 874, 2112) (Figs 1–2). We should highlight the special case of EBE 485, in which folios from one Greek and two or three Latin codices have been used. The high number of reused manuscripts written in minuscules indicates that the main reason for recycling a manuscript was not the abandonment of the majuscule script but other factors, such as the deterioration of the original codices or because the texts

<sup>3</sup> These are EBE 78, 192, 452, 485, 864 (folios from three minuscule manuscripts), 874 (folios from three manuscripts), 880, 1097 (folios from one roll and two or three codices), 2048, 2075, 2107, 2112 (folios from two manuscripts), 2155, 2471, and 2694. In EBE 2495, the only palimpsested text seems to be a note of possession of the monastery of Megistē Lavra on Mount Athos; see below Section 2.3.

<sup>4</sup> EBE 78, 139 (folios from a roll), 177, 192, 193, 223, 347, 842, 874 (folios from two majuscule manuscripts), 2106 (folios from two manuscripts), 2112, and 2795 (folios from two manuscripts).

they contained had fallen out of use or fashion.<sup>5</sup> Finally, to observe the type of the oldest scripts that we found in the EBE palimpsests, we must limit ourselves to the – more recognisable – majuscule, in which ogival (in five manuscripts) and slanted ogival (in eight manuscripts) prevail, alongside two cases of biblical majuscule (Figs 3–4).



Fig. 1: EBE 874, p. 92 (majuscule script).

<sup>5</sup> Folios from majuscule manuscripts were reused mostly in fourteenth-century EBE codices (EBE 78, 177, 192, 2106, 2112, 2795), less in thirteenth and fifteenth (EBE 139, 193, 347, 842, 874), only in two cases in twelfth (EBE 223) and eleventh century (part of EBE 2106), and never in tenth or ninth codices, when minuscules replaced majuscules in books. See also Section 2.2 below as well as Agati 2017, 70.



Fig. 2: EBE 874, p. 601 (minuscule script).

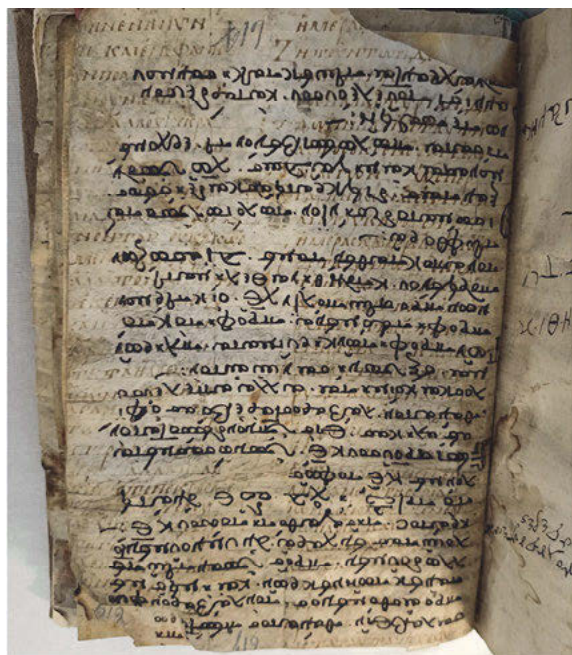


Fig. 3: EBE 874, p. 617 (slanted ogival script).

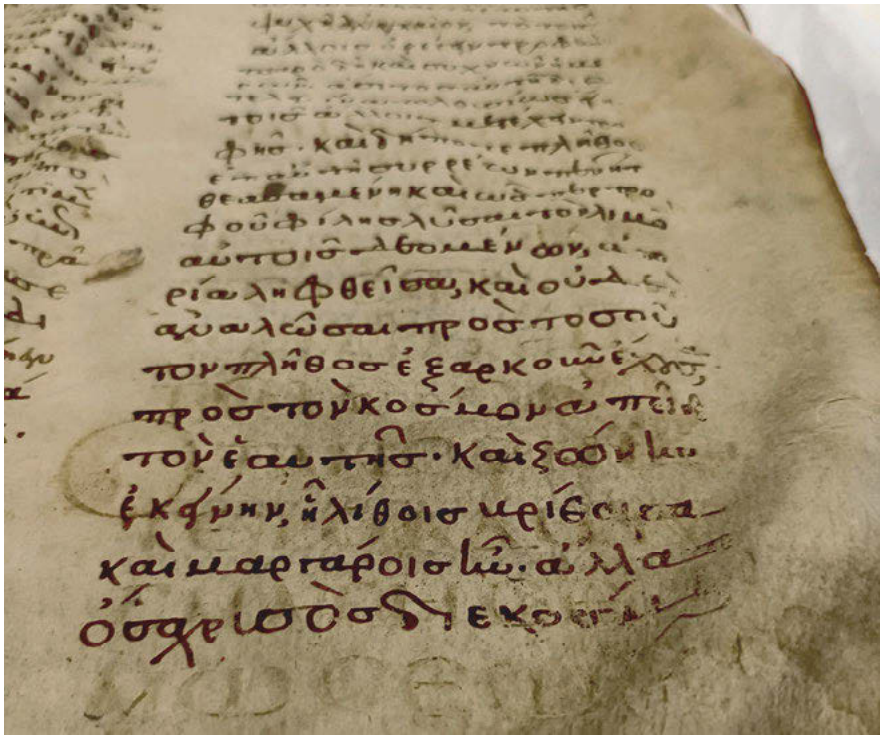


Fig. 4: EBE 2106, fol. 350<sup>r</sup> (biblical majuscule).

## 2.2 The dating

Regarding the chronology of the codices, both the older reused and the newly manufactured ones, we must point out that in some cases the general dating of the new codex is not so important. Of importance is only the dating of the newer writing on its palimpsest leaves, since, at times, these were added later to fill some gaps. This is, for example, the case of EBE 193, in which the palimpsest leaves were rewritten in the fourteenth century but added to a composite produced later, as most of its folios are datable to the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Another example is EBE 452 from the twelfth century, in which folios from an eleventh-century codex were used during the fourteenth century to fill its gap. In EBE 2471, two palimpsest folios were used as flyleaves. They were taken from a codex from the twelfth or thirteenth century, in which they had been used after their older eleventh-century text had been erased. However, in the EBE collection, we have palimpsested leaves with older writing datable to the sixth to thirteenth centuries, with most cases (twenty-two, to be precise)

datable from the tenth century and later, as opposed to sixteen cases that predate this century. Of course, we must consider a percentage of incorrect dating, since in many cases the oldest writing is barely visible. On the other hand, the reuse of the old folios took place from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, with most cases observed in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries (eleven and six to nine cases, respectively).<sup>6</sup> A final observation, arising from the new examinations, possibly concerns a rare case of folios that were palimpsested twice. These are the flyleaves of EBE 78, in which we noticed that reading symbols (ekphonic notation) that are not from the latest writing layer appear even in the space between the columns of the old layer, which leads to the suspicion that these folios also carry a third, even older, layer, which however we cannot currently distinguish (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: EBE 78, p. α (144) (*bis rescriptus*; space between the columns of the older layer).

<sup>6</sup> On this issue see also n. 7 below.

## 2.3 The content

Most of the codices reused in the EBE manuscripts were – as expected – church books for daily service, and so subject to more wear and tear. Their contents include liturgical books (thirteen volumes), Gospel lectionaries (five volumes), consecutive Gospels (four volumes), an Old Testament, and texts of the Church Fathers (eight volumes). A few comprised ascetic and hagiographical content. Three transmitted legal collections (the *Ecloga* and *Nomos Nautikos* in EBE 192, the *Basilica* in EBE 2075, and Photius's *Nomocanon* in EBE 2155). One volume – EBE 192 – had various philosophical texts, which we will discuss in more detail in Section 3. Worthy of attention is the case of EBE 223, in which the older and the newer texts on some folios are identical (Basil of Caesarea, *Ascetic Decrees*).<sup>7</sup> We observe a similarity throughout the content of the newer manuscripts in which these leaves were placed: again, the liturgical manuscripts (nine volumes) and the lectionaries or Gospels (six volumes) prevail, but there are far fewer texts by Church Fathers (three cases), more with theological and ascetic content (seven cases), and in only one case we have non-religious texts.<sup>8</sup> The case of EBE 2495 is completely unique, since, according to Politis, its one and only palimpsest leaf contains nothing but the standard thirteenth-century possession note of the library of Megistē Lavra, known from many other codices and studied by Boris Fonkich.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.4 The reuse of palimpsest leaves

In the EBE collection, we find eleven entirely or almost entirely palimpsested codices,<sup>10</sup> while some or at least a few palimpsest leaves are found in twelve further codices. The case of the paper triodion EBE 874 is interesting; it was produced when the main scribe-compiler likely collected exclusively palimpsest parchment leaves from other triodia of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, joined them together, and filled in the many gaps in the text by writing solely on paper folios.

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7 This is also the case of the Latin manuscript Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 280 (469), which contains orations of Cicero in both layers; Reitzentein 1925, 299. According to Perria 2011, 201, such cases are rather common, although she does not mention any particular example. However, it is always important to distinguish if the text on every layer is of the same variation.

8 EBE 1097 with mainly grammar content.

9 Politis 1991, 497; Fonkich 1967.

10 Entirely or almost entirely palimpsest are EBE 78, 177, 192, 223, 347, 485, 842, 864, 880, 2048, 2112.



EBE 2155 has mixed quires, that is, it is in paper except for the outer bifolio, which is in parchment and in several cases palimpsested.<sup>11</sup>

It is relevant to analyse the way in which the old folios have been arranged in the new manuscripts. The following scenarios are possible: (1) placement of open bifolios to form one folio, as in the flyleaves of EBE 78; (2) single folios that rendered just one new folio, for example in EBE 2112, fol. 156; (3) folding of folios to form bifolios, for example in EBE 347 (Fig. 6); and (4) folding of pieces from a scroll to form bifolios (EBE 139 and 1097).



Fig. 6: EBE 347, fols 35<sup>v</sup> + 36<sup>r</sup> (folding of folios to form bifolios).

Unique is the case of EBE 864, as most of its bifolios were formed by affixing two pieces of parchment from older codices whose text runs parallel to the newer one, usually in a ratio of two-thirds plus one-third ( $2/3 + 1/3$ ) of the surface of the bifolio (Fig. 7). Finally, in some manuscripts, such as EBE 2155, the much larger original bifolio had to be trimmed to fit the smaller dimensions of the new volume. This oper-

<sup>11</sup> Politis 1991, 181.

ation caused the loss of portions of the older content (Fig. 8). In turn, in EBE 2112, we see the opposite phenomenon: one of its palimpsest folios derives from a volume of smaller dimensions and falls short, both in height and width, compared to the rest of the new codex.

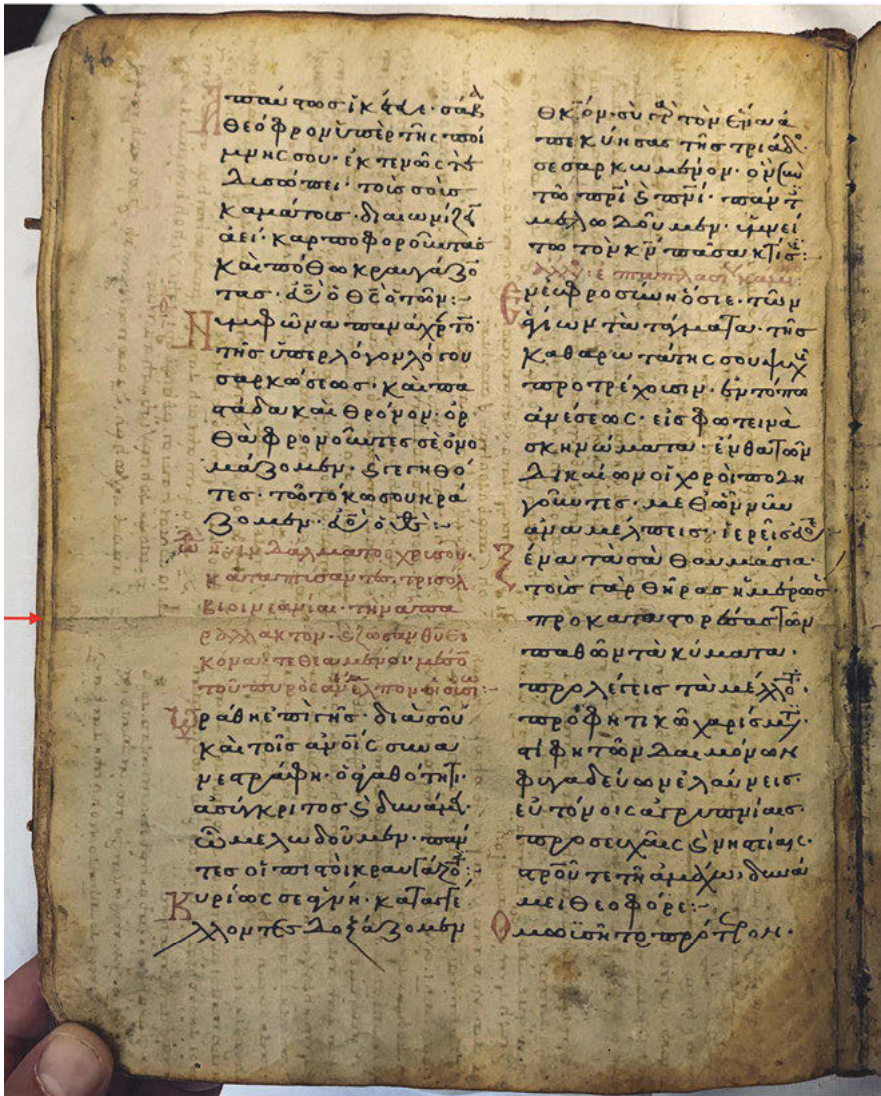


Fig. 7: EBE 864, p. 46 (affixed pieces of used parchment to form bifolios).

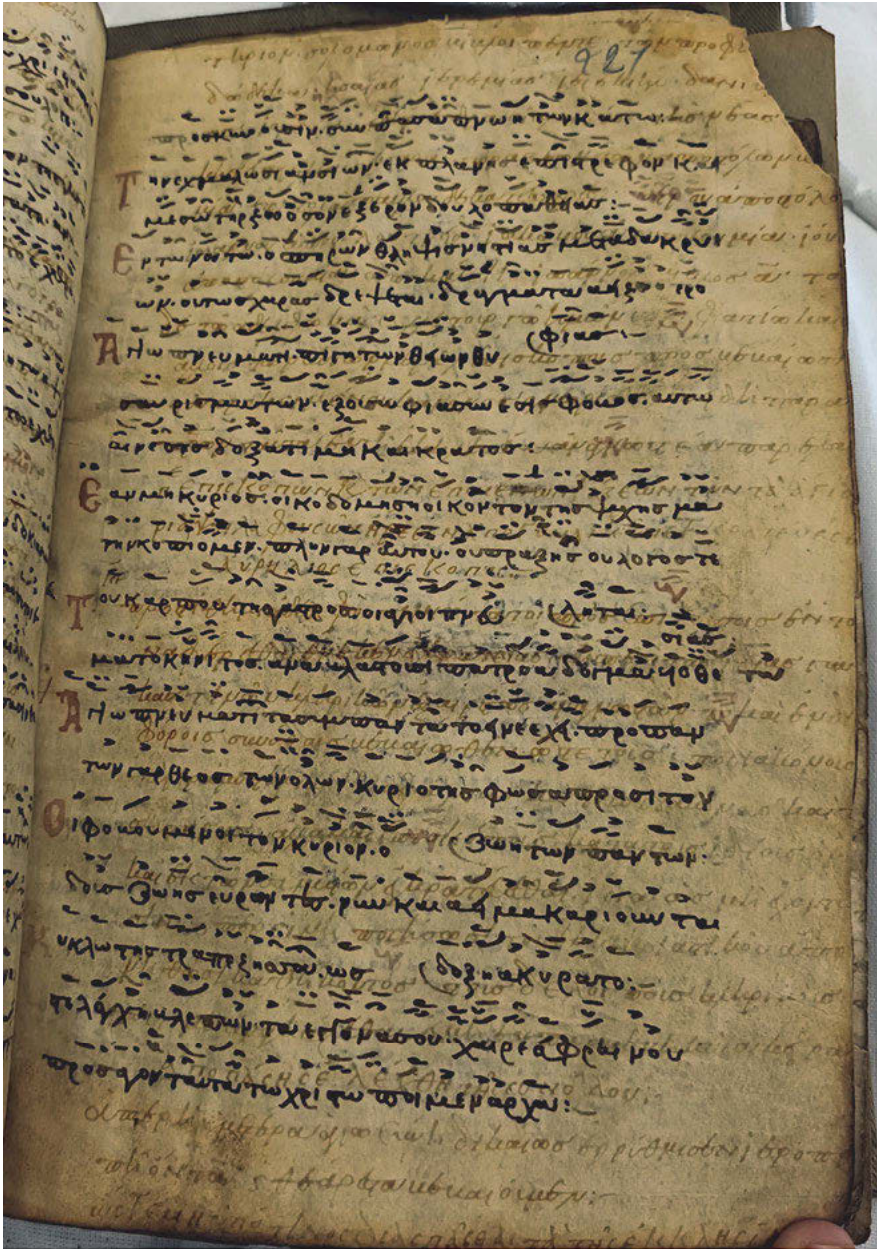


Fig. 8: EBE 2155, fol. 221<sup>r</sup> (cutting the older text in height and width).

Depending on the way in which folios were reused, the older writing appears either parallel (in thirty cases) or perpendicular (in eleven cases) to the newer one.<sup>12</sup> We observe a tendency in favour of the parallel sequence of the two scripts. Reusing the old folios in this way could facilitate the construction of the new codex, since the ruling of the older folios could be used for the new ones.

### 3 EBE 192

We will henceforth focus on EBE 192, the codex that has perhaps garnered the greatest interest because of the contents in its lower layers. This is a small-format codex – 168 × 125 mm – of 240 folios (plus a nineteenth-century paper pastedown at the beginning), numbered as pages 1–480.<sup>13</sup> It is entirely palimpsested and consists of bifolios or simple folios from two older volumes, with the newer text written always parallel to the older one and in one column (full page, similar to the older texts) of 17–23 lines. The newest layer is datable to the fourteenth century, on a palaeographic basis.<sup>14</sup> It renders a Gospel lectionary, which starts abruptly, as an unknown number of folios are missing (apparently the entire first quire).<sup>15</sup>

The oldest of the two palimpsested codices, which provided thirty-two folios in EBE 192, can be dated to the eighth century on the basis of its majuscule script, and contained legal texts, among which today we can distinguish the *Ecloga* and the *Nomos Nautikos*.<sup>16</sup> The more recent one, which yielded all the remaining folios reused in EBE 192, is datable, also on the basis of the script, to the end of the ninth century, and contained various philosophical texts.

<sup>12</sup> See Agati 2017, 70–71.

<sup>13</sup> For a codicological description of this manuscript, see Melissakis 2003–2004, 172–177.

<sup>14</sup> Although it is difficult to date with precision, on the basis of the mostly traditional – but rather inexperienced – script of the manuscript, I consider the thirteenth century less likely.

<sup>15</sup> The first remaining quire (pp. 1–16) is preserved intact, while from the fragmentary surviving numbering of the volume's quires, marked by the hand of the scribe of the Gospel lectionary, we conclude that there is indeed one quire missing at the beginning of the volume. Likewise absent is a paper ternion before p. 1, of which only traces are now discernible – obviously a later addition, which may not have contained any writing at all but merely served as flyleaves.

<sup>16</sup> In 2004, when the exact content of this part of the EBE 192 was not yet identified, I presented a paper on it with the title 'Il codice 192 della Biblioteca Nazionale di Atene e il testo giuridico nascosto in esso' at a workshop in the framework of the project Rinascimento Virtuale ('Quod in palimpsesto, laudo equidem parsimoniam: A Workshop on Legal and Other Palimpsests', Groningen, 11–12 July 2004). In this (unpublished) paper I stated that the lower script of these folios (pp. 387–392, 395–416, 419–420, 429–430, 433–464) is a biblical majuscule of the Syrian-Antiochean type, on which see Cavallo 1967, 98–104.

### 3.1 The history of the codex

In EBE 192, we find notes written by the scribes of the latest layer of the writing and by the ninth-century scribe, respectively; unfortunately they are just vows and do not offer relevant information about the provenance or early biography of the manuscripts or their producers (Fig. 9).<sup>17</sup> In contrast, much later notes help us to fathom some stages in the later history of the volume. An Arabic note (Fig. 10) indicates that the codex once belonged to the monastery of Megalē Panagia in Jerusalem. The presence of the codex in the Near East is confirmed by the Arabic translation of the titles of many of the Gospel passages, which a later hand added next to the corresponding Greek titles.<sup>18</sup> As testified by another note, the codex belonged in 1863 to the Hagio-taphite archimandrite and exarch of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Athens, Kyrillos Athanasiadis. According to one of his own publications in 1890, Athanasiadis bought today's EBE 192 together with another 'Arabo-Syrian' manuscript in Damascus. In 1868, Athanasiadis donated EBE 192 to the library of the University of Athens, which was then united with the National Library of Greece.

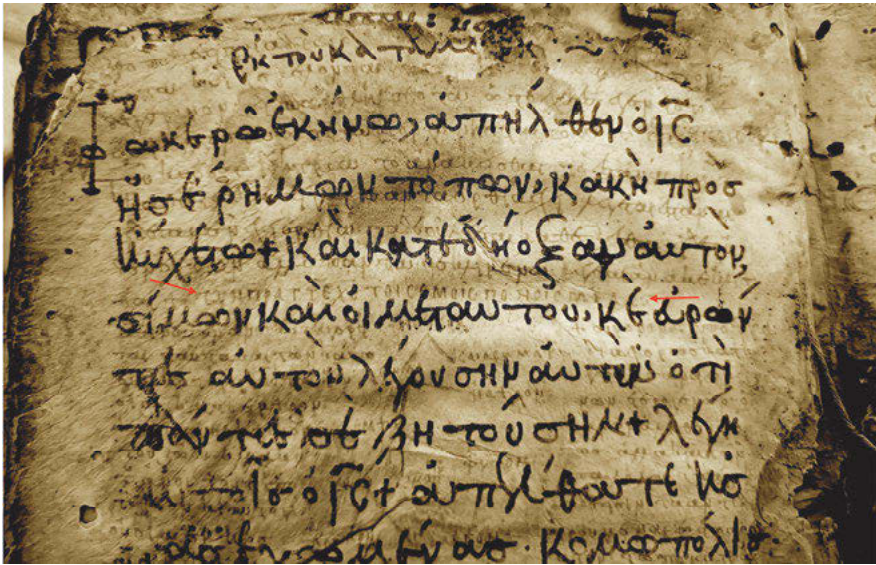


Fig. 9: EBE 192, p. 474 (older layer; note prayer of the scribe).

17 EBE 192, p. 473 (latest layer): + σωθ(ῆ) ο γράψ(ας) ημέ(ρας) / τεσσαρισκαίδεκα +; p. 474 (older layer in capital letters): + ΣΥΝΠΑΤΤΕ Χ(ΡΙΣΤ)Ε ΤΟΙΣ ΕΜΟΙΣ ΠΟΝΟΙΣ ΜΙΑΣ :: (= πονήμασι?).

18 See Melissakis 2003–2004, 176, n. 25.



Fig. 10: EBE 192, p. 170 (Arabic note of possession).

### 3.2 Previous research on EBE 192

EBE 192 was first known to researchers in 1876 from the catalogue of George Kremos, who mentions that he showed the codex to Victor Gardthausen, who studied it for a few days. A few years later, Heinrich Wilhelm Reich included it in his work on the palimpsests of the EBE. Ten more years later, Ioannis Sakkelion included it in his comprehensive catalogue of EBE's manuscripts, and in 1909, Caspar René Gregory also mentioned it in his *Textkritik des Neuen Testamentes*.<sup>19</sup> One of the above scholars seems to have used – in accordance with the practice of the time – a chemical substance to make the older layer of writing more distinct.<sup>20</sup> Traces of this intervention are visible today on some pages of the codex (e.g. pp. 178–179) (Fig. 11).

<sup>19</sup> Kremos 1876, 92; Reich 1882, 97–100; Ioannis Sakkelion and Alkiviadis I. Sakkelion 1892, 36; Gregory 1909, 424.

<sup>20</sup> For such practices, see Emanuel Zingg's contribution to the present volume.



Fig. 11: EBE 192, pp. 178–179 (traces of use of chemical substance).

### 3.3 The Aristotelian content

In this section of my paper, I focus on some relevant features of the content, script, and visual organisation of the ninth-century codex which provided most of the palimpsest folios reused in EBE 192. Dieter Harlfinger has been studying this part of the manuscript since 2004.<sup>21</sup>

A comprehensive list of the works transmitted in the palimpsested folios of the ninth-century manuscript is still a desideratum. Most of its text remains illegible because it has been either covered by the newer text or completely erased and cannot be recovered through multispectral imaging. Based on passages read on various folios, the contents are roughly as follows:

- (approx. pp. 1–82) Joannes Damascenus, *Dialectica sive capita philosophica (recensio brevior)* (CPG 8041)
- (p. 111?) Unidentified text; the title distinguished is Ἄγων Ἀμφίωνος Ὀρφέως καὶ Ἀρπίωνος, probably a school exercise

<sup>21</sup> Harlfinger referred to EBE 192 during the closing conference of the Sinai Palimpsests Project, ‘New Light on Old Manuscripts: Recent Advances in Palimpsest Studies’, 25–27 April 2018.

- (approx. pp. 127–215) Ammonius, *In Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces and In Aristotelis categorias commentarius*
- (approx. pp. 169 sqq.) Unidentified texts as scholia in Aristotle; titles distinguished are, among others, Περὶ γραμματικῆς [...] Ὅρισμός περὶ τῆς μουσικῆς [...] Περὶ ὄλου [...] Περὶ τοῦ ἔχειν [...] Περὶ ἐρμηνείας [...] Περὶ ῥήματος [...] Περὶ ἀντικειμένων [...] Περὶ προτέρου [...] Περὶ κινήσεως ἧτοι περὶ μεταβολῆς
- (approx. pp. 345 sqq.) Photius, *Amphilochia*
- (approx. pp. 421 sqq.) Hierocles, *In aureum Pythagoreorum carmen commentarius*.

Although in our palimpsest we have identified enough areas where the writing is clearly discernible to provide a satisfactory sample of it, unfortunately the same is not true for the text in these areas, since only fragments can be read and not large sections, which would allow us to follow its flow and, thus, its organisation.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3.1 The script types

The minuscule script of the lower script in most of the palimpsest folios in EBE 192 fits well into the rigid general writing trend of the ninth century. However, since its shape seems looser than examples from the first half or even the middle of that century, it is possible to date it to the end of the century (Fig. 12). Although the script develops more in width and rounded letter forms predominate, the ascenders and descenders of many letters (*η, κ, λ, μ, ν, χ*) extend well into the interlinear space, emphasising their height as well. We could therefore characterise this script as sitting between the angular and rounded trends of that period (the evolution of the older *antico oblungo* style and the *Nicola* or *minuscola antica rotunda-studita*).<sup>23</sup> In fact, even the hooks at the tip of a few letters (such as *ι* and *τ*) are curved, while in the horizontal strokes of *τ* and *π* a rounded tip sometimes appears, vaguely reminiscent of the *Keulensstil* of this period, but also of the later *bouletée*, or rather the *prebouletées*, of the same period.<sup>24</sup> As regards the height-width proportion and the angular letterforms, a tendency towards the squared script of the second half of the ninth century is discernible, but clearly we are far from the artificial image of these. A final

<sup>22</sup> On these fragments, see Melissakis 2003–2004, 173–175.

<sup>23</sup> On these scripts, see Perria 2011, 69–78.

<sup>24</sup> Perria 2011, 83, 91–92. On *Keulensstil*, see Hunger 1977, 203.



element that leads us to a dating before the beginning of the tenth century is the lack of uncial forms, except perhaps for the letter  $\theta$  and rarely for the letter  $\lambda$ .

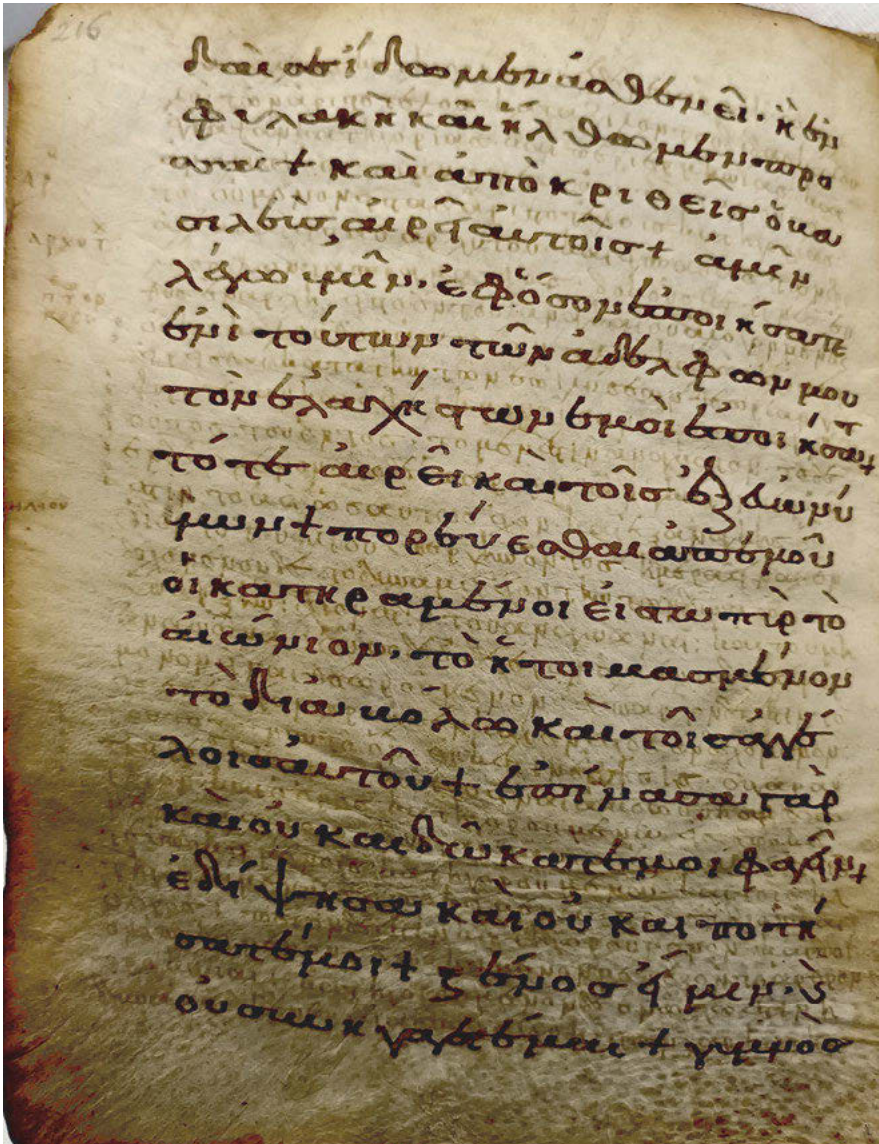


Fig. 12: EBE 192, p. 216 (minuscule of the end of the ninth century).

We therefore have a pure minuscule script in which the phenomenon of the reintroduction of majuscule characters that characterises the first decades of the tenth century does not yet appear.<sup>25</sup> At the time our manuscript was written, several specific styles or types of writing have been identified as being in use, such as the *tipo Anastasio*, the highly artificial square style, and of course the very particular writing of the so-called *collezione filosofica*, which is in fact only a subset of the *Keulenstil*. Our script does not seem to belong to any of these types, coming from high-level scribes, perhaps even professional ones; but, in combining general characteristics from various contemporary trends, it probably derives from a hand that is experienced, and the result is calligraphic – as well as orthographically correct – but the manuscript was nevertheless intended as a book for study or perhaps for teaching, as Dieter Harlfinger suggests. There are very few abbreviations, and likewise merged letters, which strictly follow a limited repertoire, imposed by the lack of readers' familiarity during this first period with the use of the minuscule in books.

### 3.3.2 The layout and paracontent

The layout of the ninth-century codex follows the 'humble' appearance of the script in which its contents were written. The text is written in one column (full page), sometimes even with wavy lines and an unjustified right-hand edge. The number of lines mostly varies between 29 and 31. As is usually the case in Byzantine manuscripts of Aristotle's works with marginal commentaries, the text block is placed in the centre of the folio, with margins of approximately equal width on the four sides, ranging from 15 to 20 mm, although it is likely that all the folios had part of the margins cut off. In the case of the codex reused in EBE 192, it seems that a large margin (*marge exégétique élargie*, as Michel Cacouros names it),<sup>26</sup> reserved for commentaries, was not needed, as it did not contain any Aristotelian treatise but rather presented works by other authors introducing Aristotelian philosophy. Nevertheless, on several folios we find such interpretative or merely auxiliary material, which can be classified as follows:

1. Commentary in the margins contemporary with the main text, possibly also by the hand of its scribe, but in a majuscule script placed between the biblical

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<sup>25</sup> On this phenomenon, see Perria 2011, 88–89.

<sup>26</sup> Cacouros 2020, 314.

and the upright ogival, with the alterations that these two show in the last phases of their decline (Fig. 13). The use of majuscule script in the commentary of a text in minuscule was common in both the ninth and tenth centuries. In our manuscript such a commentary is found on a few pages (e.g. p. 373), but sometimes it covers almost the entire extent of one or more of the margins. It is most likely that the manuscript's scribe did not plan to include any marginal commentary when he wrote the core text. This is strongly suggested by the layout of the commentaries: they are crammed into the margins in a rather sloppy manner. The ninth-century ruling in the folios supports the hypothesis that the addition of marginal commentaries was not planned during the first production process. Whenever visible (e.g. pp. 341 and 382), the oldest ruling in the folios presents lines only for the main text and no lines for comments in the margins.

2. Short auxiliary indications in the margins (mostly titles and *ethica*), usually an epigrammatic indication of the subject dealt with in the core text. Often these are introduced with the preposition ΠΕΡΙ ... (e.g. pp. 162, 189, 120). We also find standard abbreviations such as ΟΡ(ΟΣ) (for ὄρος ('definition'); e.g. p. 174). In other instances, the name of an author mentioned in the core text is noted (pp. 114 and 126) (Figs 14–15). These indications were written, probably by the scribe of the manuscript, in the same capital letters as the marginal commentaries and were intended to facilitate the study of the core text and to help readers navigate through it.
3. *Schémas* or figurative illustrations placed within the core text or in the margins of the folios. These were written by the scribe of the core text (e.g. pp. 103 and 385). All three main types, according to Cacouros's classification, are used: *schémas diérétiques*, *diérèses*, *arbres* (pp. 340, 474), *rectangles* (p. 385), and very occasionally *diagrammes syllogistiques* (p. 327) (Figs 16–17).<sup>27</sup> The texts that are part of the *schémas* are written in a majuscule script, but one of larger dimensions compared to the one employed for the other two types of auxiliary material.
4. *Scholia in margine* by a later hand, in cursive script probably from the tenth or eleventh century. These occur only seldom (pp. 177, 191, 192) and are rather short in length.

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<sup>27</sup> Cacouros 2020, 320–323.

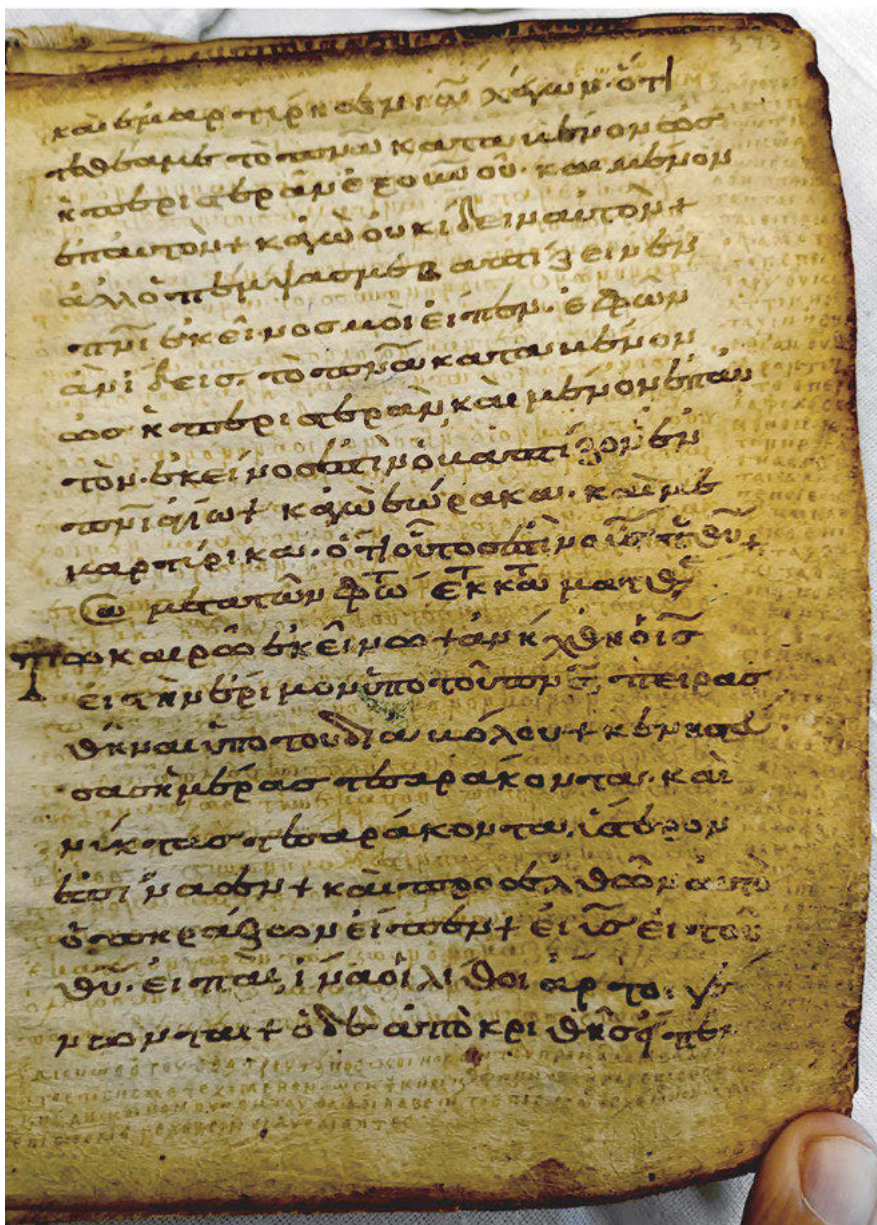


Fig. 13: EBE 192, p. 373 (commentary in the margins in majuscule script).

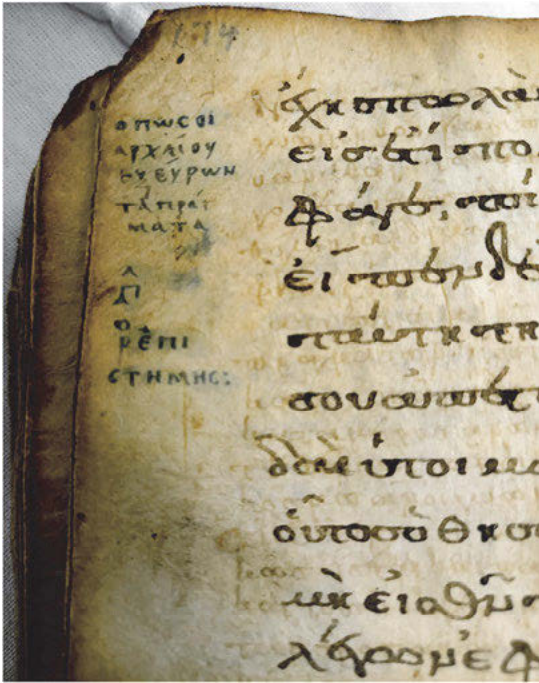


Fig. 14: EBE 192, p. 174 (auxiliary indications in the margin).

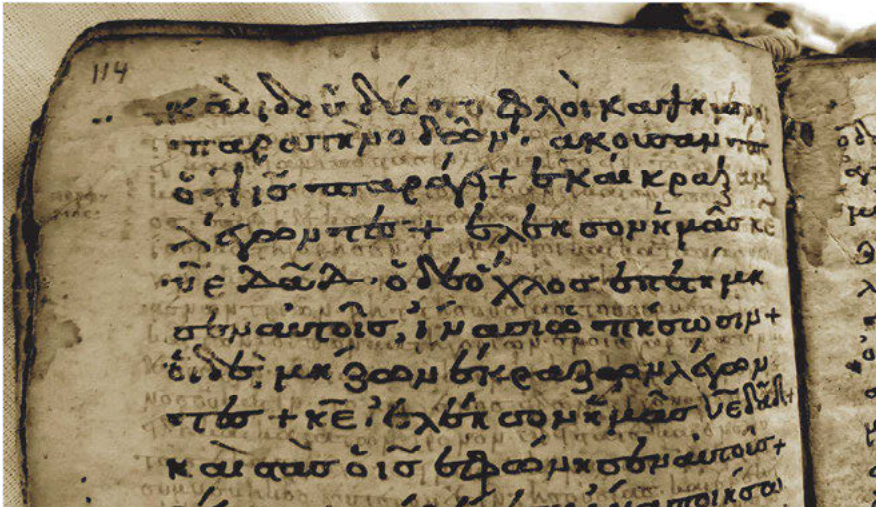


Fig. 15: EBE 192, p. 114 (name of the author Πορφύριος in the margin).

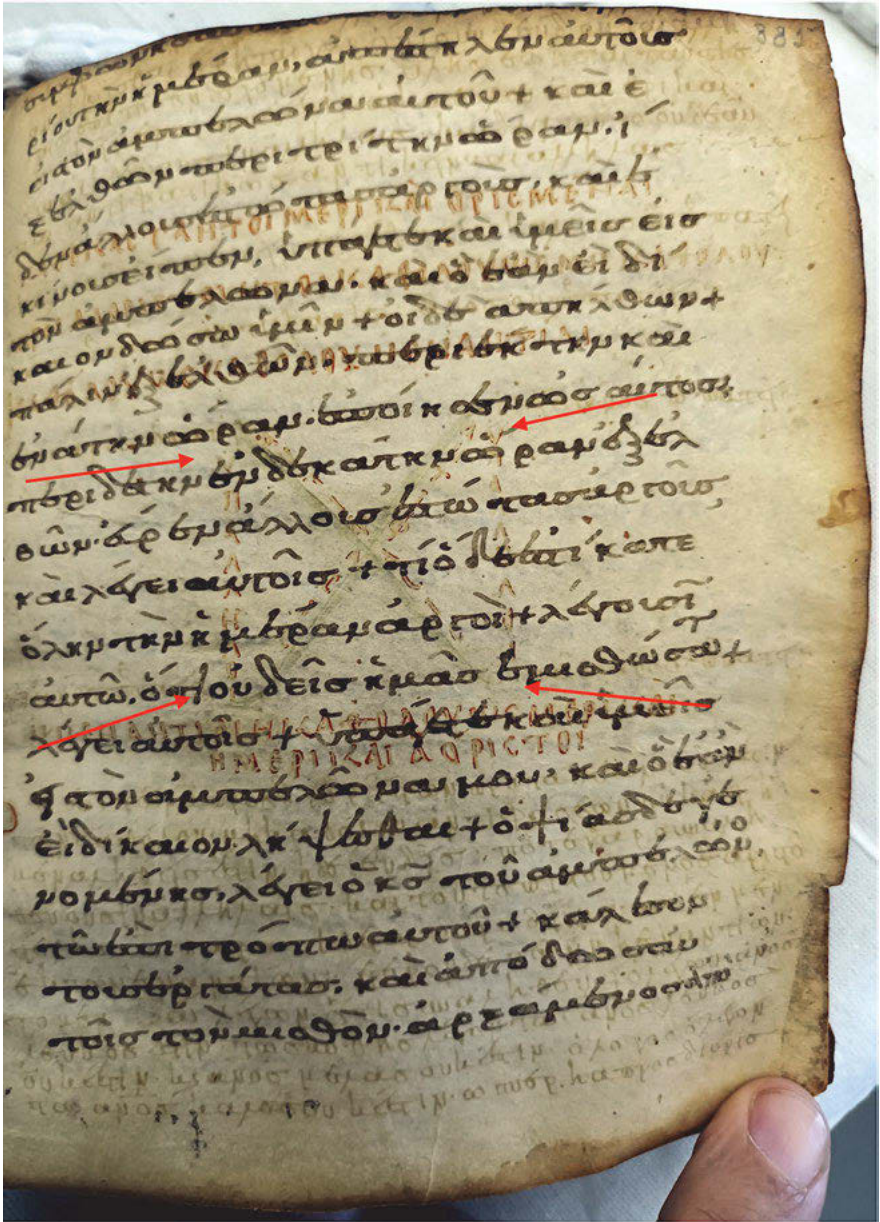


Fig. 16: EBE 192, p. 385 (schéma, rectangle).

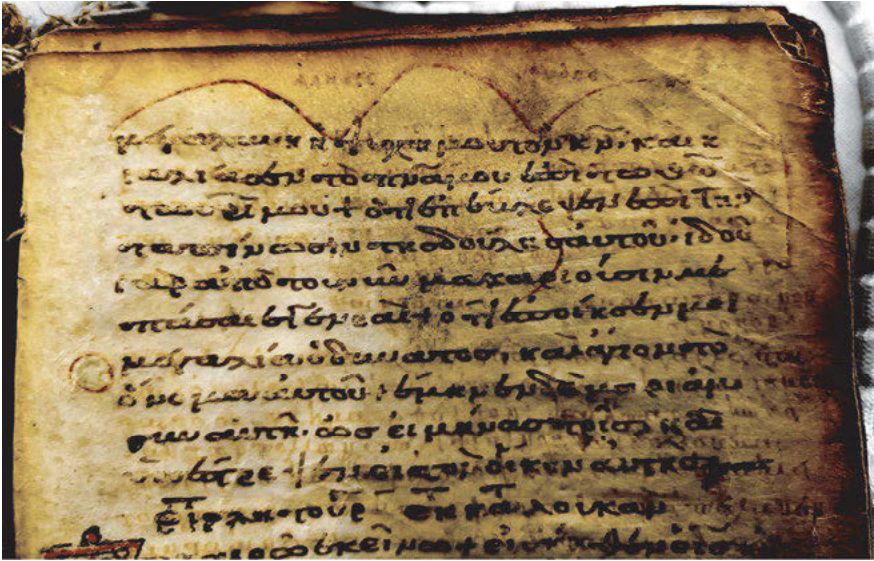


Fig. 17: EBE 192, p. 327 (*diagramme syllogistique*).

Further paratextual elements that the scribe used to better structure the content are

- a. Initial letters, written mainly outside the text block (e.g. pp. 188, 274, 288, 328) (Fig. 18).
- b. Titles of sections and subsections, in separate lines or even within a text line, written in the same ogival script of the scholia and comprehension *schémas*, usually accompanied by simple decorative elements, such as frames (e.g. pp. 151, 35, 34, 127, 471, 373) and over-title bands (pp. 111, 151, 31). The use of very simple decorative elements – stripes or bands formed by the repetition of small simple decorative strokes – is found in manuscripts from the given period, after the extremely simple, almost non-existent, decoration of the early decades of the use of minuscules. In contrast, the over-title bands, although quite crude in their design, are considerably more complex and may have been added later to the manuscript (Fig. 19). The red lettering of both the over-titles and all the initial letters, as well as the titles (e.g. p. 385), could also be later additions. However, this is not certain and it cannot be ruled out that the rubrication occurred within the first production process of the manuscript in the late ninth century.
- c. Alongside the above-described decorative elements, certain simple ornaments at the end of what appear to be discrete sections of works (pp. 351 and 385). These small lines consist of a cross or two dots at the beginning and repetitive simple wavy strokes that follow.

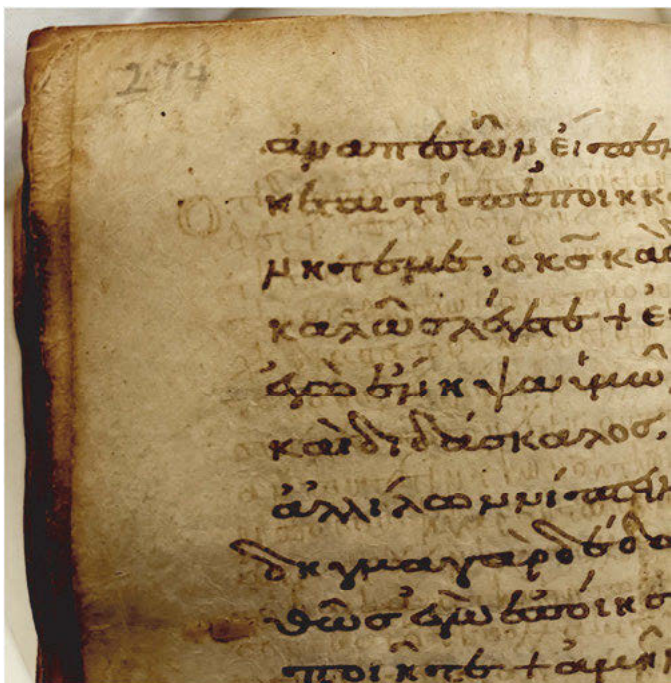


Fig. 18: EBE 192, p. 274 (initial letter).

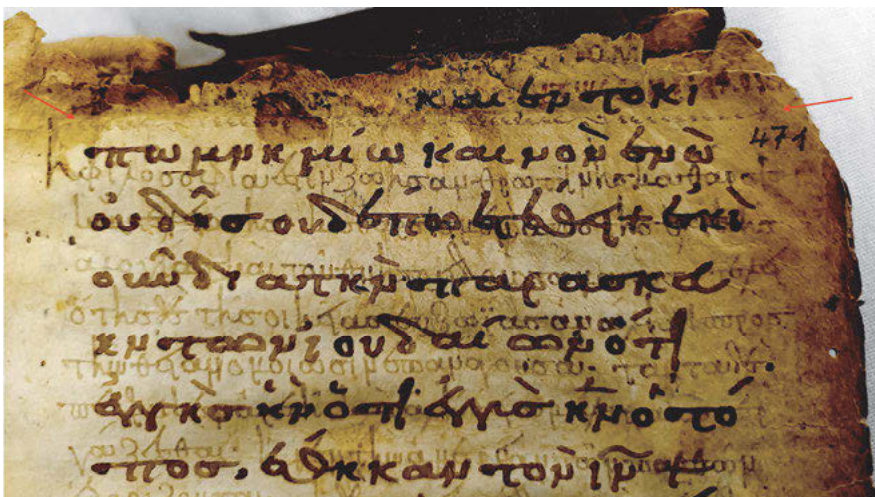


Fig. 19: EBE 192, p. 471 (band formed by small decorative strokes).



Finally, to better visualise the structure of the contents, the scribe used, where the text allowed it, chapter and subsection numbering (pp. 35, 214, 341), and, at least in the *Dialectic* of John Damascene, a table of contents is included (p. 35).

### 3.4 A few provisional remarks on the legal section in EBE 192

Information about the thirty-two folios in EBE 192 that contain legal text (seemingly *Ecloga* and *Nomos Nautikos*) was first pointed out by Gregory, although he limited his reference to stating that they were palimpsest leaves of non-theological content, written by another hand.<sup>28</sup> In recent years, further data on these folios was gained. On these folios – in reality, all bifolios – the oldest writing is biblical majuscule (Fig. 20). I had initially assumed that it dates to the fifth or sixth century, since, in the few places where it can be distinguished, we can observe all the characteristics of the decline of this type of script that begins during this period. Now, thanks to the identification of the content on the folios, that dating must be revised. The *Ecloga* was written most probably in 741 CE,<sup>29</sup> which is the *terminus post quem* for the oldest palimpsested codex in EBE 192. The text on the folios is written in 22 lines per page, and, similar to the rest of the palimpsest folios in the volume, it runs parallel to the newer one. Although the upper margin of these folios has been cut off – sometimes together with lines of the old text – to arrange the folios to the dimensions of the new codex, we estimate that the dimensions of the older one would not have been much larger. From the text today we can read a few excerpts (p. 407: δεσποτεία τούτων ἐκ τοῦ τοιοῦτου [...] μέλλον τοῦ ἐμφυτευθέντος; p. 410: ἐὰν ὁ δανεισάμενος γράμματα γινώσκων καὶ δυνατὸς ἔχων ἐν τῇ τοῦ χρέους [...]),<sup>30</sup> while in the left margin we can see its numbering (nos α–ν). However, with the help of the multispectral photos, we anticipate the possibility to reconstruct the original image of these folios. Surprisingly, the text is characterised by bad spellings, which, combined with the recent history of the entire codex, should perhaps point us to an origin in the region of Syria-Palestine, where the Greek language would have been in a state of initial decline.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, since the folios with philosophical content were probably used for educational purposes (a kind of workbook or teaching aid, with no particular claims to calligraphy or aesthetics), it is possible that the ones with the legal texts derive from some school in the East.

<sup>28</sup> Gregory 1909, 424.

<sup>29</sup> Troianos 2011, 160 and n. 39.

<sup>30</sup> *Ecloga*, ed. Burgmann 1983, 12.3 (ll. 598–600) and 14.9 (ll. 670–671).

<sup>31</sup> Potentially this could explain some orthographical mistakes and lingual peculiarities we have noticed in the text (p. 174: [...] οἱ ἀρχαίου [...]; and p. 474: [...] σύνπραττε [...]), which probably indicate that the manuscript was written in an area where the Greek language was not dominant.

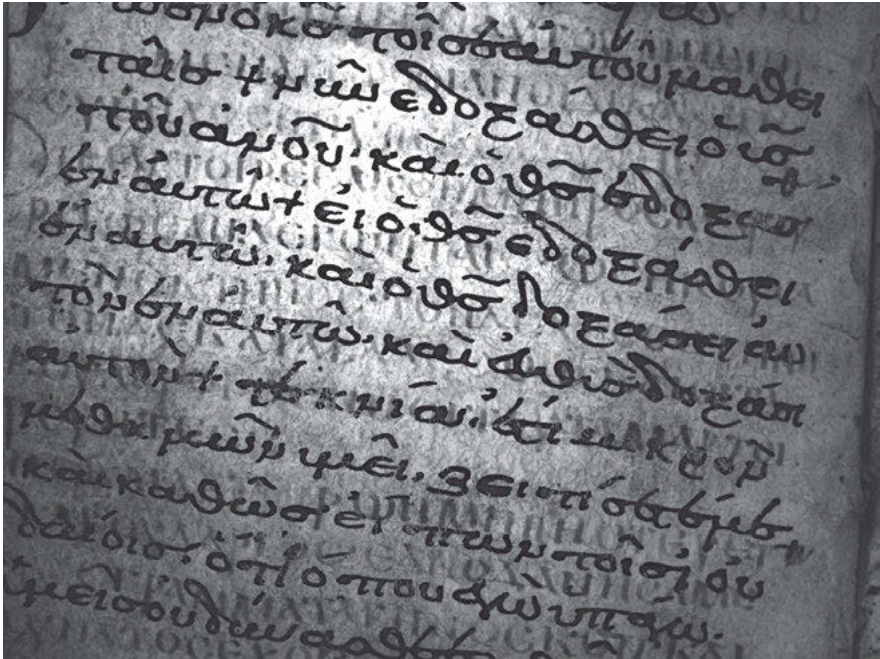


Fig. 20: EBE 192, p. 410 (oldest layer in majuscule biblical script).

## Abbreviation

CPG = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vols 1–5 (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987.

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Stefan Alexandru

# Some Reflections on Selected Leaves of the Palimpsest Manuscript Athos, Konstamonitou 99

**Abstract:** The Greek manuscript Athos, Konstamonitou 99 has been known to be a palimpsest for more than a century. Previous scholarly reasoning led to the rather intriguing conclusion that its lower layer of script is hagiographical, transmitting lives of saints written in Latin and accompanied by Gregorian notes. The current investigation shows that the original content of those parchment leaves was liturgical. Ecclesiastical hymnography, whose melodies are frequently recorded by means of four-line staves, came to light. Most of the texts identified so far pertain in some way or another to the first millenary of the Christian era: parts of the *Liber responsalis* attributed to St Gregory the Great, hymns ascribed to St Ambrose, verses written by St Venantius Fortunatus, and a further hymn attributed to Paul the Deacon. The focus of this article lies upon some manuscript folios on which the lower layer of writing can be deciphered fairly easily using soft ultraviolet light.

## Introduction

In northern Greece, the palimpsest manuscript Konstamonitou 99 (535 Lambros; Diktyon 26013) provides a unique example of the way in which Western manuscript leaves have been reused by Byzantine scribes. The monastic establishment that owns it, officially named *Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Κωνστανμονίτου* (Holy Monastery of Konstamonitou),<sup>1</sup> is located on the Athonite peninsula, whose most remarkable Byzantine heritage is well known.<sup>2</sup>

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1 On its history see Oikonomidès 1978, 1–10. See further Riley 1887, 343–351; Meyer 1894, 165; Smyrnakēs 1903, 680–689; Dölger, Weigand and Deindl 1943, 74–75; Huber 1969, 123–126; Pentzikēs 2003, 426–431; and Khatzēphōtēs 2008, 78–91. Fairly brief passages focusing on the library and mentioning our palimpsest are found in Riley 1887, 350; Smyrnakēs 1903, 687; and Khatzēphōtēs 2008, 90. The reader may not have all these publications at hand; therefore, note that Franz Dölger very concisely summarises the monastery’s past as follows: ‘Das Kloster taucht urkundlich zum ersten Male i. J. 1051 auf und wird dann, besonders im 14. und zu Anfang des 15. Jahrhunderts, häufiger erwähnt. In der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jh. erfreute es sich der Gunst serbischer Fürsten und Herren. Um 1439 berichtet die Chronik über einen verheerenden Brand, in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jh. von einem weiteren, der

In the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, which led to the much discussed and regrettable sack of Constantinople in 1204 and to the fragmentation of the Eastern Roman Empire (with Nicaea, Trebizond, and Epirus as its nuclei), some Byzantine subjects, presumably monks, somehow obtained Western manuscript material. It may have been brought by the crusaders themselves or acquired from a Latinophone monastery.<sup>3</sup> The purpose for which they reused it is easy to ascertain. The upper layer of script in codex Konstamonitou 99 transmits a Greek Gospel lectionary dated to the fourteenth century (Fig. 1),<sup>4</sup> which belonged at some point to a priest called Michael.<sup>5</sup> This lectionary, whose front cover, back cover, and spine no longer survive and whose book block is held together only by the damaged lining, consists, according to the pencilled folio numbering, of 154 parchment leaves. Their dimensions vary slightly, with fol. 37 measuring approximately 215 × 290 mm.<sup>6</sup> Most leaves are palimpsested and of Western origin, but it is worth pointing out that on fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, a *scriptio inferior* in Greek minuscules is clearly discernible under soft ultraviolet light, which shows that this leaf, unlike the subsequent one, is a Greek palimpsest.<sup>7</sup>

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eine lange Verödung des Klosters zur Folge hatte. Zu Ende des 18. Jh. durch die Fürsorge des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel wiederhergestellt, verfiel es um die Mitte des 19. Jh. (Dölger, Weigand und Deindl 1943, 74). Those who wish to see colour photographs of the monastery and some of its art treasures are advised to look at Pentzikēs 2003 and Khatzēphōtēs 2008.

2 See e.g. Speake 2000 and Amand de Mendieta 1972. For a survey of its precious objects of art, including illuminated manuscripts, see e.g. Dölger 1948 and the colourful exhibition catalogue *Thesaurοι* 1997.

3 That a Latinophone monastic establishment designated as the monastery of the Amalphytans existed and even continued to function on the Holy Mount Athos after the Great Schism is well documented; it was obviously not the only Latinophone monastery founded on Byzantine territory. On its autonomous status, see Smyrnakēs 1903, 68; see also Pertusi 1963. The latter scholar draws further attention to Athonite monasteries referred to as μοναστήριον τοῦ Καλαβροῦ and μονή τοῦ Σικελοῦ (see Pertusi 1963, 239, 242; also see Smyrnakēs 1903, 41). We are not going to speculate about the exact provenance of our palimpsest but here simply list some possibilities that are fairly easy to imagine, none of which can be ruled out at the present stage of research.

4 The photograph in Fig. 1 was taken under daylight conditions; the same applies to Figs 3a and 3b. All the other images were recorded in an environment of soft ultraviolet light and subsequently enhanced. On the Greek text transmitted by this manuscript, see Aland et al. 1994, 261; Welte 2009, 50; and Lambros 1895, 42.

5 At the bottom of fol. 2<sup>r</sup> one can see a *signum crucis* followed by the sequence of Greek letters μηχαῖλ ἡερέως (i.e. Μιχαῖλ ἱερέως).

6 According to written communication by its staff dated 28 March 2024, the microfilm owned by the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies in Thessaloniki contains no information regarding the size of this codex. It should be noted in passing that fol. 9, which does not represent a later addition and neither has suffered any mutilation, is anomalously narrow.

7 Few sequences of letters are reliably decipherable on photographs taken *in situ* on 3 January 2024.

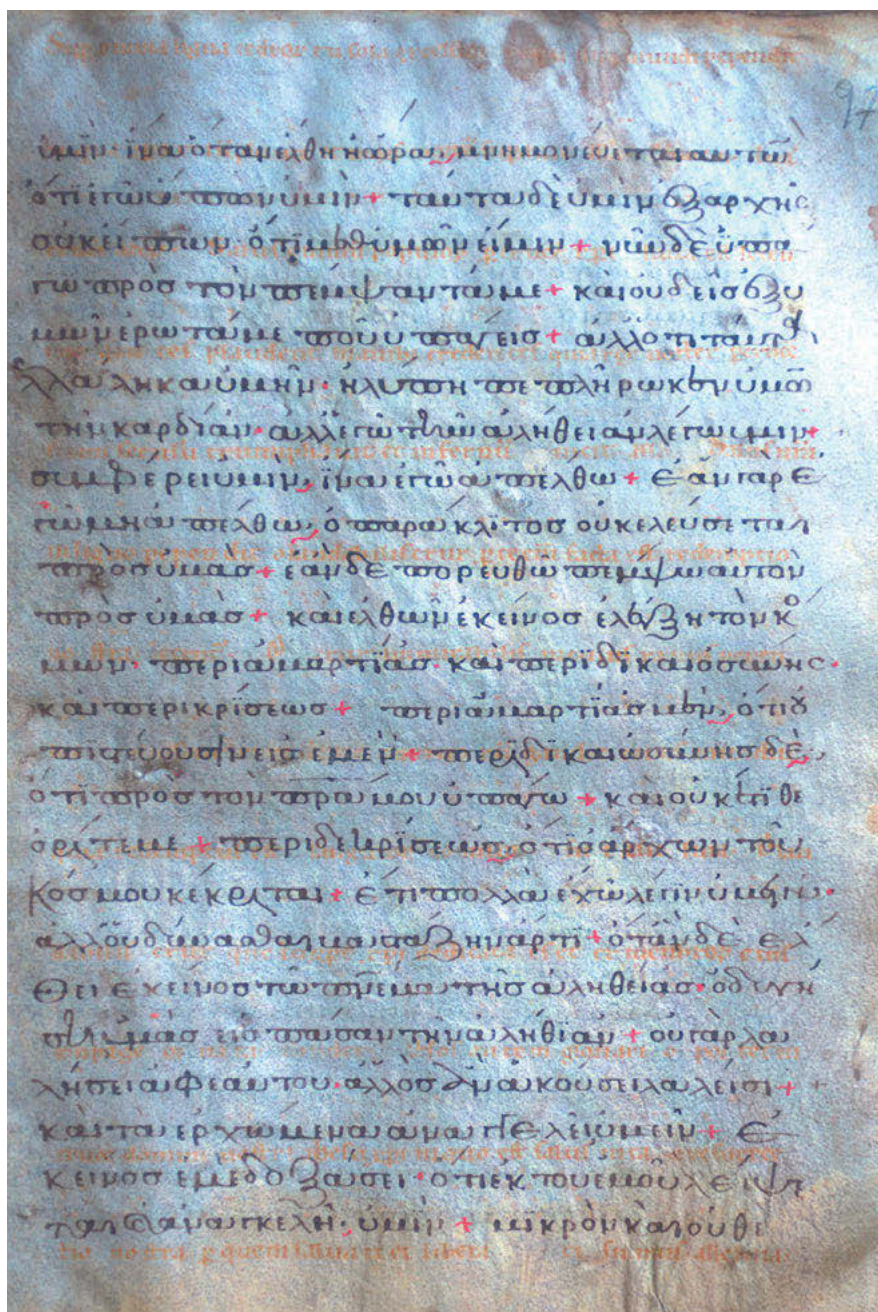


Fig. 1: Athos, Konstamonitou 99, fol. 97'; © Ιερά Μονή Κωνσταμονίτου, Άγιον Όρος.

The *scriptio superior* of the entire manuscript is, broadly speaking, of no particular interest for the history of textual transmission, since plenty of such lectionaries penned in the Byzantine Empire have survived to the present day. More interesting is the question of which texts the Western manuscript leaves held before the ink was washed away. What one can gather from the scholarly literature published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is that the leaves in question exhibited Latin lives of saints with square notes.<sup>8</sup> At an earlier stage, at the end of the nineteenth century, Spyridon Lambros (1851–1919) mentioned saints' lives and reports on martyrdom.<sup>9</sup> Already in 1887, the well-known British hymn writer and translator John Athelstan Laurie Riley (1858–1945) had reported that

there are rather over hundred manuscripts in Constamonitou, mostly service books of late date, but there are fourteen on vellum, among which is a palimpsest, the new writing consisting of the Gospels (fourteenth century) over a Latin martyrology (of the twelfth).<sup>10</sup>

At the bottom of fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, one comes across a partly damaged note written in pencil, which casts further light on the history of the scholarly investigation of this codex. One can still decipher the date of 8 July 1859, the name Porfirii, and the first five letters of the capitalised noun 'palimpsest' recorded in neat Russian handwriting. This indicates that the famous bishop and scholar Porphyrius Uspensky (1804–1885) held the manuscript in his hands on that day and that he became aware of the reused parchment.

The scholar who first noticed a musical notation in our palimpsest was the Austrian legal historian Wolfgang Waldstein (1928–2023), who visited the library of the Holy Monastery of Konstamonitou in the seventies of the twentieth century. Waldstein photographed the entire manuscript under ultraviolet light but, due to his numerous professional obligations, did not manage to publish anything substantial on it at a later stage.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For this type of notation see n. 11 and n. 26 below.

<sup>9</sup> See Lambros 1895, 42: 'τὸ πρωτόγραφον (12 αἰῶν) περιέχει βίους καὶ μαρτύρια ἁγίων ἐν τῇ Λατινικῇ γλώσσῃ'.

<sup>10</sup> See Riley 1887, 350. During my visit to Würzburg University on 28 March 2024, Andreas Pfisterer remarked with regard to the date of the Latin layer of script that the musical notation it exhibits originated in the twelfth century, from which period some relevant manuscripts still survive. He added that it became much more common in the thirteenth but saw no reason for challenging Riley's dating.

<sup>11</sup> See Waldstein 1974, 146, n. 2: 'Ein Palimpsest in Konstamonitu, den Lambros in das 12. Jh. datiert, ist eine lateinische Handschrift in gotischer Schrift, die mit Choralnoten versehen ist und nach der Eintragung im Katalog von Lambros βίους καὶ μαρτύρια ἁγίων enthält. Ich habe den Palimpsest mit UV-Licht aufgenommen'. It should be noted that the terms 'gregorianischer Ge-



There is no question that nowadays one can come across lives of saints interspersed with choral music, such as in connection with new canonisations. No doubt liturgical services of this kind exist; in them the faithful learn about the lives of those concerned, hear the words through which the ecclesiastical authority declares them saints, and then sing hymns praising their deeds, sufferings, and the like. However, the vast majority of books focusing on the lives of saints, including hagiographical works such as the *Martyrologium Romanum*, describe the deeds, virtues, and sufferings of those heroes of the Christian faith without any special concern for ecclesiastical music.

In the Greek Orthodox tradition there exist old Menaia (books containing the so-called propers, i.e. prayers and chants relating to fixed dates of the liturgical calendar),<sup>12</sup> in which one finds, among other texts, hymns, occasionally with a musical notation, followed by, for example, fairly short biographies of the saint or saints commemorated.<sup>13</sup> These, however, are liturgical books in which brief lives of saints are merely embedded; they mainly consist of hymns and certainly do not narrate the saints' lives and sufferings at great length. Since they are written in Greek, not in Latin, they do not need to much concern us here; bear in mind, though, that their use is liturgical, that is, they were penned for public worship. In the Latin West, the lives of saints were not sung either.<sup>14</sup> All in all, it seems rather unlikely that one should find in the lower layer of codex Konstamonitou 99 numerous extensive lives of saints along with musical notes.<sup>15</sup>

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sang' and 'gregorianischer Choral' are often used synonymously in German, the term 'Choralnoten' being equivalent to the Latin '*nota quadrata cantus plani*' and to the English designation 'square note'.

<sup>12</sup> On Menaia see Royé 2013; see also Bucca 2011, 59–88. Menaia have been succinctly defined as follows: 'Die Menäen enthalten die hymnischen Wechseltexte des Kirchenjahres, d. h. Texte, die im Abendgottesdienst (Hesperinos, Vesper) und im Morgengottesdienst (Orthros, Matutin) auf den Tagesheiligen Bezug nehmen. In den benutzten griechischen Handschriften sind teilweise auch nichthymnische Texte (Sinaxar- oder Kurzviten, sl. Prologviten) und Lesungen aus dem Prophetologion (Lesungen aus dem Alten Testament), Apostolos (Apostelgeschichte und Apostelbriefe) und Evangelienbuch mit enthalten' (Christians, Rothe and Vereščagin 1996, XVIII). The terms Menaion and Menologion can be used synonymously, but Menologion is more encompassing; for details, see Phountoulés 1966.

<sup>13</sup> The feast of Epiphany will concern us slightly later, since we will focus on a Latin antiphon regarding the Lord's Baptism. For this reason, it is worth pointing out that for such days Menaia offer, additionally, not only scriptural readings but also antiphons. See Koutloumousianos ho Imbrios 2009, 72–73, 83, Ἀντίφωνον Α' and Γ'.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. de Gaiffier 1961.

<sup>15</sup> Andreas Pfisterer draws my attention to the fact that occasionally the life and office of a saint together occupy one medieval Latin manuscript. An instance of this is the codex dedicated to St Eligius

Let us now look at fol. 136<sup>r</sup> of the palimpsest, on which the lower layer of script can be rendered legible fairly easily with the aid of ultraviolet fluorescent photography and digital image enhancement (Fig. 2a).

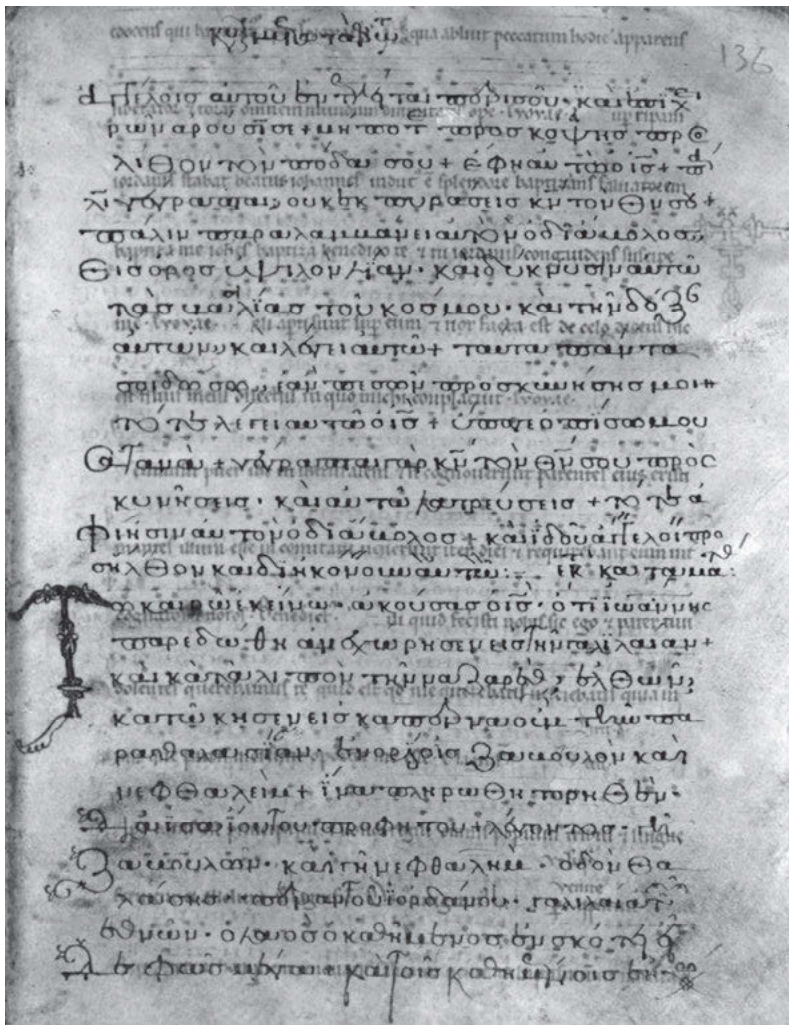


Fig. 2a: Athos, Konstantamonitou 99, fol. 136<sup>r</sup>; © Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Κωνσταντινου, Ἄγιον Ὄρος.

(in French St Éloi), which is held by the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris and which bears the lengthy shelf mark 2 MS RES 90. Fg Ms 2006. Bournon 131. Ms Rés 104.

In ll. 2–4 of this folio, one can discern, among others, the following words (Fig. 2b):

<Su>per ripam Iordanis stabat beatus Iohannes indutus est splendore baptizans Salvatorem | baptiza me Iohanne baptiza benedico te et tu Iordanis congaudens suscipe | me.

‘Upon the bank of the Jordan stood the blessed John clothed in splendour while baptising the Saviour. Baptise me, John, baptise, I bless you, and thou, Jordan, receive me rejoicing with him.’

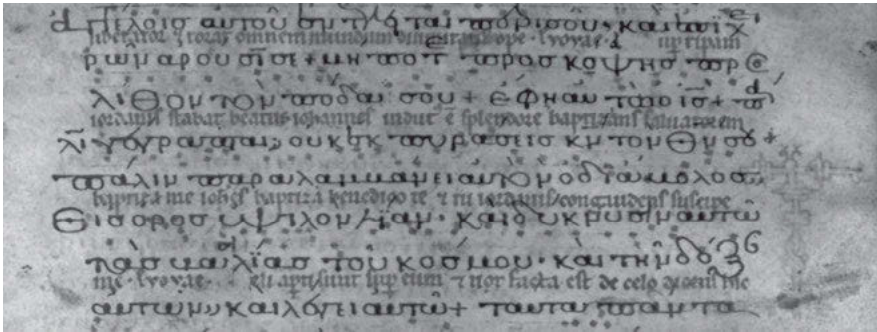


Fig. 2b: Athos, Konstamonitou 99, fol. 136r, ll. 2–5; © Ἱερὰ Μονή Κωνσταμονίτου, Ἅγιον Ὅρος.

This text is also found in the second part of the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 17436, more precisely on its fol. 42r, ll. 16–17 (illustrated in Fig. 3b; the whole parchment page is shown in Fig. 3a).

The entire Paris manuscript is known as *Codex Compendiensis*, also referred to as the *Antiphonary of Emperor Charles the Bald* (d. 877). The second part of the manuscript, which is of special interest to us – that is to say, fols 31r to 107r – has been transcribed in a yet unpublished University of Oxford thesis.<sup>16</sup> It has been designated as an Antiphoner of the Office (in contradistinction to an Antiphoner of the Mass) and has been subject to numerous scholarly investigations.<sup>17</sup> It is often referred to as *Liber responsalis compediensis* and its text was printed in Paris in 1862 by the Congregation of St Maur in the fourth tome of the corpus of

<sup>16</sup> See Barber 1972, Section B, 1–171: the text transcribed, with explanatory footnotes. This valuable thesis is available for inspection at the Weston Library of Oxford University (MS. B.D. c.2), at the Special Collections Centre of the University of Aberdeen Libraries (Lib R f 264.2 Ant 4), and in the St Pancras Reading Rooms of the British Library (REF M.R.Ref. 780.902). I had the pleasure of examining the Oxford copy on 21 December 2023.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Jacobsson 2000 and Hesbert 1935. See further Huglo 1986.

writings attributed (in any manner) to St Gregory the Great (c. 540–605); it thus was published in the seventy-eighth volume of the *PL*.<sup>18</sup> It is of major importance for the history of the Divine Office (also referred to as the Liturgy of the Hours; in Latin as *Officium Divinum* or *Liturgia Horarum*) in Western Europe. While having been penned in the ninth century, it is nevertheless believed to incorporate a significant amount of earlier material. Some other important monodic liturgical manuscripts also transmit the antiphon *Super ripam Iordanis* examined above.<sup>19</sup>

The antiphon is a kind of liturgical chant with a long history in the eastern half of the Roman Empire; an important testimony in this respect can be found in a letter addressed by St Basil the Great (330–379) to the clergy of Neocaesarea.<sup>20</sup> Antiphonal chants or antiphons involve, in some way or another, alternate singing and thus represent musical dialogues.<sup>21</sup> It is worth bearing in mind that some well-known Latin Epiphany antiphons ‘are based on Greek models’.<sup>22</sup> The antiphon *Super ripam Iordanis*, which is under discussion here, relates, as the musicologist Andreas Pfisterer points out to me, to the liturgical programme of the Octava Epiphaniae, a feast that used to be celebrated on the eighth day after Epiphany.

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18 See *PL* 78, 723–850 A. On the section quoted above, see column 744 B.

19 See Hesbert 1963–1979, vol. 3, 496.

20 See Courtonne 1961, 186 and *PG* 32, 764 A. For further sources relating to the development of ecclesiastical singing, see e.g. McKinnon 1989.

21 See Mateos 1971. For a fairly detailed and thorough discussion of the term together with a careful examination of the rather tenuous veterotestamentary evidence that is available, see Nowacki 1994; see also Huglo and Halmo 2001. Rembert George Weakland quite briefly writes about antiphons, accurately describing only those Byzantine ones that include portions of text extracted from the Book of Psalms (rather than lines or whole stanzas penned by Christian hymnographers): ‘In Western liturgical practice, a refrain sung before and after a Psalm or canticle. In Byzantine liturgical usage it means several verses of a Psalm, a complete Psalm, or even several Psalms followed by a doxology’ (Weakland 2003, 529).

22 See Rankin 2013, 248. The Latin passage to which Susan Rankin refers runs as follows: ‘*Cum igitur Graeci post matutinas laudes imperatori celebratas in octava die theophaniae secreto in sua lingua Deo psallerent et ille occultatus in proximo carminum dulcedine delectaretur, praecepit clericis suis, ut nihil ante gustarent quam easdem antiphonas in Latinum conversas ipsi praesentarent*’ (Haefele 1959, 58).

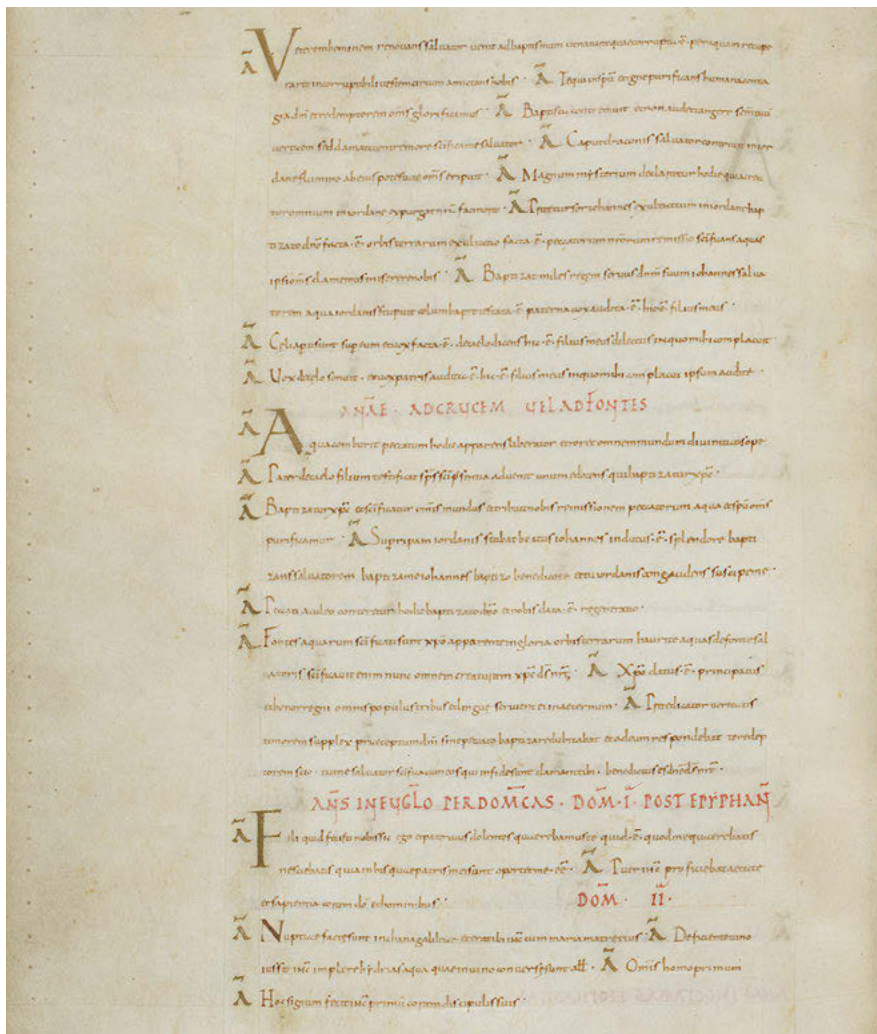


Fig. 3a: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 17436, fol. 42r; © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

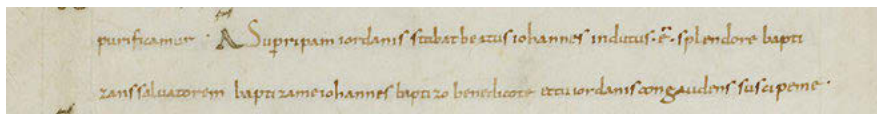


Fig. 3b: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 17436, fol. 42r, ll. 16–17; © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Not only manuscripts formerly used in cathedrals, such as the Antiphoner of Monza (Basilica di San Giovanni Battista, Biblioteca Capitolare e Tesoro, cod. C. 12. 75) or the Antiphoner of Verona (Biblioteca Capitolare, cod. XCVIII), but also two codices pertaining to monastic centres, transmit this antiphon. The former is St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 390–391 (often referred to as the Hartker Antiphoner or the Antiphonary of Hartker) and the latter is Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 28 (known as the Rheinau Breviary). It thus remains unclear if the Western leaves of codex Konstamonitou 99 side with the monastic strain of the tradition or with what is known in Latin as the *cursus Romanus* and in French as *le cursus liturgique roman*.<sup>23</sup> Pfisterer suggests that this question can be appropriately answered after all the legible Latin texts transmitted by the palimpsest are identified; for that purpose, among others, the *Cantus Index: Catalogue of Chant Texts and Melodies* should be used.<sup>24</sup> At that stage, the question of whether the Latin leaves of the palimpsest originated in a milieu of crusaders could be dealt with more efficiently, too, by means of comparing the transmitted chants with the contents of manuscripts surviving from the crusades (such as codex Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 10478, which is a breviary of the Templars) and, if necessary, with later books comprising hymns that pertain, for example, to the Teutonic Order of Knights.

Our palimpsest manuscript differs from the Paris witness referred to above inasmuch as it exhibits a musical notation that emerged later, namely the four-line staff, which is still used in plainchant.<sup>25</sup> As Pfisterer remarked after looking at several photographs of Konstamonitou 99, the notes the scribe penned on the four lines are square notes.<sup>26</sup> One might further ask if anything could be stated with certainty about the original size of the Western parchment leaves. As becomes evident from a partly surviving four-line staff whose lowest two lines are to some extent still visible at the top of fol. 110<sup>v</sup>, the original Latin manuscript pages were

<sup>23</sup> The last-mentioned receives great focus in the first volume of Hesbert 1963–1979.

<sup>24</sup> The online database *Cantus Index: Catalogue of Chant Texts and Melodies* is available at <<https://cantusindex.org/>> (accessed on 9 April 2024).

<sup>25</sup> On early Western musical notation, see Hiley 2009, especially 180–207; see also Hiley 1980. For a further occurrence of the four-staff notation in a liturgical manuscript, see Dobszay 2004, 89. By referring here to the four-line staff we do not rule out that some other kind of Western musical notation may occur in yet unstudied parts of the Konstamonitou palimpsest.

<sup>26</sup> See also Hiley 2009, 183 ('square or quadratic notation as standardized in Paris in the thirteenth century') and the penultimate column of his table on p. 182, entitled 'Eight medieval types of signs for notating chant'. In German, square notes are designated as '*Quadratnoten*', '*quadratische Neumen*', or '*Choralnoten*' (the term used by Wolfgang Waldstein). For a broad generic English term covering all the medieval signs for notating monodic melodies, Pfisterer simply recommends 'chant notes'.

longer, extending further up. This can be equally inferred from the upper margin of fol. 130<sup>v</sup>, where the mutilated Latin *scriptio inferior* reaches up to the current edge of the leaf, from fol. 152<sup>r</sup> and numerous other folios.

Not all the leaves of the palimpsest are easily legible and its content is heterogeneous, given that hymns written by other Christian authors also appear in it. In the left column of fol. 121<sup>r</sup>, for instance, we can scrutinise a hymn pertaining to the liturgical services on Palm Sunday, also found in the *Liber responsalis*,<sup>27</sup> and in the adjacent right column on the same folio we can discern an Easter hymn attributed to St Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397; the passage is reproduced in Fig. 4).<sup>28</sup>

As we can see in Fig. 5, one can read in the left column of fol. 122<sup>v</sup>, l. 12 of the *scriptio inferior* the words ‘tres dare terna’, which allow us to identify the hymn of St Fulbert of Chartres (c. 970–1028) entitled *In Epiphania Domini*.<sup>29</sup> On fol. 119<sup>v</sup>, the clearly legible words ‘veniens sacratos ponere’ in the eighteenth line of the left column permit us to spot a hymn in honour of St John the Baptist attributed to the Christian historian Paul the Deacon (c. 720–c. 800; for the manuscript passage, see Fig. 6).<sup>30</sup> On fol. 112<sup>r</sup> in the third line of the lower script, one can identify the words ‘Agnum Dei demonstrabat et illuminabat mentes hominum’ (Fig. 7), which reportedly occur on fol. 100<sup>r</sup> in codex 2787 of the Biblioteca comunale Augusta of Perugia.<sup>31</sup> These words are equally transmitted on fol. 67<sup>r</sup> of the Codex Compendiense and by numerous other witnesses of the Corpus Antiphonarium Officii. These codices partly belong to the monastic branch of the manuscript tradition<sup>32</sup> and partly to the branch designated as the *cursus Romanus*.<sup>33</sup>

27 See PL 78, 850 A.

28 See PL 17, 1203 and 86, 943 A.

29 See PL 141, 350 D and Blume 1922, 283: ‘Dum colunt unum, meminere trino / Tres dare terna. / Gloriam trinae monadi canamus’.

30 See PL 95, 1597 D.

31 On this manuscript it is worth scrutinising the exhibition catalogue Parmeggiani 2006.

32 St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 390–391; Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 28; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 17296 and latin 12584; London, British Library, Add MS 30850; and Benevento, Biblioteca Capitolare, V 21.

33 Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, lit. 23; Ivrea, Biblioteca Capitolare, 106; Monza, Basilica di San Giovanni Battista – Biblioteca Capitolare e Tesoro, C. 12. 75; and Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, XC VIII.

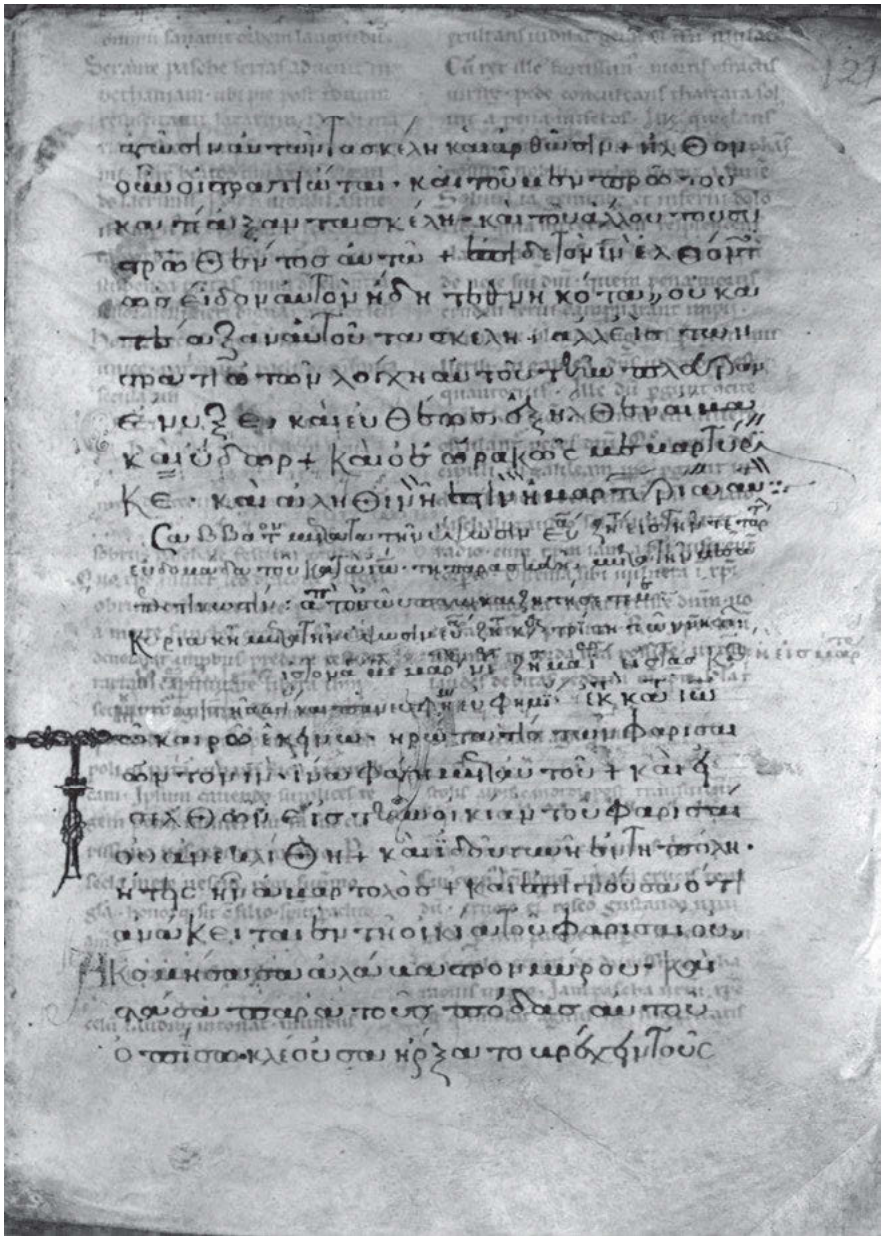


Fig. 4: Athos, Konstamonitou 99, fol. 121<sup>r</sup>; © Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Κωνσταντινου, Ἅγιον Όρος.



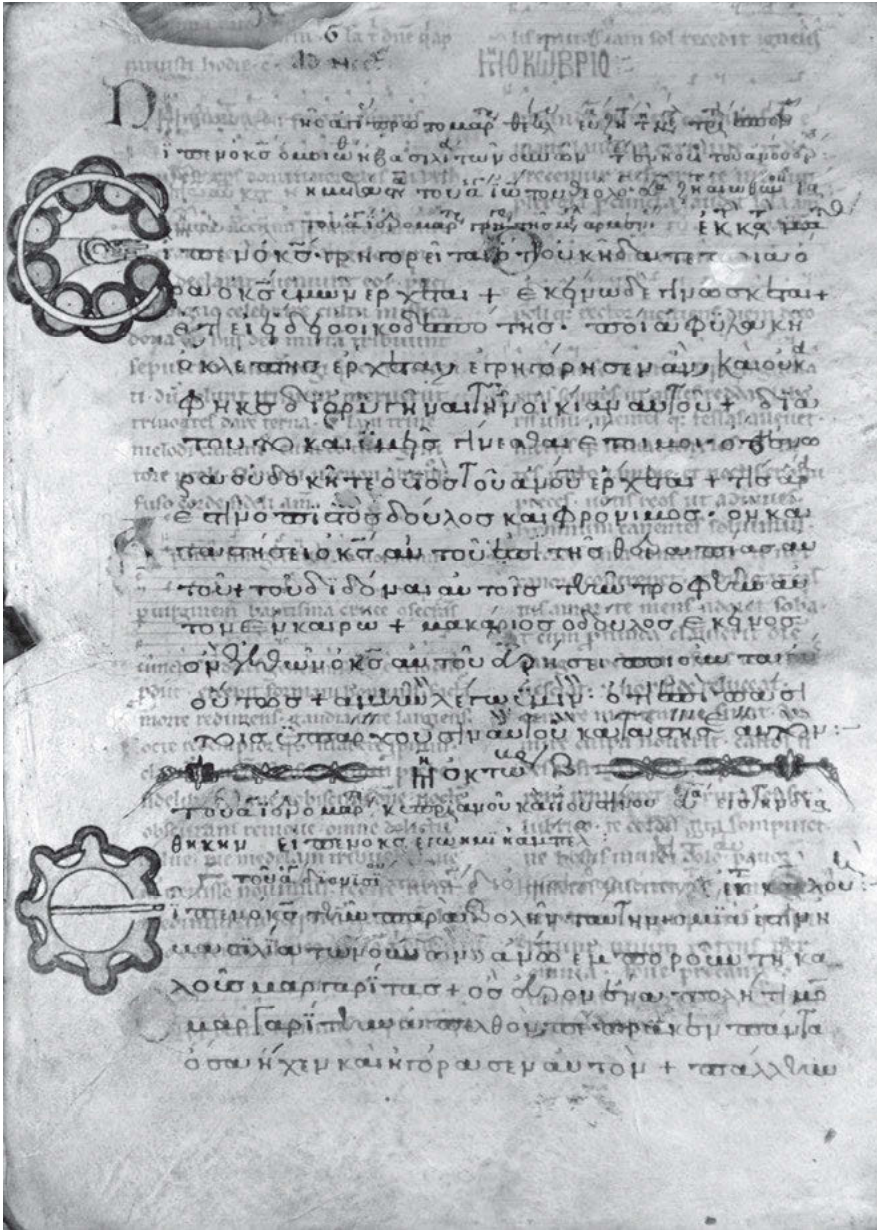


Fig. 5: Athos, Konstamonitou 99, fol. 122; © Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Κωνσταντινου, Ἄγιον Ὄρος.

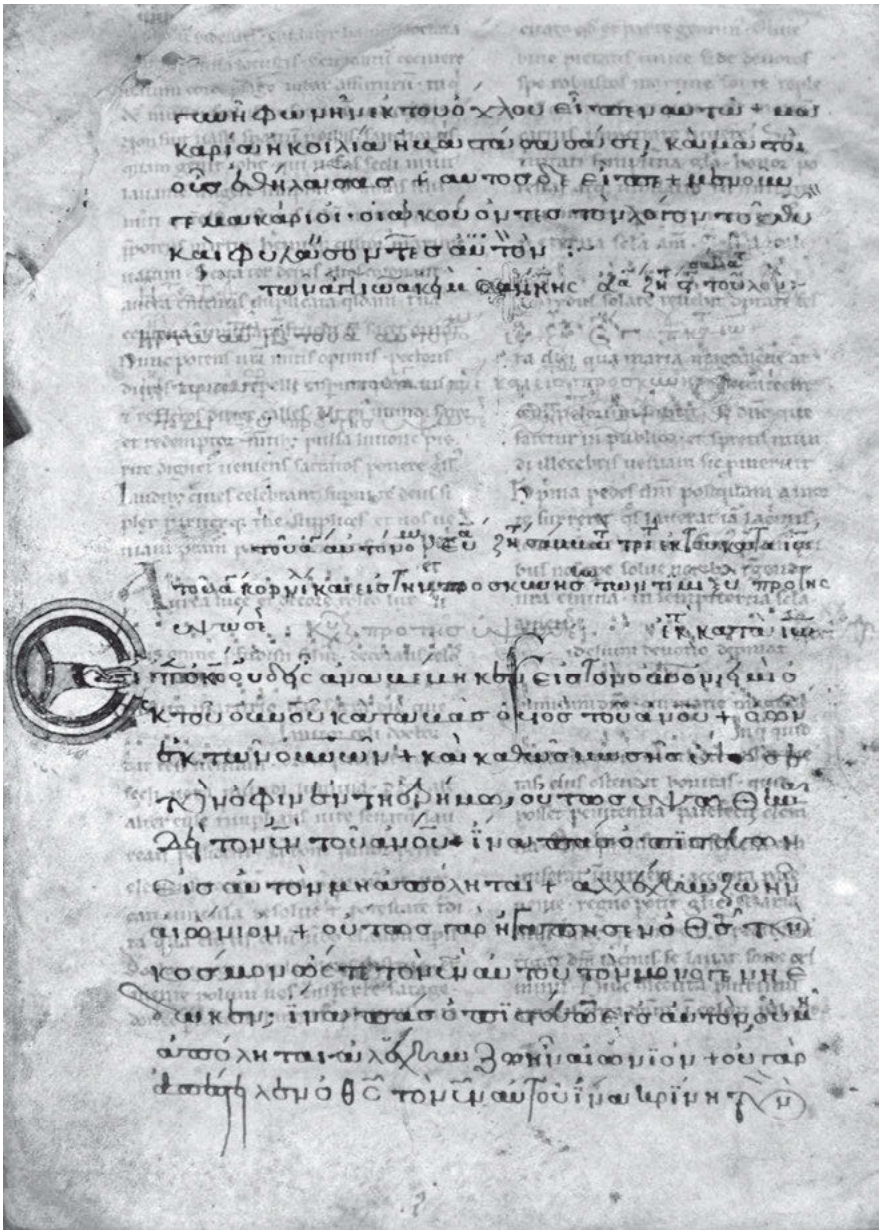


Fig. 6: Athos, Konstamonitou 99, fol. 119r; © Ιερά Μονή Κωνσταμονίτου, Άγιον Όρος.

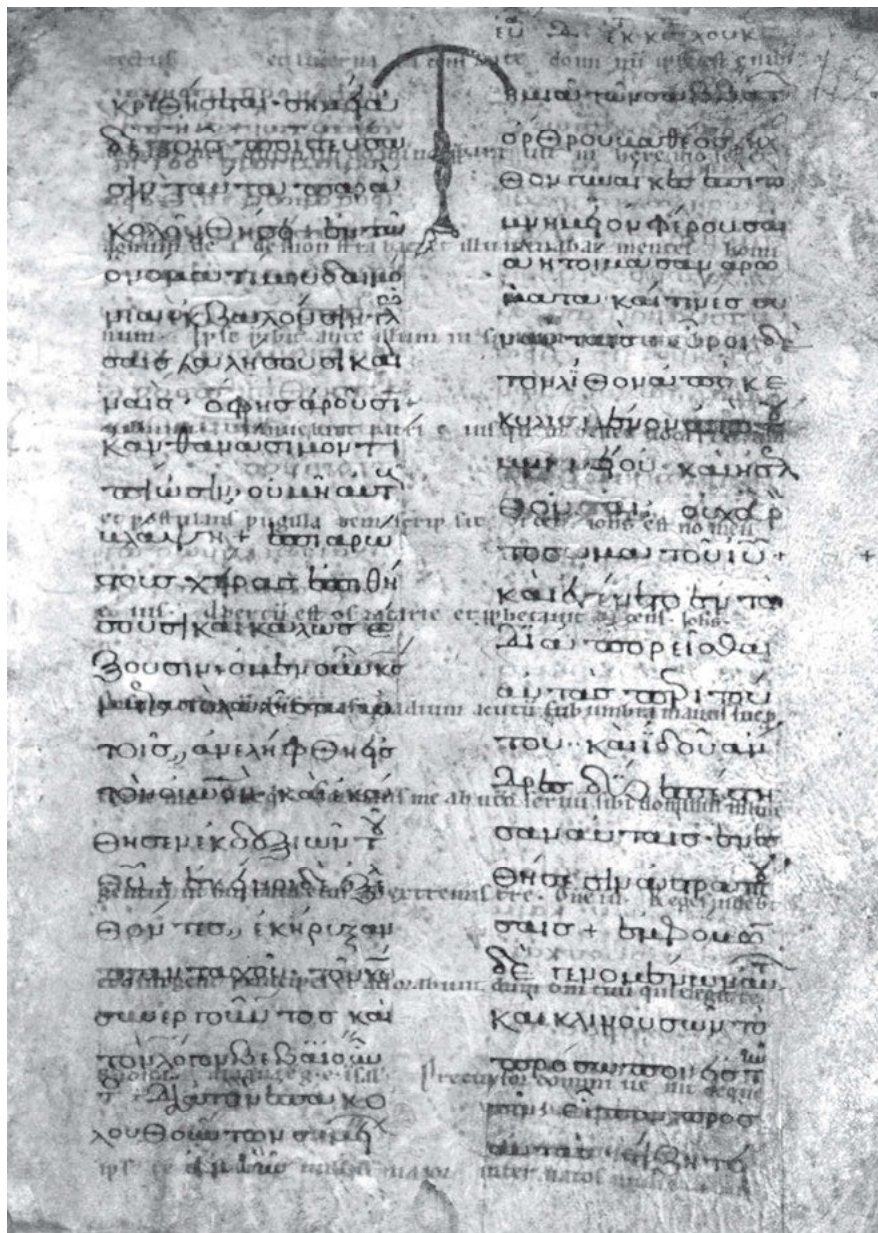


Fig. 7: Athos, Konstamonitou 99, fol. 112'; © Ιερά Μονή Κωνσταμονίτου, Άγιον Όρος.

Fine compositions of other Christian hymnographers are equally present in the palimpsest; for example, one comes across verses of St Venantius Fortunatus (c. 535–c. 610) as well as of anonymous authors. It thus needs to be pointed out that this rich repository of Latin liturgical texts accompanied by musical notes, which has been unduly neglected for many decades, deserves to be investigated in greater detail.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Pfisterer, who has kindly examined fols 97<sup>r</sup>–98<sup>v</sup> in detail and compared their texts with the contents of other Latin musical manuscripts known to him, has finally identified numerous similarities with a codex held by Ghent University Library. It bears the shelf mark HSL.HS.BKT.006 and was penned by Premonstratensians. It should be noted that in the medieval period this Western ecclesiastical order was reportedly active not only in the Holy Land, but also on the territory of what now is modern Greece. To gain an insight into the methodology used in order to identify affiliations between mediaeval musical manuscripts see Pfisterer 2013, 149, n. 10.

Matthew Holford, from the Weston Library at the University of Oxford, and Laura Zazzerini, from the Ufficio Fondo Antico of the Biblioteca comunale Augusta of Perugia, for their kind assistance.

## Abbreviations

PG = Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus ...*, *Series graeca*, vols 1–166, Paris: Imprimerie catholique, 1857–1866.

PL = Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus ...*, *Series latina*, vols 1–221, Paris: Imprimerie catholique, 1841–1855.

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Christa Müller-Kessler

# The Trials and Tribulations of a Palimpsest Reader

**Abstract:** This article deals with the history of various methods to read palimpsests with Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Syriac texts (fifth to seventh century) of diverse makings and origins, and the different results achieved through them in the last forty years. Early Christian Palestinian Aramaic and a variety of Syriac texts can be found hidden under a number of scripts such as Arabic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Georgian, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac. Some have even been overwritten two or three times, which makes deciphering them an arduous task. The Hebrew square script tends to be particularly awkward, as it can cover almost the whole lower script, which is then at times difficult to bring out with any technical methods, including even multispectral imaging. It will be demonstrated that such obstacles could and can be overcome with a number of approaches.

## 1 The beginning

When we think and speak of palimpsests, we often mean overwritten texts hiding under one or more scripts. In most instances, such palimpsest manuscripts are made of animal skin, which required a long procedure to prepare as writing sheets. The animals used to produce the precious writing material, in the form of parchment or vellum, were sheep, goats, and calves. Rare and time-consuming to produce, this material was deployed to be written upon until the introduction of paper. To obtain a sheet with the script erased, generations of scribes tried to scrape off the ink, used acids such as lemon juice, and employed other methods to remove the ink from the parchment. Iron gall ink, however, turned out to be rather resistant, as it eats into the parchment and often was not possible to erase it completely. Sometimes the scribes did not even attempt to get rid of the texts and overwrote them once or several times, as did, for example, the Georgian monk Ioane Zosime in the tenth century.<sup>1</sup> It so happens that very early, rare, and even unique text material has been preserved underneath texts dated centuries later, which have been of importance for Greek, Latin, and many other language trans-

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<sup>1</sup> Brock 2012b.

missions like Syriac,<sup>2</sup> among them languages used only in Late Antiquity such as Caucasian Albanian<sup>3</sup> and Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA). For the most part, the latter can be studied only in this type of hidden texts.<sup>4</sup> The majority are early Bible witnesses<sup>5</sup> and hagiographical,<sup>6</sup> apocryphal,<sup>7</sup> theological,<sup>8</sup> and liturgical texts,<sup>9</sup> but also philosophical treatises<sup>10</sup> and science texts such as medical and pharmacological descriptions by Galen in Syriac translation<sup>11</sup> or, as a very exceptional example, the Archimedes Codex,<sup>12</sup> all of which were handed down to us only through this kind of reuse. Apart from the overwriting, the centuries-long storage and often maltreatment of the parchment material have had their effects on the early witnesses, including the practice of treating barely visible passages with chemical reagents in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> With regard to reading palimpsests, they have been a challenge ever since the first scholars tried to figure out what is hidden underneath the many scripts in very early dated manuscripts. In the beginning, one had no other option than to read what could be extracted from the visible lower text with one's own eyes. Despite today having

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2 Brock 2011 and 2012a.

3 Gippert et al. 2008–2010.

4 Müller-Kessler 1991, 1–4; Müller-Kessler 2023c.

5 For the New Testament (NT) in Greek, see Parker 2008, 70–74; for the Septuagint, Rahlfs 1907; for the NT in Latin, Parker 2008, 75–76; for NT and Old Testament (OT) in CPA, Baars 1960; Baars 1961; Goshen-Gottstein 1973; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1997; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998b; Müller-Kessler 1992; Müller-Kessler 1993; Müller-Kessler 2019b; Müller-Kessler 2020b; Müller-Kessler 2021a; Müller-Kessler 2022a; Müller-Kessler 2023b; and Müller-Kessler 2024; for the NT in Syriac, Brock 2016. For the Peshitta, hardly anything is extant in palimpsest form.

6 Rather noteworthy have been some rare or even unknown martyrdoms in CPA such as that of Proklos and Hilaros (Müller-Kessler and Kessler 2023) or the *Life and Death of Patriklos*, follower of Pamphilos of Caesarea (d. 309) (Müller-Kessler 2019a).

7 These include some of the earliest attested versions and witnesses of the *Dormition of Mary* in CPA (Müller-Kessler 2018 and 2019b) and the Syriac text running under *Obsequies* (Müller-Kessler 2020a and 2022c).

8 For example, the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem (Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1999; Müller-Kessler 2021b), or homilies by pseudo-John Chrysostom (Brock 1999b). See also Müller-Kessler 2014, 288–289, and Müller-Kessler 2022a, 35–40.

9 This concerns the earliest versions of the translation from Greek into CPA of the Old Jerusalem Lectionary; see Müller-Kessler 2023c.

10 Not yet published from Sin. arab. NF 68.

11 For more information, see Kessel 2016.

12 For further descriptions of the Archimedes Codex, see Noel *apud* Netz et al. 2011, 21–75.

13 Land 1875, 185; Gibson 1893, 64–65; Lewis 1910, III. See Emanuel Zingg's contribution in the present volume.

many technical appliances and innovations, no methodological rules can be established, as each palimpsest has its individual challenges.

## 2 Working in various libraries and collections

### 2.1 Cambridge, Oxford, London

I started my early scholarly career forty years ago by diving directly into the reading and decipherment of early palimpsest manuscripts from the fifth to seventh century. One of the most renowned ones among them has been Codex Climaci Rescriptus (CCR), at that time housed in the library of Westminster College, Cambridge, as a legacy of Agnes Smith Lewis and Dunlop Margaret Gibson left to the college, with the exception of one folio which has been kept since the 1920s or 1930s in the Mingana Collection, Birmingham (Mingana, Syr. no. 637).<sup>14</sup> CCR is a collection of diverse manuscripts which have been overwritten by a ninth-century *ser̄to* hand with the Syriac translation of the *Scala paradisi* (Fig. 1) and the *Liber ad pastorem* (Fig. 2) by John Climacus (d. 649). These lower texts, coming from twelve manuscripts (seven in CPA<sup>15</sup> and five in Greek),<sup>16</sup> might have been produced in the fifth to seventh century. The palaeographic character of the scripts differs quite considerably in the CPA as well as in the Greek text, and thus they do not derive from one and the same time. CCR was acquired over a period of ten years by Lewis and her sister Gibson in Egypt (1895, 1905, 1906) in batches and single leaves,<sup>17</sup> and the Birmingham folio by Alphonse Mingana.<sup>18</sup>

The other relevant manuscript contains *The Story of the Forty Martyrs of Sinai and Eulogios the Stone-Cutter*, overwritten in a ninth-century Arabic script, still stored at Westminster College<sup>19</sup> except for one leaf, now in the Max Freiherr von Oppenheim Stiftung in Cologne (Fig. 3).

<sup>14</sup> Duensing 1938 does not mention from whom or where he had the folio at his disposal. He obviously studied the folio years before for decipherment; see Black 1939, 201; Mingana 1939, XXV.

<sup>15</sup> According to the new subdivision as found in Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1997, 50–53; Müller-Kessler 2019c; Müller-Kessler 2023c, 209, 212–214; and Müller-Kessler 2023d, 148–151.

<sup>16</sup> Moir 1956; Moir 1957; Williams et al. 2022, 505–506.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis 1897, CXXXVIII–CXXXIX (published with the eleventh-century Lewis Lectionary); Lewis 1909, XI.

<sup>18</sup> Duensing 1938, 44–45; Black 1939, 201.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis 1912; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1996.

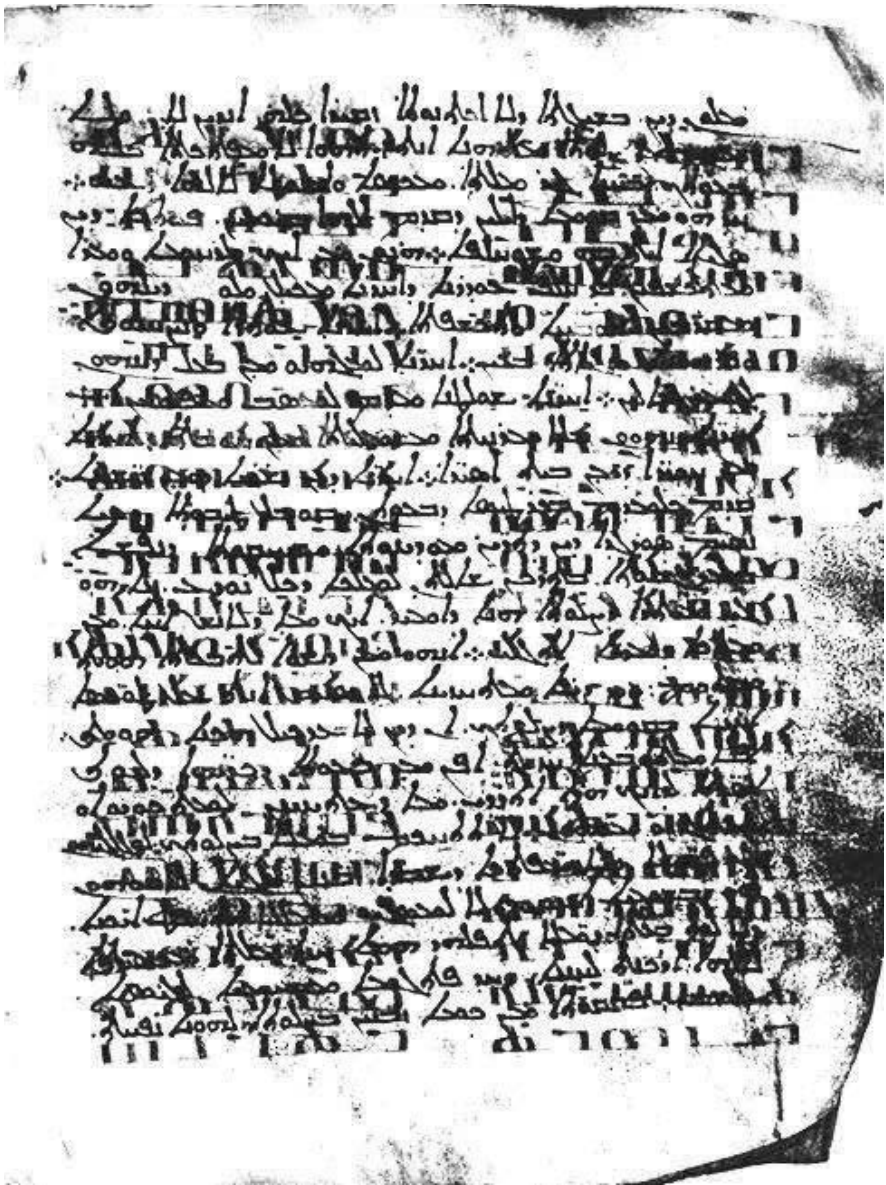


Fig. 1: Washington DC, Bible Museum, CCR2B, fol. 126<sup>v</sup>: Romans 7:6–11; Lewis 1909, pl. I.

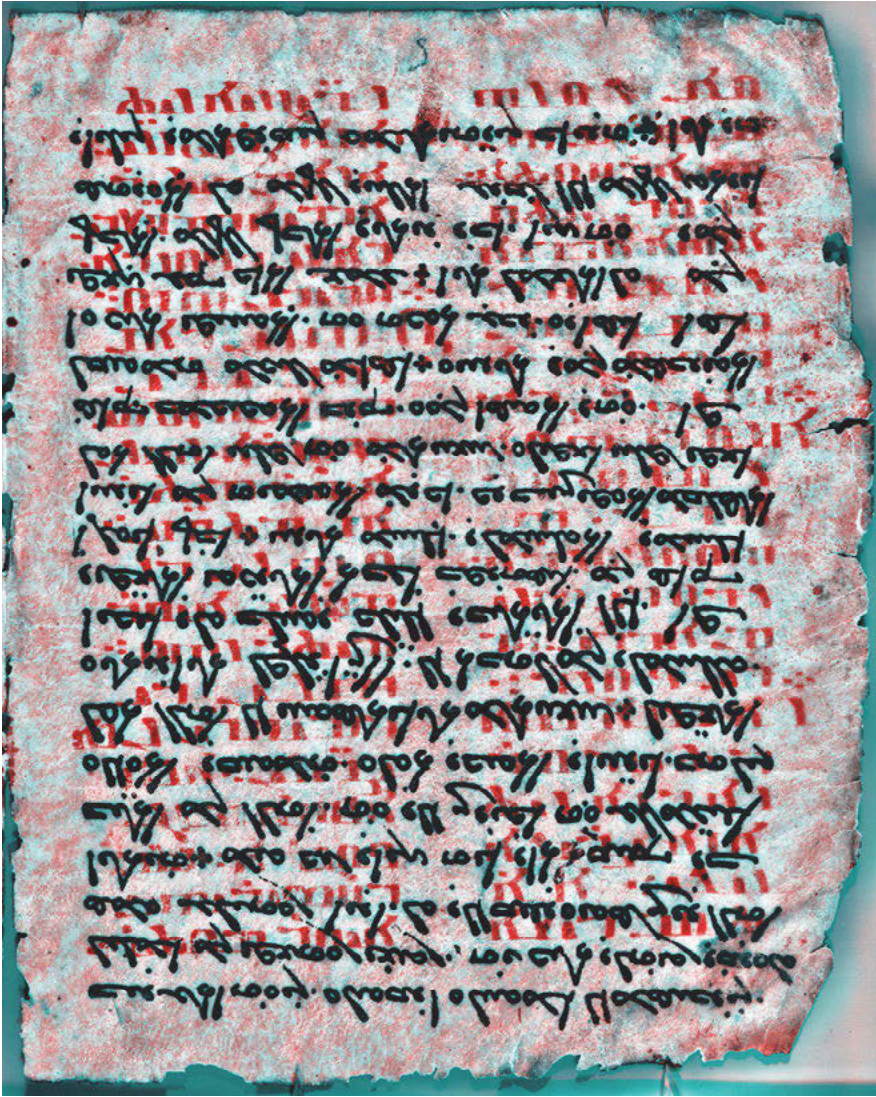


Fig. 2: Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, syr. NF 38, fol. 5<sup>vr</sup>: CCR2B, 1 Corinthians 12:17b–24a; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

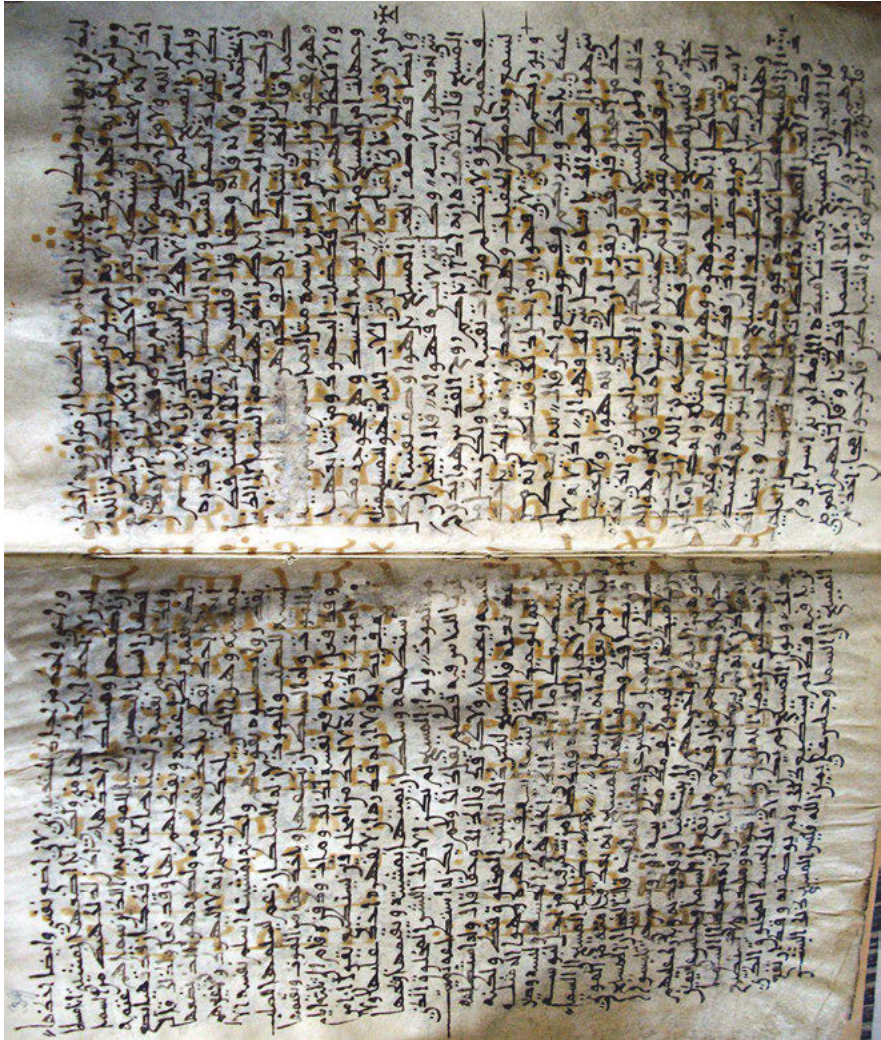


Fig. 3: Cologne, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim Stiftung, no shelf mark, fol. 34<sup>r</sup>/39<sup>v</sup>: *Forty Martyrs of Sinai*; © Max Freiherr von Oppenheim Stiftung, Cologne.

The goal of my studies on all these palimpsests was to prepare a reference grammar for CPA from scratch.<sup>20</sup> This Western Aramaic dialect from the early period (fifth to

20 Müller-Kessler 1991, XIII–XIV.

seventh centuries) is known to have survived, with a few exceptions, only in the form of palimpsest manuscripts. These manuscripts were in great need of collation so that non-existent grammatical forms or ghost words could be avoided in this new philological reference work, since the old readings were from previous editions published eighty to hundred years earlier. It was clear from the beginning, as my training in Assyriology taught me, that only through the re-reading of the originals a better result could be achieved for a reliable text basis. With generous funding, I travelled to Cambridge, Oxford, London, Rome, St Petersburg (then Leningrad), Göttingen,<sup>21</sup> and later Philadelphia,<sup>22</sup> and worked with the originals. The Istanbul material was not among the researched objects, since this fragmentary material from the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus remains inaccessible due to its unknown catalogue numbers in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art.<sup>23</sup>

In the beginning, I was able to read the individual palimpsest folios only with the naked eye, and results depended on the light conditions in the various libraries. By chance I was permitted access to CCR and the manuscript of *The Story of the Forty Martyrs and Eulogios the Stone-Cutter*<sup>24</sup> at my leisure. To my utter surprise the key to the library of Westminster College, Cambridge and the adjacent tower, where the manuscripts were stored at that time (CCR today Bible Museum, Washington), was handed over to me, and studying was possible for three months whenever the light was favourable. This was advantageous for better reading, but on some folios the script was too faint underneath the Syriac and Arabic hands, and even holding them in the afternoon sunlight at the window was not of much help. One folio from CCR, containing 1 Corinthians 15:42b–49a, had been treated with a chemical reagent in the time of Lewis, and except for some lines at the bottom and top of the verso nothing is

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<sup>21</sup> Financed by the city of Berlin (Nachwuchsförderungsgesetz).

<sup>22</sup> Financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) during a post-doc at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.

<sup>23</sup> Only Dominique Sourdel and Janine Sourdel Thomine worked on some relevant Arabic text material in the 1960s, but the shelf numbers of the CPA material remain unknown. See Sourdel and Sourdel Thomine 1964 and 1965.

<sup>24</sup> One bifolio (34/39) could not be collated at that time, since Lewis had lent the manuscript to Friedrich Schulthess in 1913–1914 (Schulthess 1914, 253), who had a single folio from a private collector at his disposal for study. With the return of the manuscript, this very folio (23/24, Lewis's foliation, published in Schulthess 1902, 258–260) came along by error, but bifolio 34/39 stayed behind in Germany, and its whereabouts had not been known until 2016, when my colleague Tamás Visi drew my attention to its storage in the Max Freiherr von Oppenheim Stiftung at the Orientalisches Seminar, Universität zu Köln. There does not exist any correspondence by Lewis concerning this accidental mix up of the two folios. The black-and-white photograph of bifolio 32/35 published with the edition gives a glimpse of the legibility of the manuscript in general and shows the faint lower script in some parts.

legible today.<sup>25</sup> It also looks like the subscription between 2 Corinthians and Galatians must have been visible underneath at the time Lewis prepared the reading of the text for her edition.<sup>26</sup> One amusing remark found in the first edition of CCR is by Lewis herself: she complains in her introduction that the lower script came out too clearly in the first photographs for the facsimiles in the book, which she had ordered from the Cambridge photographer. She did not want the reader of the edition to get a wrong idea of the legibility of the single manuscript fragments, which in reality were less readable for the decipherer of the original.<sup>27</sup> A new approach to this codex made it clear that the folios written in the typical CPA uncial had to be further subdivided, as they belonged to more manuscripts than Lewis's sub-numbers implied,<sup>28</sup> but this has been a question of content rather than deciphering the text. Meanwhile, the missing eight folios of the eighteenth quire came to our attention in a manuscript from the New Finds at St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (hereafter: Sin.), syr. NF 38. The text was at once recognised as belonging to this very codex by Sebastian Brock,<sup>29</sup> despite the poor quality of the photograph, the moment the catalogue by Sister Philothée came out.<sup>30</sup> During the Sinai Palimpsests Project,<sup>31</sup> I was entrusted with deciphering the lower texts and attributing the upper Syriac text of this quire, which turned out to contain missing parts from 1–2 Corinthians of CCR2B.<sup>32</sup> Despite

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25 Although not mentioned as such in Lewis's introduction, it has to be explained that the script is today hardly visible on the verso of this folio and therefore also did not show up under ultraviolet light in the 1990s during the reading preparation for the text edition of the *Epistles*. Lewis's readings of this folio are nearly complete but cannot be restored today; see Lewis 1909, 132, and Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a, 86.

26 See Lewis 1909, 144 and Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a, 107.

27 Lewis 1909, XVI. One wishes that all folios had been photographed with this excellent photographic skill at that time. The scholarly twins Lewis and Gibson would have had the means to finance it. It also highlights, however, the difficulty of reading such text material at that time. This should be taken into consideration before young scholars, who have multispectral images at their disposal, make disparaging remarks, forgetting about the working conditions at that time.

28 With the identification of the text passages under Sin. syr. NF 38 from the New Finds at St Catherine's Monastery, another subdivision was possible for the manuscript containing the *Acts of the Apostles* and the manuscript with the Pauline Letters; see Müller-Kessler 2023d, 150. This applies also to the new subdivisions concerning the Greek folios, as recently signalled by Malik 2022, 737–738; Williams et al. 2022, 505–506.

29 Brock 2012a, 13.

30 Philothée 2008, 422.

31 <<http://sinaipalimpsests.org/>>. All web addresses (URLs) referred to in this article were last accessed on 12 June 2024.

32 Müller-Kessler 2023d.



the help of multispectral images, the salvaging of certain text passages from the palimpsest folios required some time to reach a satisfactory basis for its *editio princeps*.<sup>33</sup>

Far more of a challenge was reading and deciphering the lower script in the diverse palimpsest fragments of the Taylor-Schechter Collection (hereafter: T-S), housed at Cambridge University Library, in 1983–1998. It was still the simple and primitive reading of the 1980s, although the method of using ultraviolet lamps had been introduced long before.<sup>34</sup> Each fragment in this collection has been sewn into glass (actually a kind of perspex) and mounted into large and heavy volumes, which were to be left lying flat on the table. Reading was only possible during library hours, which were of course shorter than in other reading rooms. The light was the typical overhead artificial neon light, which might be useful for any book reader but not for a palimpsest decipherer. A dark room and ultraviolet lamps were not provided in these years. Nevertheless, a few badly preserved fragments, in which the underneath script was clearly legible, could be deciphered and subsequently identified as containing a number of biblical texts (Genesis, 2 Kingdoms [2 Samuel], Isaiah, Jeremiah, Acts, 1 Corinthians, John).<sup>35</sup> This was more than a surprise, since Moshe H. Gottstein had not identified all the Old Testament material for the first collection of all passages and citations in the monograph *The Bible in the Syropalestinian Version*, a collaborative work with Hanan Shirun.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, regarding the description of palimpsests underneath Rabbinic texts from the Cairo Genizah a few years later by Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, no identification could be achieved for these fragments.<sup>37</sup> Finally, it was also possible to work on the whole set of palimpsest fragments back home in the form of black-and-white bromide prints, since I could not spend more than three months in Cambridge and Oxford in 1983, returning there only sporadically later in the 1980s and 1990s. I ordered them as ultraviolet photographs. Using these bromide photo prints, however, requires that one already has some experience with the reading of originals; the untrained reader will be at loss. Extraordinarily, in some passages the lower script came out much clearer in the black-and-white prints than in the originals, but this could differ from one pal-

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<sup>33</sup> Müller-Kessler 2023d.

<sup>34</sup> Moir 1956, 5, n. 2 speaks of a reading aid in the form of ultraviolet light for the Greek sections of CCR. He obviously must have had a private lamp at hand, since Westminster College in the 1980s did not own one.

<sup>35</sup> Müller-Kessler 1992; Müller-Kessler 1993; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1997, 19, 99–100; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a, 189–190; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998b, 46–49, 88–89.

<sup>36</sup> Goshen-Gottstein 1973.

<sup>37</sup> Sokoloff and Yahalom 1978.

impsest fragment to another. On some of them, the *scriptio inferior* was legible neither in the manuscript reading room nor in the photos. It took another thirty years (2023) for five very deteriorated folios from the Taylor-Schechter and Lewis-Gibson (L-G) collections (T-S 12.209<sup>r</sup>, Fig. 4; 12.759; 16.328<sup>r</sup>, Fig. 5,<sup>38</sup> 12.758;<sup>39</sup> L-G Glass 1a<sup>r</sup>, Fig. 6, and 1b<sup>40</sup>) to be identified with the help of an ultraviolet reading lamp or a torch in a dark room within the Manuscript Reading Room<sup>41</sup> (see Section 3.4 below), which today is the general manuscript reading room in the Cambridge University Library, since the Taylor-Schechter Collection unit had a special reading room in the 1980s and 1990s.



**Fig. 4:** Cambridge, University Library, T-S 12.759<sup>r</sup>: *Pseudo-Caesarius*; © Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.

<sup>38</sup> Müller-Kessler 2023b, 104, 107–112, 116–117, 119–121; two articles on the biblical fragments are in preparation.

<sup>39</sup> Müller-Kessler 2023a and 2024.

<sup>40</sup> Müller-Kessler and Kessler forthcoming.

<sup>41</sup> Müller-Kessler 2023b.



Fig. 5: Cambridge, University Library, T-S 16.328, fols 1<sup>r</sup>, 2<sup>r</sup>: 3 Kingdoms 11:5–12a; 11:32b–36; © Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.

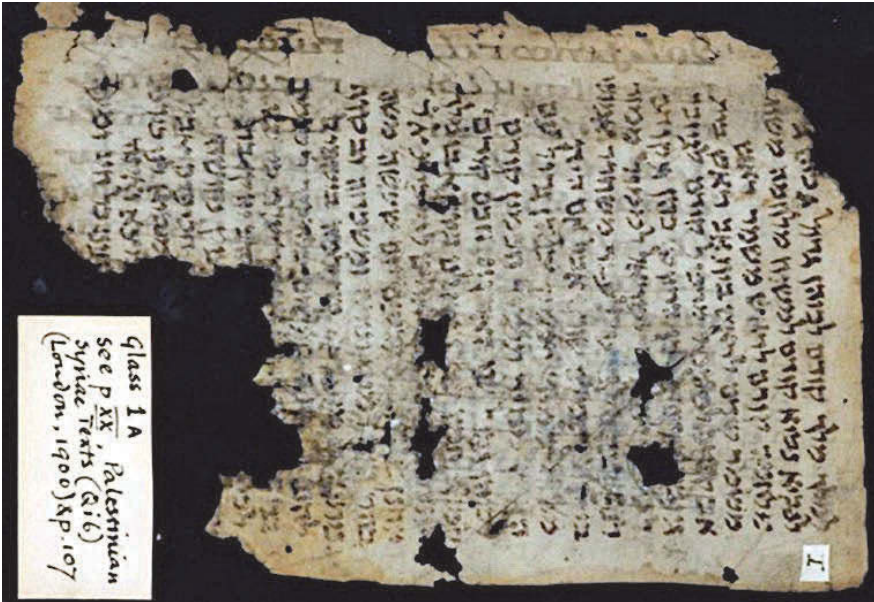


Fig. 6: Cambridge, University Library, L-G Glass 1a<sup>r</sup>: Ioannes Ieiunator, *Sermo de poenitentia*; © Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.

The old Oriental Manuscript Reading Room within the Bodleian Library in Oxford (today the Weston Library, hereafter: Bodl.), with another collection of Genizah finds, had similar working conditions, despite having the ancient and comfortable atmosphere and charm of an old library. The single fragments from the Cairo Genizah are either kept under glass (Syr. c. 32–33 [P]) or are bound into book volumes, which have to be forced open with heavy weights to be able to read a single folio. In some of them, the lower script is very faint, especially in one Jeremiah fragment (Heb. e., fol. 43<sup>v</sup>), which gives a rather greasy impression of the parchment. The reading of the erased script is rather difficult and the biblical text still cannot be fully deciphered today. However, some reverse sides of Jeremiah (Bodl., Heb. e. 73, fol. 42<sup>v</sup>; Heb. b. 13, fol. 13) and Lamentations (Heb. b. 13, fol. 12) finally were able to be read and subsequently published.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2 Göttingen and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

In between, in 1985, followed reading trips to the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Göttingen (hereafter: SUB) and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter: BAV) in the year 1985. Again, both research libraries did not provide any additional helping devices so that palimpsest reading was only possible without ultraviolet light. The black-and-white prints of Vat.sir. 623 and 627 (Fig. 7) provided by the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana were not very helpful, especially for the parts where the script was too faint to study at home. Whether they are indeed ultraviolet photographs as ordered is doubtful, since the lower script does not come up in the photos as clearly as it should in this case.

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<sup>42</sup> Müller-Kessler 1992.

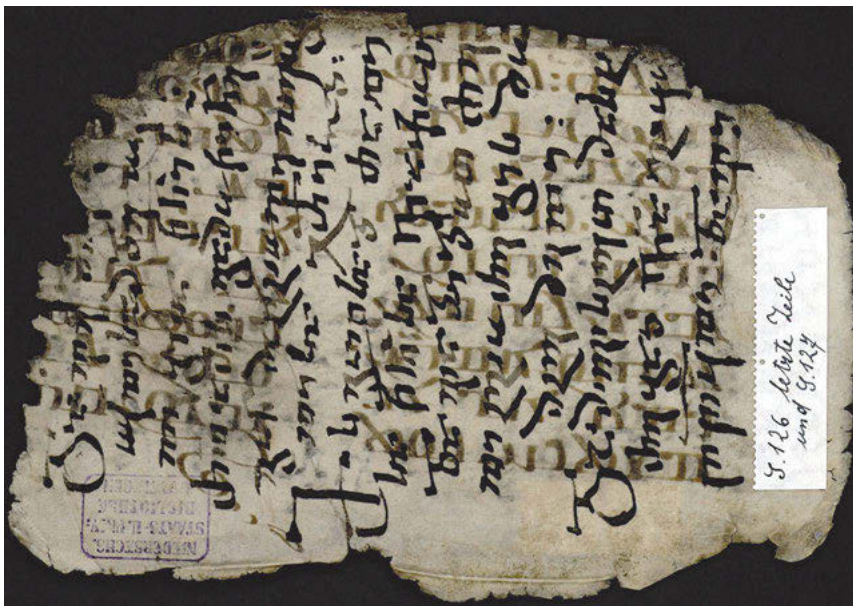


Fig. 7: BAV, Vat. sir. 623, fol. 173<sup>r</sup>: Exodus 12:34–35b; 37b–39a; © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

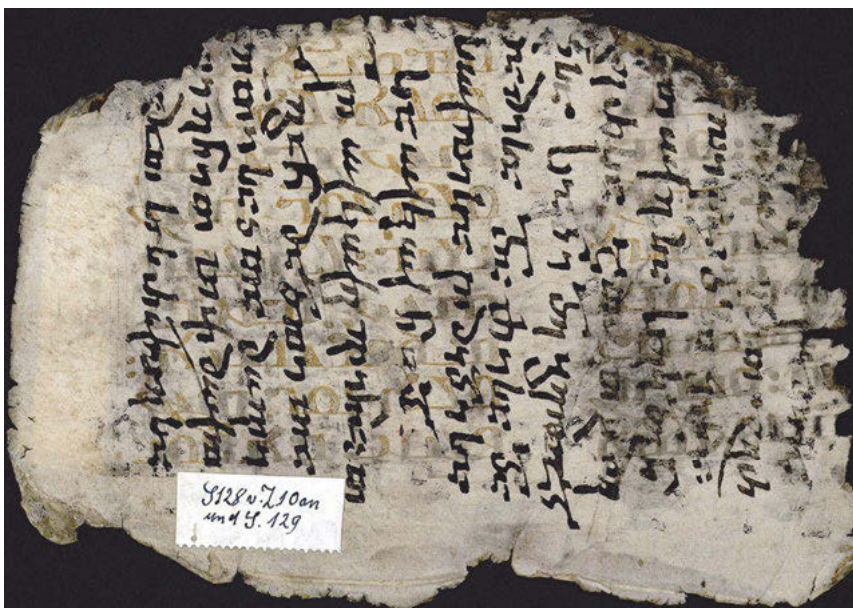
The staff was always very attentive and helpful at both libraries, but I had to try to read the palimpsests in the old-fashioned method. Since Hugo Duensing had done a proper job with the reading of the originals when he had them for private study, he provided a reliable text basis, and so it was only a question of verifying the readings and not deciphering the whole lot from scratch.<sup>43</sup> SUB produced in the meantime very good colour photos of the CPA palimpsest fragments from the Duensing Collection, in which Duensing's handwritten references are still attached (Figs 8a–b).<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Duensing 1906, 113–125.

<sup>44</sup> Duensing 1944; Duensing 1955, 117–118, 120–149, 150–152.



a



b

**Figs 8a–b:** SUB, Syr. 23, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>/3<sup>v</sup>: Ephrem, *Sermo in adventum Domini*; © Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen.

## 2.3 St Petersburg

Another challenge concerning CPA manuscript collations was obtaining a working permit for the National Library of Russia (hereafter: NLR) in 1986 in St Petersburg, at that time Leningrad, to check the two manuscript parts of Sin. georg. 34 (I) and formerly Tsagareli 81 (I),<sup>45</sup> which had been taken to St Petersburg by Constantin von Tischendorf in 1855 and 1857.<sup>46</sup> Jan Pieter Nicolaas Land edited all passages of the lower script in CPA that were legible to him in his fourth volume of *Anecdota Syriaca*.<sup>47</sup> The other two separate folios are NLR, Greek, MS. 119<sup>48</sup> and Antonin Collection, EBP IIIB 958<sup>r</sup>.<sup>49</sup> Although my mentor in Semitic languages Rudolf Macuch started writing to the library already in 1984, it took two years to receive an answer confirming that I could prepare my trip to Russia (Soviet Union). After four days of formalities, I was able to inspect these palimpsest folios, which had not been studied or rechecked since Land's publications in 1875 and Nina Pigulevskaya's manuscript description in 1960.<sup>50</sup> In October 1986, the manuscript reading room was open some days in the morning for eight hours and some days in the afternoon, including Sundays. Despite being a rather dark room with only a table lamp and a bit of light coming through tiny windows, a first collation was possible. In the 1990s followed several research trips with an ultraviolet lamp in my luggage. I worked in the same room, and the librarians never questioned my lamp. In contrast, one employee even offered to help me with my readings and suggested that one might develop something with a computer program to highlight the lower script. I found this very forthcoming, since none of the earlier librarians from any of the libraries had cared to provide me with anything to bring out the faint script, even in the form of an ultraviolet lamp. With the latter device, I could decipher the numerous unread passages and pages, especially in the folios containing the Old Jerusalem Lectionary<sup>51</sup> and the unread pages and

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45 Tsagareli 1888, 233.

46 Tischendorf 1855, 13; Tischendorf 1860, 49.

47 Land 1875, 185–189 (Latin part), 165–224 (Syriac part).

48 Pigulevskaya 1934, pl. XXIX–XXX. This leaf is very deteriorated but the reading with an ultraviolet lamp helped a bit in restoring the text; see Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1997, 126–127. It was the only example of a remaining psalter in CPA with a Eusebian hypothesis at that time. Only recently some more examples have surfaced under Sin. CPA NF frg. 12 (Brock with an Appendix by Müller-Kessler forthcoming).

49 The Antonin folio from the Cairo Genizah find could be studied only in the 1990s; see Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1997, 211–212.

50 Pigulevskaya 1960, 55, no. XVII; Pigulevskaya 1937, 556.

51 Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1997, 77–79, 116–122.

passages of the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem (CPG 3585),<sup>52</sup> which were not possible for Land to make out in the 1860s.



Fig. 9: NLR, Syr. 16, fol. 19r: unidentified; © National Library of Russia, St Petersburg.

<sup>52</sup> Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1999, 29, 31, 43, 61, 63, 69, 71, 81, 91, 101, 103, 105, 107, 117, 119, 123, 139, 149, 151, 153, 163, 171, 175, 179, 189, 191, 199.



On many passages, he or someone in the library had tried to apply a chemical reagent, which left traces of green and brown colour on the parchment, as if someone had used paint. In contrast to the application on the Old Syriac Gospels (Sin. syr. 30)<sup>53</sup> by Lewis in St Catherine's Monastery, the script in St Petersburg did not suffer under this chemical treatment, and the text still can be brought out with ultraviolet light. Only some folios or the versos could not be read. This includes a number of pages from former Sin. georg. 34, which originates from the Laura of Mar Saba. The parchment is very greasy, which might be connected with the production of the animal skin (Fig. 9). The parchment folios defy any kind of reading and had to be left blank in the publication (NLR, Syr. 16, fols 12, 14, 25, 28–29, 57),<sup>54</sup> especially for one Old Jerusalem Lectionary fragment (MS B)<sup>55</sup> and some still unidentified texts.<sup>56</sup> Land already declared them in 1875 as unreadable.<sup>57</sup>

## 2.4 Martin Schøyen Collection, Oslo

In June 1996, I met with the private collector Martin Schøyen at University College London. Over lunch in the Senior Common Room, I discovered that he had acquired the missing second part of the Georgian codex Tsagareli 81 (II)<sup>58</sup> from the antiquarian book dealer Hans Peter Kraus in New York. Without waiting for final permission from our grant giver, the German Israeli Foundation (GIF), which only permitted travel between Israel and Germany, I travelled in the first days of July 1996 to Oslo to collate and add the unpublished text parts.<sup>59</sup> Thanks to the summer light conditions, I was able to work on the palimpsest folios with my personal ultraviolet lamp nearly all day and night in Schøyen's guest house. I was unable to read some half-columns of Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catecheses*<sup>60</sup> during this short sojourn, since I decided to concentrate on as many folios as possible to complete

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53 Brock 2016.

54 Müller-Kessler 2014, 270, 280, 300–302.

55 Müller-Kessler 2023c.

56 Müller-Kessler 2014, 302.

57 Land 1875, 187–188, fols 19, 23, 35, 50, 53.

58 Tsagareli 1888, 233; MS 35 in the Schøyen collection. While the present article was being prepared for printing, this part of Tsagareli 81 was auctioned and bought by a Georgian private person who promised to donate it to the National Museum of Georgia, Tbilisi; see Tarras 2024.

59 Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1997, 128, 188, 150; Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a, 52–55, 58–67, 98, 100, 102, 110–111, 114–115, 119, 133–134, 138, 141–142, 155, 171.

60 Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1999. We did not want to transmit incorrect readings and therefore omitted the additions in Desreumaux 1997, 143, 145, 149, 151 (without referring to what had been published before by Duensing 1906; 1955).

their readings. This part of the Tsagareli 81 manuscript was difficult to handle, as the collector had it bound tightly into the former Coptic wooden boards to obtain, in his opinion, a complete book, despite the other part of Tsagareli 81 (I) being kept in St Petersburg since 1857.<sup>61</sup> At least, I was able to salvage the correct Eusebian canon tables below the Gospel texts with the Ammonian numbering in the margins of Luke and John,<sup>62</sup> which were already presented in Duensing's edition<sup>63</sup> but were partially later misread by Alain Desreumaux.<sup>64</sup> I had already extracted them from the St Petersburg part as an exceptional example of the only early Gospel manuscript preserved in fragments in CPA (CSR<sup>c</sup>) with these numberings,<sup>65</sup> alongside the Gospel sections left unread by Duensing in 1906.<sup>66</sup> The readings in the Gospel part in Desreumaux's text edition do not represent the text as appearing in the original but were restored from another unpublished version in Sin. syr. NF 42 (an eleventh-century manuscript) and a late text witness in Vat.sir. 19 (eleventh century) as published by Lewis and Gibson in 1899, or even in the *Horologion* (twelfth century) edited by Matthew Black (1954).<sup>67</sup> Where no parallels were extant in CPA, Desreumaux left the readings open or they cannot be traced back to the original text in the folios.<sup>68</sup> Naturally, some readings remained doubtful for our edition, which were indicated in the lower apparatus as 'MS should be collated'.

## 2.5 New Finds from St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai

In 2012 came the offer to join the Sinai Palimpsests Project, run by Claudia Rapp from the Institute for Medieval Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, and the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library in Los Angeles under Michael Phelps, as a joint venture with St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai and financed by Arcadia Foundation.<sup>69</sup> There had been a gap of nearly twenty years since I had dealt with even more difficult texts, on metal strips in lead, gold, and silver in tiny scripts, or on

61 Müller-Kessler 2022b, 24–28.

62 Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a, 139–140.

63 Duensing 1906, 145–146.

64 Desreumaux 1997, 72–73; Brock 1999a, 764–765; Müller-Kessler 1999, 633–634.

65 Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a, 94–95, 97, 168–169.

66 Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff 1998a, 58–67, 88, 98–100, 102, 110–111, 114–115, 133–136, 138, 141–142, 145–146, 155–156, 170–171.

67 Desreumaux 1997, 65–71, 74–81, 101–112, 115, 127. Some readings were even made worse in contrast to Duensing's in 1906; see Müller-Kessler 1999.

68 Desreumaux 1997, 61, 64, 66, 68–69, 75, 100, 102, 104–107, 114, 116, 118, 122; see Lewis 1899.

69 See the project website at <<http://sinaipalimpsests.org/>>.

many ceramic bowls used as protective amulets.<sup>70</sup> It was not clear to me what text material I would be given in the form of multispectral images, which arrived on a memory stick by special delivery from Los Angeles. The palimpsest manuscripts, or parts of them, were selected randomly according to the lower scripts for each individual participant. The start was made with Sin. georg. NF 71, with eight damaged quarters of folios which had been cut to that format to be overwritten in a Georgian *khutsuri* script by Ioane Zosime for a hymnary (*iadgari*). As I was familiar with the scribal hands from St Petersburg (NLR, Syr. 16) and Oslo (Schøyen Collection, MS 35, 37) it did not take very long to assign the extant quarters of the former folios to their rightful contents. Two very badly preserved fragments belonged to the Old Jerusalem Lectionary MS A, with the pericope of Exodus 4:31b–5:1a, 5:3–4a, 5:6b–7a, 8b–10a (Sin. georg. NF 71, fols 1 + 8),<sup>71</sup> but there were also passages from the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem<sup>72</sup> and the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>73</sup> I was not aware that the same fragments had been given to Sebastian Brock for identification and that I was ahead of him in the decipherment, on account of the advantage of having dealt with parts of the original palimpsest manuscripts years beforehand. The second collective manuscript, Sin. georg. NF 19, which followed soon after, would turn out to be a real challenge to work with, as it forms a collection of nine manuscripts underneath this Georgian Codex Sinaiticus Rescriptus with individual hands in CPA.<sup>74</sup> Again it contained fragments of the Old Jerusalem Lectionary MS A (Fig. 10)<sup>75</sup> as well as of the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem (CPG 3585) (Fig. 11).<sup>76</sup> Here Ioane Zosime really made use of the most disfigured scraps of former parchment folios. In the case of *Catechesis* X.10–12 (Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 7 [I]), one column was cut into two parts and the second column was sewn onto it upside down. The right-hand column belongs to another fragment, today housed in St Petersburg (NLR, Syr. 16, fol. 117), which could be reconstructed in its former set-up in the edition of the additional fragments.<sup>77</sup> The second sewn-on column (Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 7 [II]) derives from *Catechesis* III.10–13.<sup>78</sup> The most bizarrely preserved bifolio is Sin. georg. NF 19, fols 2 + 3, which contains *Catechesis* VI.7–8, with six lines cut off from one folio and then sewn onto the right side of an-

<sup>70</sup> Land 1875, 187–188, fols 19, 23, 35, 50, 53.

<sup>71</sup> Müller-Kessler 2023c, 211, 226, 249–250.

<sup>72</sup> Müller-Kessler 2021a, 34–53.

<sup>73</sup> <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under 'Georgian NF 71'.

<sup>74</sup> <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under 'Georgian NF 19'.

<sup>75</sup> Müller-Kessler 2023c, 248–252.

<sup>76</sup> Müller-Kessler 2014, 283–288; Müller-Kessler 2021a, 23–53; Müller-Kessler 2022b, 31–32.

<sup>77</sup> Müller-Kessler 2021a, 34, pl. I.

<sup>78</sup> Müller-Kessler 2021a, 34, pl. I.

other folio.<sup>79</sup> Apart from the maltreatment, it was easy to assign these fragments to their rightful contents.<sup>80</sup> Only their reading turned out to be rather difficult, as it will be for any external reader of the multispectral images provided by the Sinai Palimpsests Project. Two other individual folios were easily legible, with one being part of an until today unidentified homily (Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 59)<sup>81</sup> and the second also containing a homiletic text, namely, John Chrysostom's *De poenitentia* (CPG 4631), which only recently could be identified and joined with one fragment stored at the Princeton University Library (hereafter: Princeton, Garrett MS. 24, fol. 99),<sup>82</sup> and one year later connected with Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 62.<sup>83</sup> The Garrett palimpsest fragments could be read with the help of various photographic methods (black and white, digital colour, multispectral imaging).<sup>84</sup> One non-palimpsest scrap (Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 1) is a Gospel fragment.<sup>85</sup>

Of Sin. georg. NF 19, six folios are double palimpsests with CPA as the *scriptio infima* and a Greek minuscule in between. With all, it was very difficult to find a way to start reading them. Two years later, however – on a very chaotic train trip from the south of Germany to London – I was able to salvage on one folio in every second line the name ‘Mary’. In email correspondence with Brock while still on the Eurostar, he expressed the opinion that it is probably from the *Dormition of Mary* (BHO 643; Fig. 12), of which just this section had been recently published from an early Syriac version by Stephen Shoemaker in *Le Muséon*.<sup>86</sup> I followed this hint straight away, after dropping off my suitcase, consulting Victor Arras's Ethiopic text edition held in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.<sup>87</sup> Brock's guess turned out to be correct. Despite the successful identification, it took me months to figure out a nearly complete reading, since the lowest writing mingles in a pseudo-red colour with the text in between, which makes the reading more than challenging. Still, it was worthwhile to produce a first edition of one of the earliest witnesses of this apocryphal text next to the Syriac transmission from Deir al-Suryan, which would follow a few years later.<sup>88</sup>

79 Müller-Kessler 2021a, 34–35, pl. II.

80 <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under ‘Georgian NF 19’.

81 Müller-Kessler 2014.

82 Müller-Kessler 2022b.

83 Müller-Kessler 2023e.

84 Skemer 1996; Müller-Kessler 2022b. The folios were not considered for the CPA catalogues by Bar-Asher 1977 and Desreumaux 1979.

85 <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under ‘Georgian NF 19’.

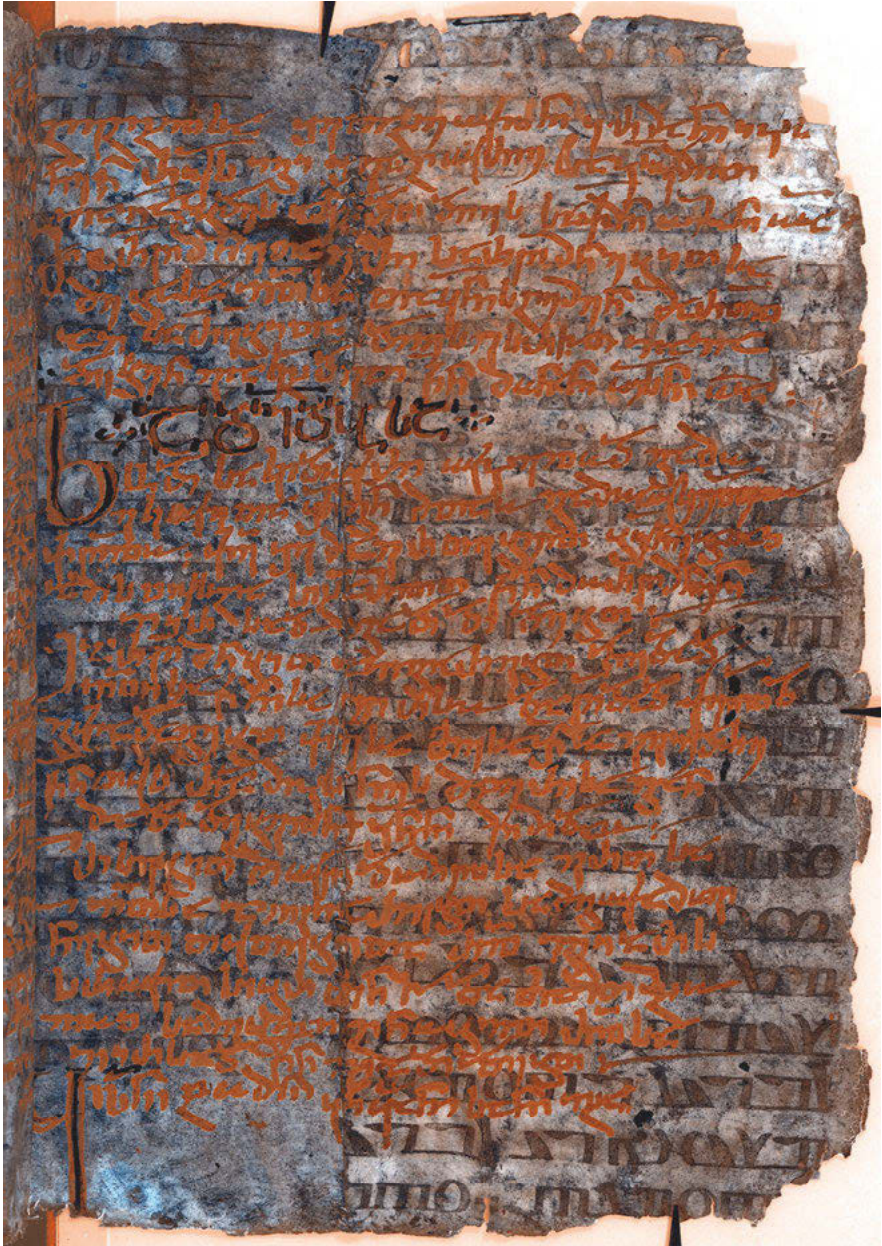
86 Shoemaker 2011, 260–263, 267.

87 Arras 1973.

88 Müller-Kessler 2018, 71–73, 85–91; Müller-Kessler 2020a; Müller-Kessler 2022c.



Fig. 10: Sin. georg. 71, fol. 1r: Exodus 4:31b–5:1a; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.



**Fig. 11:** Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 7 [I]': Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* X.10–11; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

In 1992, I had prepared a textual reading of two palimpsests found on double folios with this Marian text in the Taylor-Schechter Collection (T-S 16.327, 16.351), which Brock was able to identify based on my readings as pertaining to the *Koimesis*. Meanwhile I had discovered the tiny fragment T-S AS 78.401, which joined to T-S 16.327, fol. 1. Due to the Sinai New Finds, I went again through the Taylor-Schechter Collection, with the result of coming across a fragment which, on account of the upper Midrashic text, belongs to the same manuscript. Instead of going to Cambridge for reading, I tried to figure out the text, using the large computer screens in the British Library Rare Reading Room, via the Friedberg Genizah Manuscript website.<sup>89</sup> After many obstacles and wrong guesses, I was able to fit it into this text a few chapters onwards (as § 80).<sup>90</sup> It came as a surprise to many interested scholars in the apocryphal field who had not been aware that there existed such an early source translated into this Western Aramaic dialect. Only two folios (Sin. georg. NF 19, fols 4 and 5) could be attributed neither to the five-book nor to the six-book version according to the content,<sup>91</sup> despite a near-to-complete reading. The content, however, speaks clearly for its being connected with the apocryphal transmission of the *Dormition of Mary*.

This left me with two remaining double palimpsest folios (Sin. georg. NF 19, fols 10 and 11). They appeared in the beginning as likely illegible or not possible to assign. The Sinai Palimpsest Project was coming to an end, in July 2017, and I had not made anything out of them. I tried again and finally, after several attempts, I was able to identify the two folios as belonging to Jeremiah 15:19b–16:4a (Fig. 13).<sup>92</sup>

Some years after the images went online in 2018, I visited the website to find that I supposedly had been unable to identify one non-palimpsested fragment, which I had never received with the batch of Sin. georg. NF 19. To straighten this out: fol. 62 obviously contains the same homily by John Chrysostom as fol. 61, since the scribal hand is identical, and the content fits in between Princeton, Garrett MS. 24, fol. 99 and the beginning of Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 61.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> <<https://fjms.genizah.org>>.

<sup>90</sup> Müller-Kessler 2018, 76.

<sup>91</sup> Müller-Kessler 2018, 73–74, 91–95.

<sup>92</sup> <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under ‘Georgian NF 19’. For fol. 11, despite the identical scribal hand, the exact biblical passage could not be defined.

<sup>93</sup> Now Müller-Kessler 2023e.

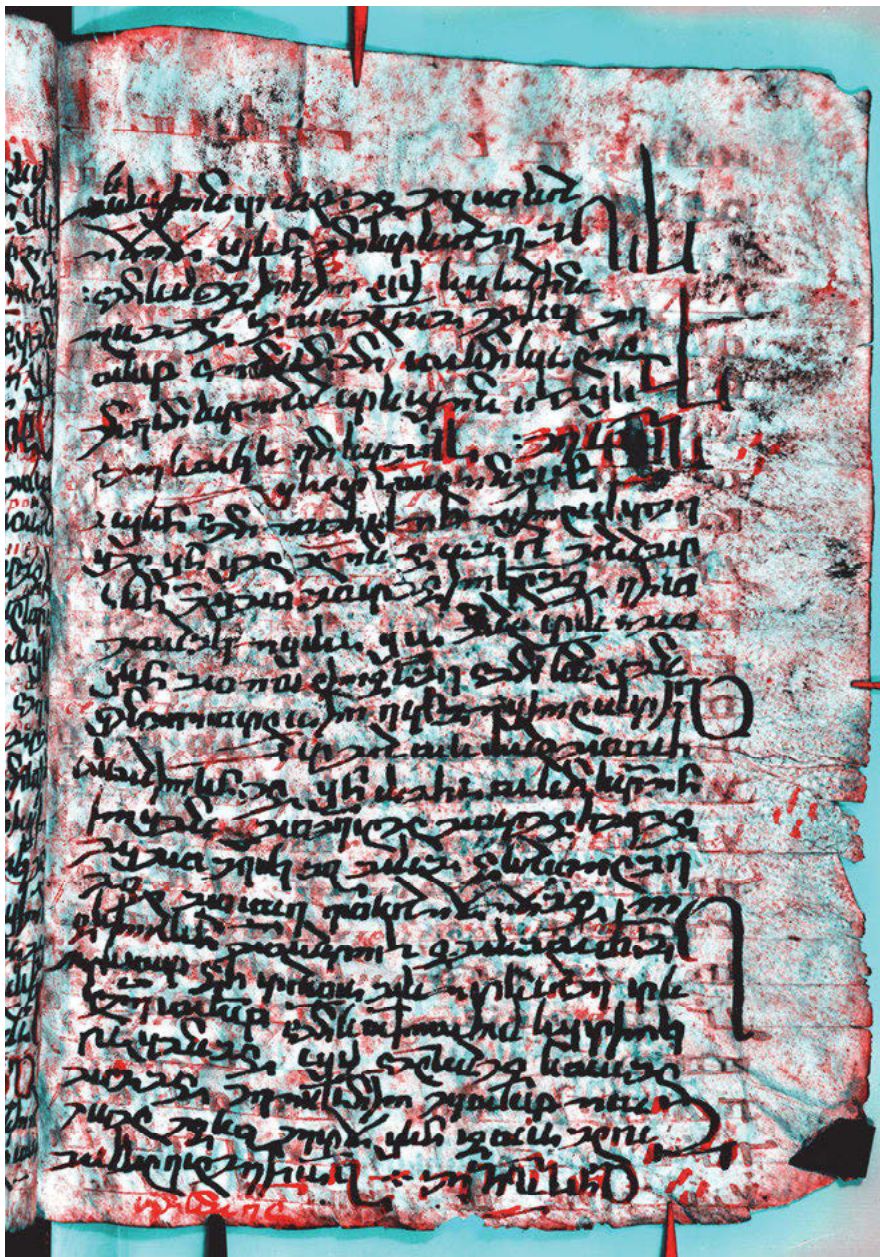


Fig. 12: Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 8<sup>r</sup>: *Dormition of Mary* §§ 99b–100a; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.



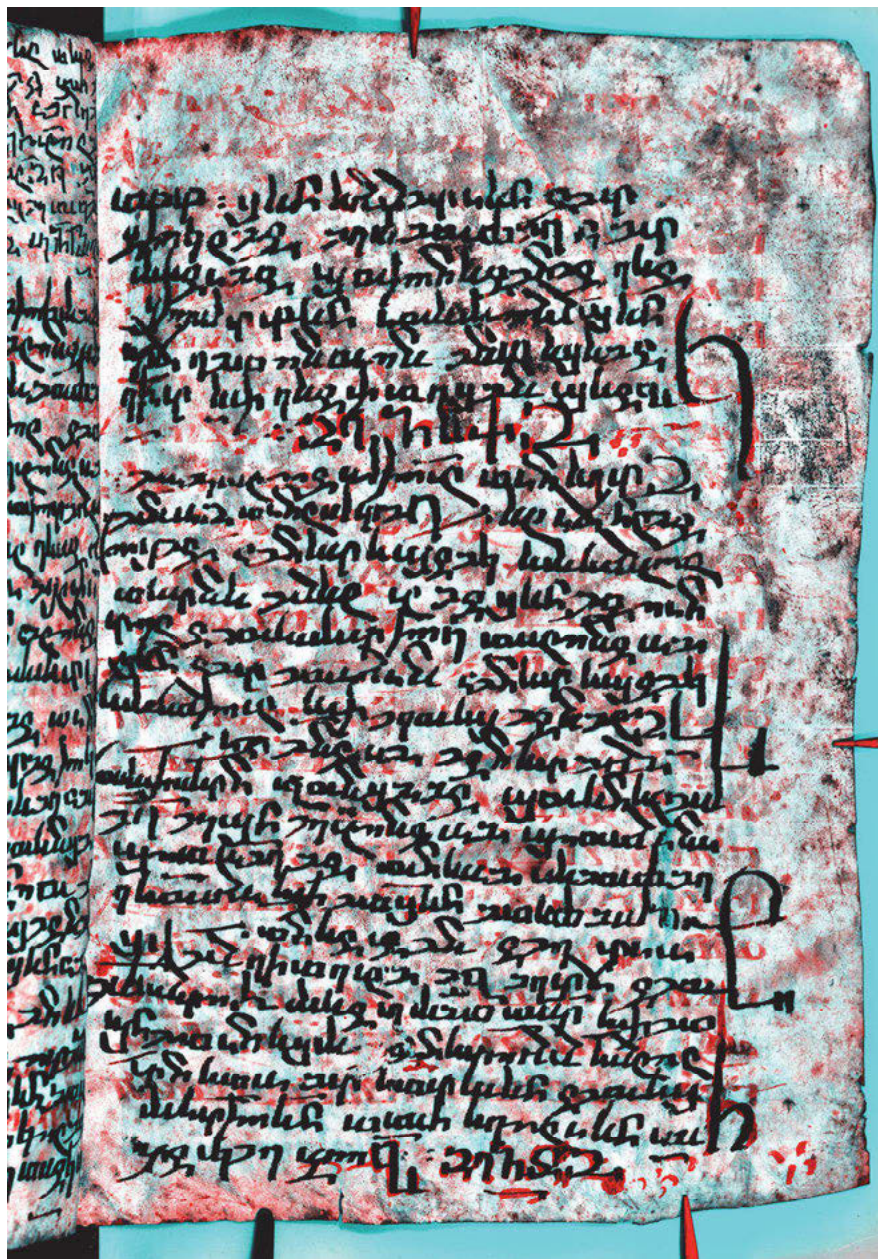


Fig. 13: Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 10v: Jeremiah 15:19b–16:4a; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

After the two heavily damaged Georgian manuscripts, a beautiful Greek one (Sin. gr. NF MG 14) followed in 2013, four CPA folios under a Greek majuscule (fols 16/21, 17/20, 18/19, 28). Folios of this codex were chosen as examples to demonstrate the legibility of the overwritten scripts and were made available on the internet<sup>94</sup> before the results of the Sinai Palimpsests Project finally went online. Although these CPA texts with biblical books were quite legible, a certain passage of 3 Kingdoms 9:6 on fol. 28<sup>v</sup> could not be made out despite the multispectral imaging. Here, the *scriptio inferior* is hidden under a smudge and the words could not be fully extracted for publication.<sup>95</sup> The bifolio 17/20, with Proverbs 11:1b–15, was a puzzle at the beginning of transliteration from the point of its deviating biblical contents, but here again Sebastian Brock had a solution: he discovered that it more or less follows the Byzantine Prophetologion as published by Carsten Høeg and Günther Zuntz.<sup>96</sup> The CPA text, however, derives from a biblical manuscript (Fig. 14). The last bifolio (fol. 18/19) was rather easy to attribute to Job 3:11c–4:3a,<sup>97</sup> and except for some missing edges of the parchment with a few words and letters, the text could be fully established. The script is rather bold and not as fine as in the text of 1 Kingdoms, which made reading it a bit easier.<sup>98</sup>

Another matter has been Sin. syr. NF 11, consisting of two independent lower manuscripts written in CPA, which I was offered for identification in 2015. In the first part, one finds sections of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in the second, the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem. The parchment material is rather well preserved in this extant part of the Gospel manuscript, and the script can be easily made out. All former folios were cut into quarters and are overwritten in a Melkite Syriac script type with the translation of the *Life of Sabbas* (BHG 1608) and the *Life of Euthymius* (BHG 647–648b) by Cyril of Scythopolis.<sup>99</sup> A drawback, however, is that the majority of folios 1–61 in this manuscript cling together in this fragmentary state and could not be taken apart, and therefore could not be foliated.<sup>100</sup> Thus it cannot be judged yet if all fragments come from a Bible or a lectionary manuscript, as no traces of lectionary rubrics or subdivisions are visible so far except for a large decorative *waw* with a cross inside (Fig. 15). As already pointed

94 <<http://emel-library.org/gallery/sinai-palimpsests-processed-images/>>.

95 Müller-Kessler 2022a.

96 Høeg and Zuntz 1952, 233–234.

97 Little reward after all the years, since this passage in biblical Hebrew was my exam text in my doctoral *rigorosum* in 1988 at the Freie Universität Berlin.

98 Müller-Kessler 2020b.

99 Binggeli 2019, 51–54.

100 Sin. syr. NF 11; see <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under ‘Syriac NF 11’ and ‘Codicology & Overtex’.

out above, the other folios with higher numbers contain a few parts of the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem in CPA, surviving here in a second independent version. In these folios, the lower script is rather faint, but the multispectral images bring out enough text to establish a full reading. Some sides cannot be read at present, as they are also stuck together. Only in the folios at the end can we make out that the text is written in two columns as expected (Fig. 16), and therefore the individual folios could be joined to their original set-up.<sup>101</sup>

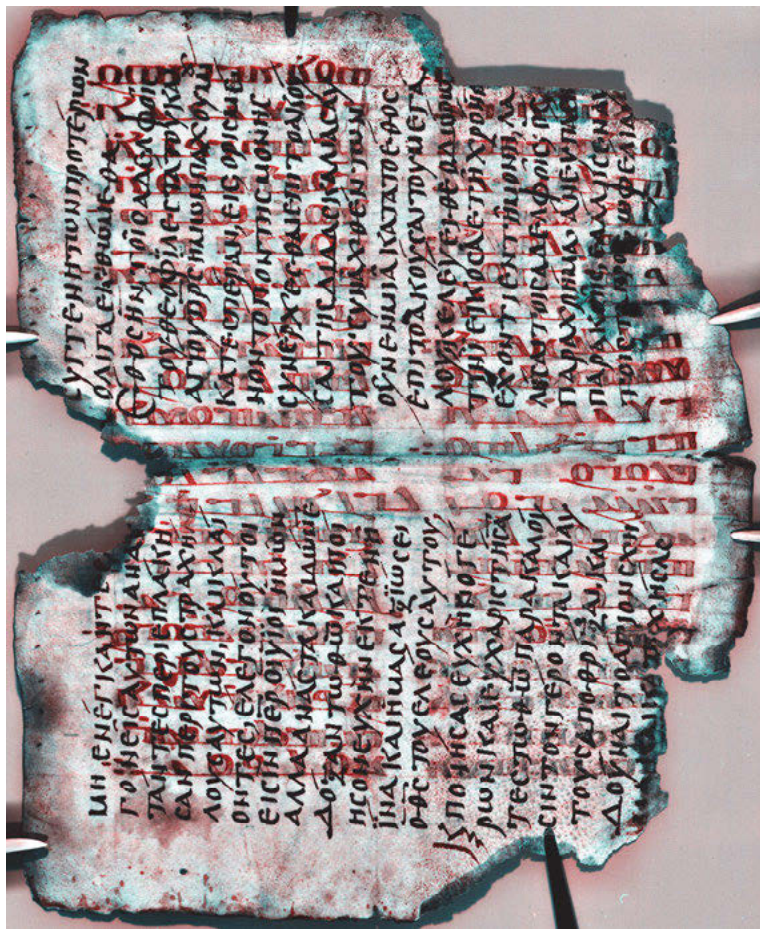
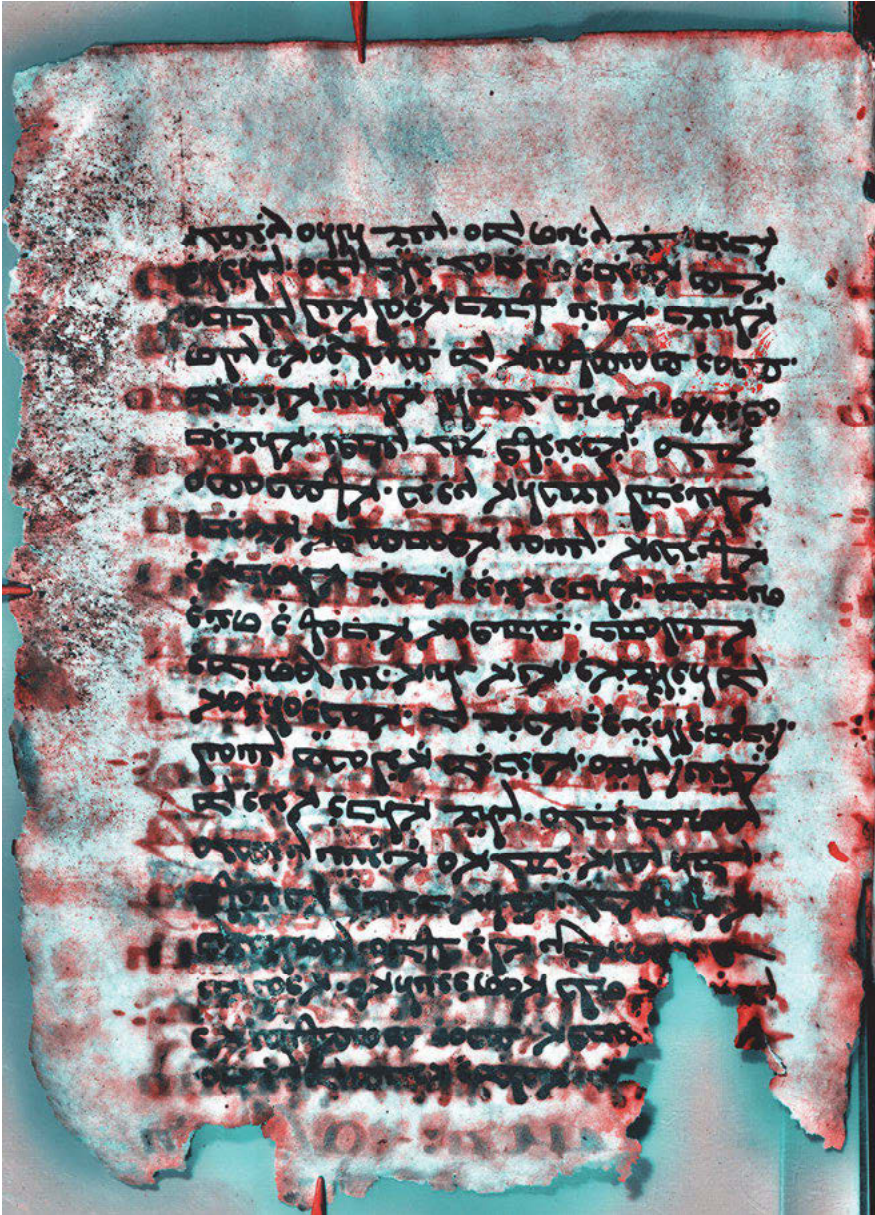


Fig. 14: Sin. gr. NF MG 14, fol. 17/20<sup>r</sup>: Proverbs 11:1b–8a; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

<sup>101</sup> Müller-Kessler 2021b, 358–366, 370.



Fig. 15: Sin. syr. NF 11, fol. 90<sup>v</sup>: Luke 14:1; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.



**Fig. 16:** Sin. syr. NF 11, fol. 109<sup>v</sup>: Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* X.16–17; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

Not always is the lower script so well preserved as in Sin. arab. NF 66, which arrived in December 2015 by memory stick and could be immediately read. This is true of the lower Greek text with an unknown mythological poem in hexameters, as well as the CPA folios with a fragmentarily remaining *martyrologion* as their content. Here, the CPA script underneath was not removed and comes up in clearly legible letters. The one matter of hindrance for establishing the unknown texts is that the ninth-century Arabic scribe decided to cut some folios apart; that is, what is left of the separated right- or left-hand column, which has been merged onto a complete folio (Fig. 17). Only a few letters remain of the incomplete column. As long as the content is known from other language sources, this is not of great disadvantage, except for missing text parts; however, on two folios (representing four original folios in CPA), a complete non-transmitted martyrdom surfaced. This is the *Martyrdom of Patriklos*, who was one of the eleven or twelve followers of Pamphilos of Caesarea (d. 309)<sup>102</sup> and has been only known by his name listed in Georgian as *Patrikila* among other saints buried in the church of St George at Lydda,<sup>103</sup> and in Arabic as *Batriqlāwus* under 3 November in the Melkite *synaxarium*.<sup>104</sup> Apart from this new and previously untransmitted martyrdom, the version of the *Martyrdom of Mamas of Caesarea in Cappadocia* (BHG 1017–1019; BHO 589)<sup>105</sup> is attested for the first time in CPA, as is the last part of a multiple *Martyrdom of Philemon, Arianos, and the Four Protectors* (BHG 1514; BHO 973).<sup>106</sup>

From the Old Collection in the Sinai library followed four folios (Sin. arab. 588, fols 33, 35, 45, 46) in 2016, which were already known to Lewis when she compiled her Syriac catalogue in 1894.<sup>107</sup> John Frederick Stenning published snippets of a few verses from 2 Kingdoms 2 and 3 Kingdoms 9 in 1896.<sup>108</sup> He was unable to glean more from the folios at that time at St Catherine's Monastery, as these pages have been quite a challenge to decipher. They are double palimpsests with an old *naskhī* Arabic script on top and a Syriac *estrangela* in between, and the CPA layer with 2–3 Kingdoms is the lowest script (Sin. arab. 588, fols 33, 35, 45, 46).<sup>109</sup> Here

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102 Müller-Kessler 2019a.

103 See Kekelidze 1918, 4, l. 34.

104 Sauget 1969, 316.

105 Müller-Kessler 2016.

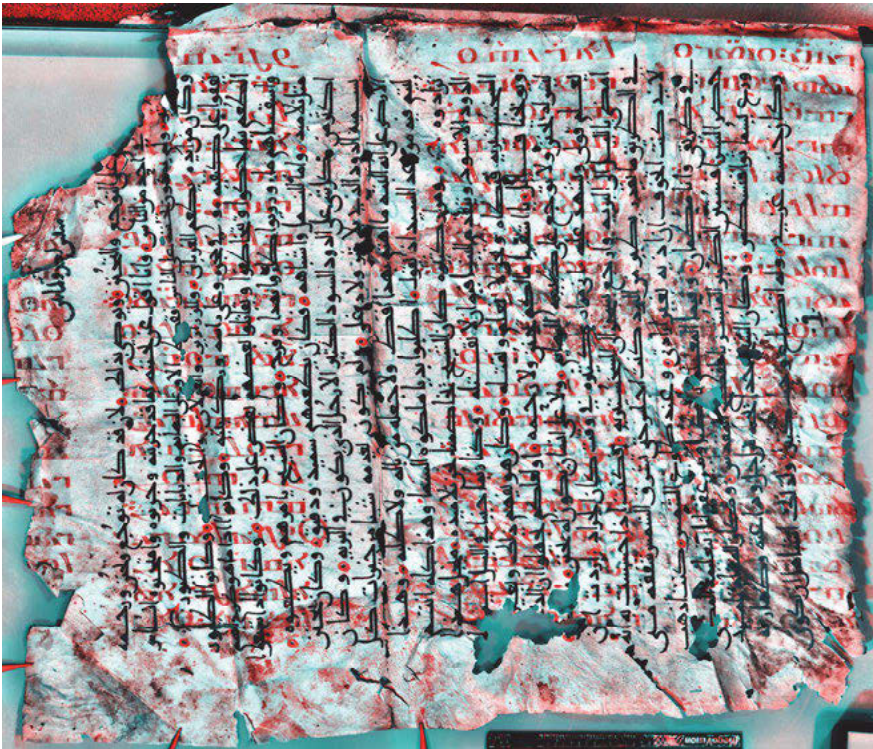
106 Müller-Kessler 2017.

107 Gibson 1894, 125.

108 Stenning *apud* Gwilliam, Burkitt and Stenning 1896, 29–36.

109 Attiya and Kessel in <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under 'Arabic 588'.

also the multispectral imaging shows its limits (Fig. 18), since only two recto sides can be fully read at present, and of the rest only the attribution of the biblical verses was somehow possible. The CPA script is in most parts so effaced that a complete reading seems impossible if no future technology emerges that can bring out even the faintest traces. Being a double palimpsest is a principle problem, as the middle script interferes with the lowest. Differentiating the characters is often difficult, since both come up in one colour in contrast to the top script, mostly in the original black ink.

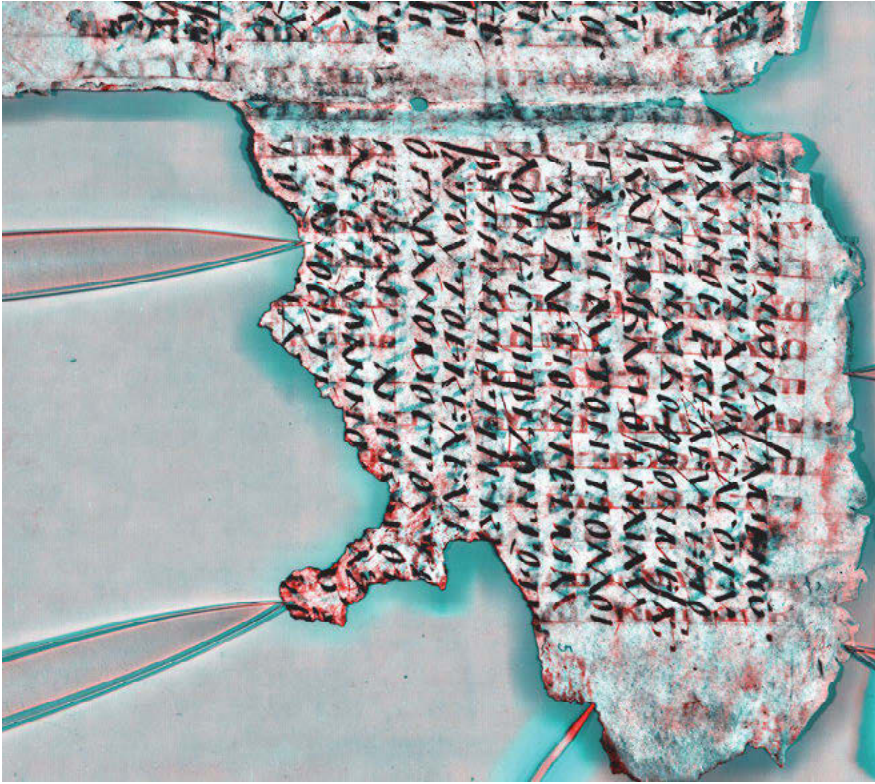


**Fig. 17:** Sin. arab. NF 66, fol. 1 (I)' + (II)'; *Martyrdom of Patriklos of Caesarea*; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.



Fig. 18: Sin. arab. 588, fol. 35v: 3 Kingdoms 2:35b–35g; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.





**Fig. 19:** Sin. gr. NF MG 32, fol. 5': Job 14:22; Isaiah 42:4; Psalm 74:1; Exodus 6:28–29a; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

When Sin. gr. NF MG 32 arrived in 2016, it turned out to be a palimpsest manuscript which was sort of legible with multispectral images, but some parts of the folios, being rather damaged, could be only joined from disjunctive pieces. The CPA fragments contain sections of biblical pericopes from the Old Jerusalem Lectionary, some of which had been hitherto unattested. The rubrics, however, which are more of interest for liturgy studies, are unfortunately gone. Only one rubric can still be seen, and from the others the red ink has vanished (Fig. 19), which is often the case for this kind of ink. It is a deficiency in such early lectionary palimpsests that the rubrics cannot be extracted. It is further deplorable as the CPA transmission can be considered the earliest secondary source after the missing

early Greek witnesses of the Old Jerusalem Lectionary. The folios are heavily damaged fragments, and only a part of them survived.<sup>110</sup>

### 3 Progress in technology and identifications in long-known palimpsest material

While modern technology might have brought a different approach, with the possibility to display and easily read simple manuscripts in electronic formats, it has not made much of difference for the reading of palimpsests. The latter still can only be read in a tedious and time-consuming fashion to prepare a text basis for a broader readership. Although the palimpsest reader has access to better devices, such as multispectral imaging, to help in the deciphering, it is still experience that matters when it comes to reading such overlaid texts, especially tightly overwritten lower scripts or double and triple palimpsests. The difficulty with multiple palimpsests is that in multispectral images the lower scripts are brought out in the same colour, making it a nightmare to distinguish the different characters, especially when the undertext is very faint and overwritten in inconvenient places.

#### 3.1 Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery

The year 2021 marked forty years since James Hamilton Charlesworth edited a booklet with photo samples of seven manuscripts from the New Finds, made in the St George Tower at St Catherine's Monastery in 1975. These images, which he had come by in an anonymous fashion, resulted in the announcement of some interesting texts.<sup>111</sup> For one double folio from Sin. gr. NF M 167 (without shelf number in the publication), however, Charlesworth failed to attribute the lower script and content, probably due to a lack of knowledge of the script in question. In a number of publications, he declared it as Syriac written in one column.<sup>112</sup> It was clear to specialists, however, that what one had here was a CPA uncial. The photo is a poor black-and-white print (Fig. 20), and its contents defied any kind of

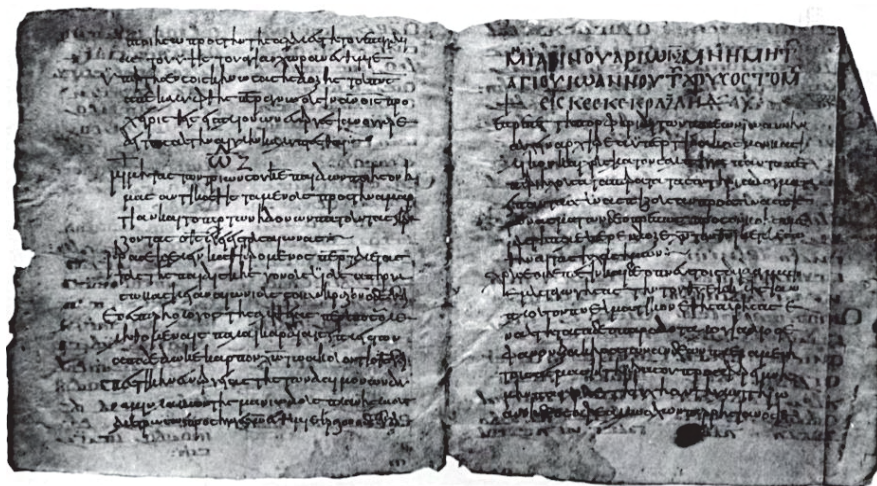
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<sup>110</sup> Müller-Kessler 2023c.

<sup>111</sup> Charlesworth 1981, XIV, n. 2: 'For the present, our benefactor must remain anonymous for political reasons'.

<sup>112</sup> Charlesworth 1980, 32–33; Charlesworth 1981, 29.

identification.<sup>113</sup> Another reading trial in 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and at more leisure with an electronic version of Charlesworth's article, the undertext seemed to be a bit more legible; it turned out to be a biblical text from Numbers (4:15b–5:6a).



**Fig. 20:** Sin. gr. NF M 167, unnumbered fols: Leviticus 26:26b–35; Numbers 4:23b–5:6a; Charlesworth 1981, XIV.

On this basis, I was able to decipher the correct number of Gershon's sons, and only this number agrees with the Septuagint and Masoretic transmission, whereas the rest heavily deviates from any Bible transmissions. Since it is a double folio, the other part should have contained Numbers too, but there were verses of Leviticus 26, again deviating from any *textus receptus*. Although 90% could be extracted from this faint photo, one needed better images. I sent a request to Father Justin, the librarian of St Catherine's, by email, asking if he would be able to provide me with simple digital photos. This query was answered immediately with a set of digital photos including all other CPA fragments of this manuscript,<sup>114</sup> including

<sup>113</sup> Charlesworth 1981, 29, pl. VII.

<sup>114</sup> I owe my sincere thanks to Father Justin, who promptly produced the digital photos for me, which enabled the publication of such exceptional Bible witnesses at a satisfactory level.

some non-palimpsest ones,<sup>115</sup> and a nearly full reading was possible, except for two verbs in Leviticus 26:29–30 (Fig. 21).<sup>116</sup> The script was not erased on all folios, which makes it a perfect sample for palaeographic studies, even in the case of the palimpsest folios.<sup>117</sup>

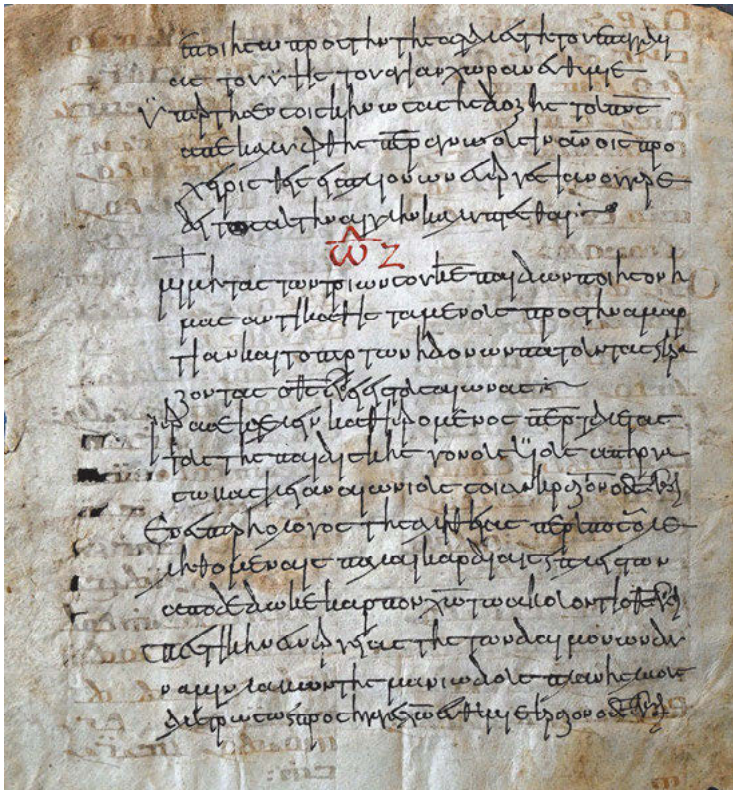


Fig. 21: Sin. gr. NF M 167, unnumbered fol.: Leviticus 26:26b–35; © St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

<sup>115</sup> The nearly complete folios, some of which are non-palimpsests, contain the Gospel passages of Luke 5:27–39, 7:25–37, 8:13b–24b, 8:37–9:4 and John 10:10–23, 11:11–27, and are not new to the CPA transmission, since they also can be found in eleventh-century Lectionaries A, B, C; see Lewis and Gibson 1899. It is a typical CPA Bible manuscript for the Gospels with a gap and header between the sections.

<sup>116</sup> Müller-Kessler 2021a, 366. Another matter are the Leviticus verses 7:15b–8:9a and 8:9b–20a, which have been a challenge to attribute to and are newly attested verses.

<sup>117</sup> The manuscript has not been foliated yet, but this will be done in the near future for the next session of multispectral imaging to be put online.

Sebastian Brock had been given the fragments with Syriac and CPA from the New Finds for a first catalogue description. Among them were a few deteriorated fragments under the class mark Sin. CPA NF frg. 12, with the rest of a psalter in CPA as *scriptio superior*.<sup>118</sup> The *scriptio inferior* as it appeared in the catalogue photos was too faint to make any sensible reading of. Later, however, Brock also received this collection during the Sinai Palimpsests Project and could assign the undertexts to a psalter as well.<sup>119</sup> Being not the best preserved palimpsest fragments – with heavily erased underwriting, mostly frayed on some sides as well as on edges, and only half preserved – these fragments turned out to be tricky to read. Brock sent his primary readings to me for rechecking, and I managed to get a bit ahead. Puzzling for me were a number of text passages between the Psalms, which I could not fully read in the beginning. Nevertheless, Brock was able to realise, with the scanty and incomplete readings I was able to offer, that these were the Eusebian *hypotheseis* as found in a few Greek sources.<sup>120</sup> My first readings were not satisfying for me, and I had another go at the multispectral images on the website a year later. Finally, I was able to establish the full readings of the *hypotheseis*, also termed *periochae*, for Psalms 21–23 and 121–123;<sup>121</sup> they agree with the Greek transmissions.<sup>122</sup>

### 3.2 Syriac palimpsests in the British Library

On account of my identifications and new readings of the CPA palimpsest folios with the *Dormition of Mary* from the Cairo Genizah in the Taylor-Schechter Collection (T-S 16.327; T-S 16.351; T-S AS 78.401; T-S NS 258.140), St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (Sin. georg. NF 19, fols 4–5, 8–9), and CCR4 (still Westminster College, Cambridge at that time), I decided to check and compare the Syriac witnesses in the British Library (hereafter: BL). Of one class mark (BL, Add MS 17135, fol. 9<sup>v</sup>), Stephen Shoemaker had recently published one left column,<sup>123</sup> but the rest was said to contain this apocryphal text as well. I recognised at once that there were two different Syriac manuscripts underneath a late-eleventh-century Syriac script. There was only one drawback for reading the

<sup>118</sup> Brock 1995, 87–88 with figs 418–434.

<sup>119</sup> <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse/>>, under 'CPA NF frg. 12'.

<sup>120</sup> Bandt 2019, 124–127.

<sup>121</sup> Brock with an Appendix by Müller-Kessler forthcoming.

<sup>122</sup> Bandt 2019, 136–139.

<sup>123</sup> Shoemaker 2011, 267.

complete folios of Add MS 17135, fols 6–11 (Fig. 22)<sup>124</sup> and the fragmentarily published Add MS 14665, fols 21–24<sup>125</sup> – namely, that the British Library could not offer me any ultraviolet reading lamp (either missing, broken, etc.), and even the batteries in the torch were not working. On my next research visits, I brought my own lamp, which was of the same making as in any other library such as the University Library of Cambridge or the Bodleian Library in Oxford. It was, however, absolutely forbidden to use this lamp, and I was also denied a dark room. The Rare Reading Room allowed me to use the lamp only if I would not constantly light up the manuscript with it. In the end, I bought another private torch with ultraviolet light, which I was entitled to use in both reading rooms. Although the light conditions in the Rare Reading Room in the corner of ‘Special Material’ were better (i.e. darker) in the beginning, suddenly this part of the room was lit as in the Oriental and Asiatic Reading Room due to the complaints of other readers. Despite all these obstacles in the end I was able to prepare primary editions of the *Obsequies of the Lady Mary* (BHO 643) from these two early and unique textual transmissions in Syriac (Add MS 17135, fols 9, 6 [top], 7 [bottom])<sup>126</sup> and the fragmentarily published Add MS 14665, fols 21–24, which both have no surviving Greek *Vorlage*,<sup>127</sup> and could offer at least a codicological description of probably one of the earliest witnesses of a text by Jacob of Serugh, his *Homily on the Presentation at the Temple*, in the other four folios BL, Add MS 17135, fols 6 (bottom), 7 (top), 10–11 (Fig. 23).<sup>128</sup> With the help of multi-spectral imaging, more might have been possible to achieve, but one must bear in mind that no granting body would finance travel of the Lazarus Project group from the Rochester Institute of Technology, New York State, to shoot photographs of only ten palimpsest folios in London. However, the Association pour l’Étude de la Littérature Apocryphe Chrétienne (AELAC) in Lausanne does have a project planned to procure such multispectral images from the British Library for the edition of the *Dormition of Mary* (BHO 643) from various language sources, which will probably improve the reading through this technological method.<sup>129</sup>

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124 Müller-Kessler 2020a.

125 Müller-Kessler 2022c.

126 Müller-Kessler 2020a.

127 Müller-Kessler 2020a and 2022c.

128 Müller-Kessler 2020c.

129 The project of an edition in a Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum volume for all witnesses of the *Dormition of Mary* was discussed and planned in a meeting between Sergey Kim, Jean-Daniel Kaestli, and myself in Lausanne in November 2023.



Fig. 22: BL, Add MS 17135, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>: *Obsequies* §§ 98–99a; © Christa Müller-Kessler.

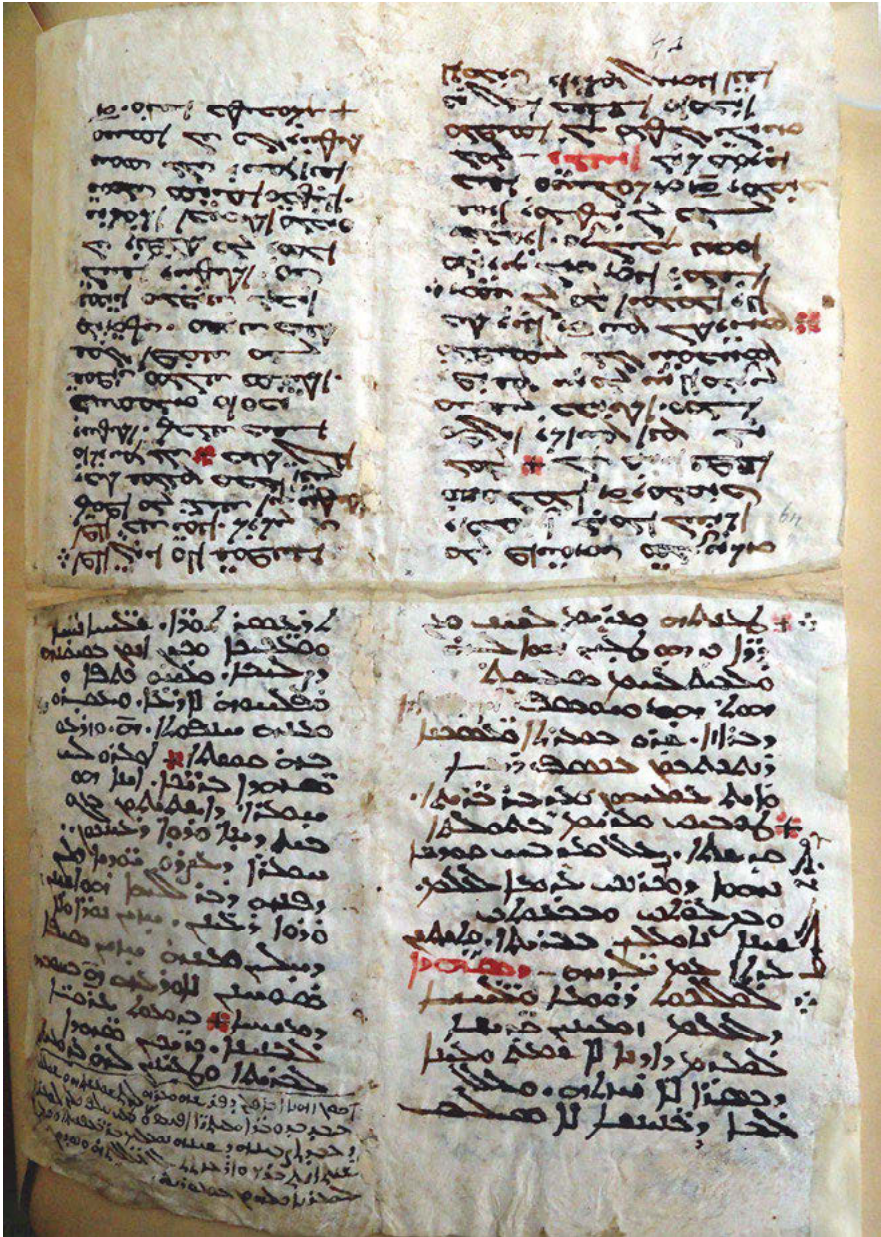


Fig. 23: BL, Add MS 17135, fol. 11v: Jacob of Serugh, *Homily of the Presentation at the Temple*; © Christa Müller-Kessler.



### 3.3 Various CPA palimpsest fragments under the handwriting of Ioane Zosime

In 2022, I was supposed to hand in a contribution on CPA texts found in four or more manuscripts reused under Georgian texts by Ioane Zosime for the journal *Digital Kartvelology*. Most of the texts had already been assigned to their rightful content, but again single fragments were left over, which still needed identification. The fragments in question came from Princeton, Garrett MS. 24 and others from the New Finds at St Catherine's Monastery. Time was running short in February, since – due to a misunderstanding about the deadline – I had only one month to put together the article. Again, the problem was that the fragments from the Princeton University Library, except for one, existed only in xerocopies of black-and-white photo prints, which were hardly legible, and Princeton's plan to prepare multispectral images and put them online for an interested readership was only to happen in June.<sup>130</sup> So, I was stuck with these hardly legible fragments in poor photographs. Trying to extract some sensible passages, and noticing that in Princeton, Garrett MS. 24, fol. 99 (Fig. 24), the same scribal hand could be made out as in Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 61, provided a start for a possible identification.<sup>131</sup> The successful attribution on the basis of my scanty readings was achieved by Estella Kessler.<sup>132</sup> She was able to trace the vital passages of the *Sermo de poenitentia* by John Chrysostom (CPG 4631) through the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*,<sup>133</sup> which helped considerably in understanding the lower text. Finally, the Garrett palimpsest fragments went online in June 2022 and it was possible to fill remaining reading gaps for publication, except for the two fols 88/89, which remained unidentified. On 15 August (Assumption Day), when the new electronic journal *Digital Kartvelology* was published, Sebastian Brock identified my readings of Princeton, Garrett MS. 24, fols 88/89 with Ephrem, *In adventum Domini* (CPG 4012). The fragments directly precede SUB, Syr. 23, fols 2<sup>r</sup>/3<sup>v</sup> (Figs 8a–b).<sup>134</sup> The identification of all the Georgian palimpsest fragments which have CPA underneath is not

<sup>130</sup> A number of colleagues were informed about this link by William Noel, Associate University Librarian for Special Collections; see <<https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/99108928073506421>>.

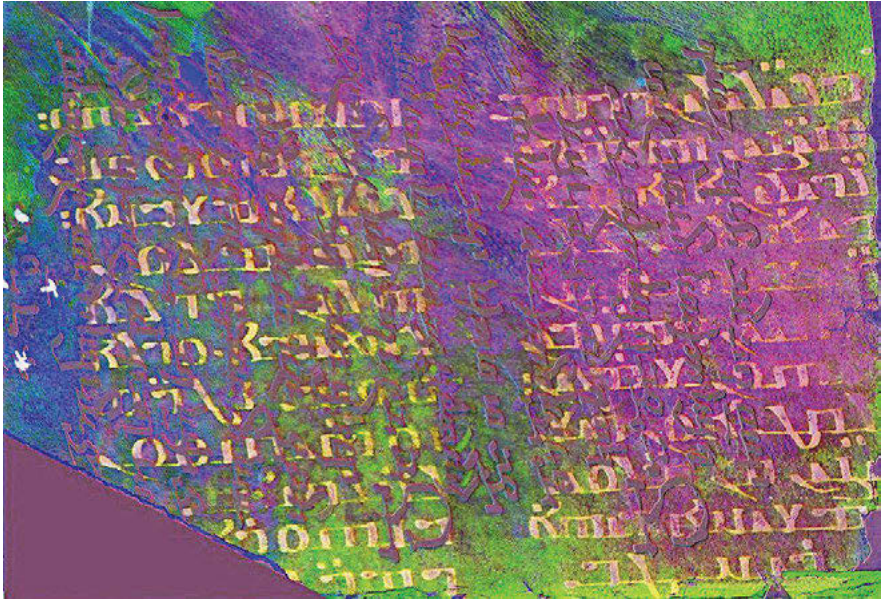
<sup>131</sup> At <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>> under 'Georgian NF 19', fol. 62 is found a text which is a non-palimpsest. It was not identified by me as in 2013 I had never received any photo of this folio with the lot of CPA folios under Sin. georg. NF 19. The text on this damaged and only partially preserved fragment precedes, from the content point of view, Sin. georg. NF 19, fol. 61. Now only the former lower half of Princeton, Garrett MS. 24, fol. 99 is still missing.

<sup>132</sup> At that time, Kessler was still at Brasenose College, now New College, Oxford.

<sup>133</sup> <<https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/>>.

<sup>134</sup> Sebastian P. Brock, email, 15 August 2022.

possible, except for some perfectly legible homilies (CSR<sup>j</sup>, CSR<sup>k</sup>).<sup>135</sup> They were presumably removed from St Catherine's Monastery by Friedrich Grote in 1892, later went through shadowy routes into the private possession of Consul Adam in Göttingen,<sup>136</sup> and, via the antiquarian book dealer Karl W. Hiersemann, into the collections of Robert Garrett<sup>137</sup> and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vat.sir. 623; 627; 628).



**Fig. 24:** Princeton, Garrett MS. 24, fol. 99r: John Chrysostom, *De poenitentia*; © Princeton University Library, Princeton.

Another double folio (Sin. georg. NF 55, fols 19 + 20) took several attempts for a first identification.<sup>138</sup> Jost Gippert asked me a few times if I could manage any kind of attribution of the two lower CPA scripts in this unique palimpsest to be inte-

<sup>135</sup> Müller-Kessler 2014, 288–296.

<sup>136</sup> Albrecht 2013, 273. See Emilio Bonfiglio's contribution to the present volume for a similar case.

<sup>137</sup> Skemer 1996.

<sup>138</sup> Alain Desreumaux in <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under 'Georgian NF 55', 'Under-texts', and 'Gospel of Mark. New Testament'. This identification cannot be verified. It also should be pointed out that this bifolio is a double palimpsest with two CPA texts above each other, where the lowest layer and older CPA type is difficult to make out. For the first publication concerning the double folio, see Gippert et al. 2008–2010, vol. 1, I-29 where the undertext was assumed to be Syriac.

grated in a revised publication of the Caucasian Albanian palimpsests. The difficulty has been, despite having multispectral images at hand, that only on two sides of each folio are single words of the lowest CPA script sort of legible. The individual letters do not show clear contours. The middle CPA script shows a different scribal hand and mingles with the lower one, especially in fol. 19<sup>r</sup>. It so happened that I had just transliterated one folio in another manuscript from the New Finds, Sin. syr. NF 56, fol. 82<sup>v</sup>/77<sup>r</sup>, which contains Matthew 13:49b–55a.<sup>139</sup> Although Sin. georg. NF 55, fol. 20<sup>v</sup> deviates slightly in text from Sin. syr. NF 56, fol. 82<sup>v</sup>/77<sup>r</sup>, it provided the entry into a first reading and assigning of the double folio to a similar layer of a quire with probably nearly identical Matthew verses (13:49?–55a), which turned out to be in fol. 20<sup>v</sup> from hitherto unattested verses (13:54b–55a), also in CPA.<sup>140</sup>

### 3.4 Taylor-Schechter Collection and Lewis-Gibson Glass Collection

In 2023, forty years after I started my work on the CPA text corpus and during the preparation of a manuscript catalogue of all the CPA palimpsests known from the Cairo Genizah in a number of collections, I decided to attempt another reading of the unidentified palimpsests in the Cambridge University Library. I had obtained black-and-white prints of all the fragments between 1991 and 1994, but the script on some fragments has been so very poorly preserved that reading or identification at home was impossible, just as it was years ago in the library itself. In February 2023, the head of the Genizah Unit, Ben Outhwaite, gave permission for the fragments sewn into glass (actually perspex) to be taken to the dark room, where I could use the two ultraviolet lamps provided. This was very helpful for all the Taylor-Schechter fragments, but not for the two folios which belong to the former Lewis and Gibson collection (L-G Glass 1a, 1b), which meanwhile were bought in a joint acquisition by the Cambridge University Library and Bodleian Library at Oxford from Westminster College, Cambridge. The glass material (perspex) under which these are mounted clearly must be a different kind, since this material reflects, and reading the lower text was impossible with this kind of method in the dark room. On the third day, I could not access the Manuscript Room, as an over-

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<sup>139</sup> Identified by Alain Desreumaux in <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>, under ‘Syriac NF 56’ and ‘Undertexts’.

<sup>140</sup> According to the quire with fols 82/77 and 83/76 (Matthew 13:42b–55a, 15:27b–39), as displayed by Desreumaux 2023, 136.

head lamp had fused and burnt out. The room was understandably closed for replacement of all lamps, as it would have been a hazard for the materials stored there. Due to the repeated experience of libraries not having ultraviolet lamps at all or only missing or broken ones (as in all reading rooms of the British Library in the last years), I keep with me my own lamp or other lighting device, such as a torch with ultraviolet light. To my utter surprise, the reading of the lower script under these two folios (L-G Glass 1a, 1b) with this torch under full overhead artificial neon light in the Rare Reading Room was suddenly possible.<sup>141</sup> It happens to be the rather rare text of the *Sermo de poenitentia* by Ioannes Ieiunator (Ἰωάννης ὁ νηστευτής; CPG 7555) in its earliest transmission (Fig. 6), of which I owe the identification to Estella Kessler, who managed to attribute the Greek version through the help of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.<sup>142</sup> All in all, five palimpsest fragments out of eight were possible to attribute despite the appalling state of their preservation.<sup>143</sup> One is from the Book of Joshua (T-S 12.758);<sup>144</sup> a double folio of 3 Kingdoms 11:5–14; 31–36 (T-S 16.328), partially as a non-palimpsest but with a very faint script (Fig. 5); one belongs to the Wisdom of Solomon 13:1–11 (T-S 12.209),<sup>145</sup> as a part of the same manuscript as Bodl., Syr. d. 32; and the last probably comes from pseudo-Caesarius (T-S 12.759; Fig. 4). All are hidden under Palestinian Hebrew types of script. As I write this article, three of the fragments with Wisdom of Solomon, 3 Kingdoms, and pseudo-Caesarius (CPG 7482?) are to be photographed with the multispectral-imaging method by Ivan Shevchuk and Kyle Ann Huskin from the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at Hamburg University, which will hopefully make a better or full reading for their coming publications feasible. Remaining are two half-complete folios, and the rest are only surviving edges of folios with a few letters on them, not enough to be able to join or read them.<sup>146</sup>

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141 Although Lewis applied a reagent (hydro-sulphuret of ammonia) on the two fragments and some others in the Taylor-Schechter Collection, the lower script was not affected, and it is still legible; see Lewis and Gibson 1900, IX.

142 Müller-Kessler and Kessler forthcoming.

143 Müller-Kessler 2023b.

144 Cambridge, University Library, T-S 12.758 with Joshua underneath is one of the best examples for a Palestinian Hebrew script nearly covering the CPA one below; see Müller-Kessler 2023a.

145 Two articles on these topics are in preparation.

146 Müller-Kessler 2023b, 117.

## Conclusion

All in all, it will have become clear that reading and dealing with palimpsest manuscripts, as well as their remaining fragments, is not as easily done as one would expect, even in our modern times and with advanced technology. Despite the introduction of multispectral imaging, many institutions do not yet have the equipment to produce such photographs. It also would have been quite an endeavour and too expensive to fly in specialists for, for example, one to ten folios when I was dealing with the palimpsest fragments of the *Dormition of Mary* (BHO 643; Fig. 22) and the earliest palimpsest fragments of Jacob of Serugh's homily on the *Presentation at the Temple* (Fig. 23) between 2018 and 2022, both stored in the British Library.<sup>147</sup> In the end, one is stuck with the old reading methods, which, nevertheless, produced in the early stages of palimpsest research excellent results when, for example, Lewis and Gibson were working with Francis C. Burkitt, Robert L. Bensly, and John Rendel Harris on the Old Syriac Gospel text in St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai during the first months of 1892,<sup>148</sup> or when Johan Ludvig Heiberg was working on the Archimedes Codex in Istanbul in 1906,<sup>149</sup> or when scholars were working from their photographs back home. It cannot be denied that with the new technology a fuller reading is often possible, undertaken in a leisurely fashion at one's own desk, but the achievements of preceding scholars should not be underestimated or sneered at. The question is if it is vital to have elaborate commentaries on a missing diacritical sign, as in Greek recently,<sup>150</sup> or on *seyames* (double plural dots) in Syriac when the basic texts have already been more or less established with perhaps a few errors in some readings.<sup>151</sup> Young scholars who do not know such historical working methods should show more respect for the work done under less favourable conditions, which can be still found and experienced nowadays even in renowned libraries.

## Acknowledgements

For the permission to reproduce images, I must thank the following institutions: Cambridge University Library; St Catherine's Monastery; Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana; and Princeton University Library.

<sup>147</sup> Müller-Kessler 2020a; 2020c and 2022c.

<sup>148</sup> Gibson 1893; Lewis 1910.

<sup>149</sup> Netz et al. 2011.

<sup>150</sup> Malik 2022, 741–746, and Malik 2023, 22–23 overrates such deficiencies, which do not change anything on the text readings, as rightly pointed out by Parker 2008, 96–97.

<sup>151</sup> Such tiny diacritical signs are often covered by the upper layer.

## Abbreviations

*BHG* = François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3rd edn (Subsidia Hagiographica, 8a), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1957; *Novum Auctarium* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 65), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1984.

*BHO* = Paul Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 10), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1910.

*CPG* = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vols 1–5 (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987; Jacques Noret, *CPG III*, 2nd edn, Turnhout: Brepols, 2003; Maurits Geerard and Jacques Noret, *Supplementum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1998; <<https://clavis.brepols.net/ciacla/Default.aspx>> (accessed on 13 February 2024).

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Grigory Kessel

# Beyond the Invisible: Some Aspects of Syriac Palimpsests

**Abstract:** The study examines Syriac palimpsests and provides observations into the practice of manuscript palimpsestation and reuse in the Syriac Christian milieu during the Middle Ages. Predominantly attested for the period between the ninth and eleventh centuries, the recycling of Syriac parchment codices was primarily confined to various traditions of Syriac Christianity. The study, undertaken on the basis of a list of palimpsests with identified undertexts, takes a close look at various characteristics of reused codices and those produced from them. Alongside such aspects as age and content, the study addresses the issue of reasons leading to reuse; proposes a typology of newly produced codices based on the number of manuscripts they were made of; and distinguishes two possible scenarios for the provenance of reused codices.

## 1 Introduction

It is no surprise that much remains unknown about Syriac palimpsests. We do not know where and when these ancient parchment codices were initially produced and then later dismantled, their texts washed away, and their parchment sheets prepared for reuse. Moreover, we are uncertain whether the dismantling and washing processes immediately preceded reuse or if they occurred at significantly different times and places. The precise methods used to remove the writing in the milieu of the Syriac Christians are also as yet uncertain.

We also do not yet understand how parchment folios from codices produced in the Syro-Mesopotamian region found their way into new books in Palestine or Egypt, sometimes in languages other than Syriac, such as Arabic, Georgian, and even Hebrew. There is no clear explanation as to why some newly produced manuscripts incorporate only one ancient Syriac codex while others comprise portions from around twenty independent codices.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A broad and multifaceted survey of palimpsests and various pending research questions can be found in Kohlbacher 2009. Rapp 2023 takes as its main focus palimpsests kept at St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai.

The initial step in addressing these and other related questions in the study of Syriac palimpsests is the gathering of evidence and analysis of the accumulated data, attempting to uncover patterns and differentiate between regularities and irregularities. Ideally, one should also consider neighbouring manuscript traditions that repurposed old codices for new productions, as a broader contextualisation that takes into account various social and economic factors may offer additional insights into the culture of palimpsests. However, even from the outset this is challenging because, to date, we lack a comprehensive list of all Syriac palimpsests, and for one simple reason: published catalogues, particularly those produced before the twentieth century, often neglect the presence of underwriting.

Therefore, to compile a comprehensive list of Syriac palimpsests (which can range from single folios to complete codices), one would need to re-examine firsthand a significant number of Syriac manuscripts. Fortunately, the majority of Syriac palimpsests we know about are preserved within codices originally or currently housed in two Egyptian monasteries: Dayr al-Suryān in the Nitrian Desert and St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. The most efficient approach, then, would be to begin with the current and former holdings of these two monasteries.

As far as the Syriac manuscripts from Dayr al-Suryān are concerned, the largest number of them are now kept at the British Library (hereafter: BL). After their acquisition in the nineteenth century (by the British Museum), the manuscripts were catalogued by William Wright, who magnificently describes not only the overwriting but also the undertexts.<sup>2</sup> However, Wright's work, remarkable as it is, requires fresh revision.<sup>3</sup> This is not only due to the expansion of our knowledge about Syriac literature but also because we now have at our disposal powerful technical means and methods that can greatly assist the research.

It would not be overstating the case to say that the Syriac palimpsests housed at St Catherine's Monastery – unlike those held at the BL – are essentially uncharted territory. At the time of writing, we possess only a rough estimate of their total number. While Sebastian Brock's catalogue of Syriac fragments meticulously records and often identifies the underwriting of palimpsests,<sup>4</sup> Agnes Smith Lewis's

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<sup>2</sup> Wright 1870–1872. All Syriac palimpsests can be conveniently found listed together in Brock 2020, 241–244.

<sup>3</sup> As an example, one can mention Wright's somewhat hesitant identification of the manuscript London, BL, Add MS 17137, fols 6–11 as containing the apocryphal *Book of Mary's Repose*. However, as has been recently demonstrated by Christa Müller-Kessler, only fols 6 (top half), 7 (bottom half), and 9 contain this work (see no. 64 in the Appendix to this article); fols 6 (bottom half), 7 (top half), 8, and 10–11 feature Jacob of Serugh's *Homily on the Presentation in the Temple*, which originate from an independent *codex antiquior* (no. 74) (Müller-Kessler 2020a and 2020b).

<sup>4</sup> Brock 1995a.

checklist completely neglects the presence of underwriting in many manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> The catalogue of Mother Philothea usually does indicate the presence of under-texts and provides identification for some of them but usually requires verification.<sup>6</sup> The situation has been partly remedied by the Sinai Palimpsests Project, which introduced a significant number of Syriac palimpsests that had previously been entirely unknown.<sup>7</sup>

The study of palimpsests from these two monasteries is significantly complicated by the dispersal of their manuscript holdings among multiple libraries and collections worldwide.<sup>8</sup> This challenge is particularly pronounced in the case of the St Catherine's collection (hereafter: Sin.), where the identification of scattered parts (*membra disiecta*) remains incomplete.<sup>9</sup>

In the realm of research of Syriac palimpsests, there exists, besides the studies of individual palimpsests,<sup>10</sup> only one synthetic survey to date, authored by Andrea Schmidt and published fifteen years ago.<sup>11</sup> This seminal study primarily focuses on the collection housed at the BL, with the author drawing heavily upon the information provided in Wright's catalogue. Despite these constraints, Schmidt's work yielded several intriguing observations, particularly concerning the interval between initial and subsequent productions, the genres of reused and newly produced codices, and other related issues.

The present study's objective is to analyse various aspects of the Syriac manuscripts that have been reused and overwritten, focusing primarily on those con-

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5 Lewis 1894 (important additions, also with regard to palimpsests, were provided by John Frederick Stenning in its Appendix II). During my visit to St Catherine's Monastery in 2014, I had the opportunity to go through all the Syriac manuscripts on parchment belonging to the so-called Old Collection with the aim of checking if there are palimpsests that have not been previously noticed. As a result, three palimpsests with *scriptio inferior* in Greek (Sin. syr. 3, syr. 50, syr. 64) and five with *scriptio inferior* in Syriac (Sin. syr. 17, syr. 35, syr. 38, syr. 41, syr. 49) were recognised for the first time. On this imperfection of the earlier catalogues of the Sinai collection of manuscripts, see also Rapp 2023, 41.

6 Philothée du Sinai 2008.

7 See the project website at <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/>> (accessed on 15 February 2024).

8 For a brief history of the Syriac manuscript collection at Dayr al-Suryān and its dispersal, see Brock and Van Rompay 2014, xiv–xv. The general history of the library of Dayr al-Suryān by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (1932, 439–458) urgently requires an update.

9 A major advance in reconstitution of Syriac parchment codices has been made by Paul Géhin (2017, with further additions in Géhin 2020). For a brief survey of the history of St Catherine's Monastery's library, see Géhin 1998.

10 Zautcke 2021 deals with the reuse of New Testament codices and in particular takes into account the evidence of the palimpsests kept at St Catherine's Monastery.

11 Schmidt 2009.

nected with Dayr al-Suryān and St Catherine's Monastery. Recognising the need for caution when relying on older catalogues (which can contain errors in determining the number of palimpsested folios, in describing their relationship to the newly produced codex, and even in identifying the language), this survey mainly centres on those palimpsests whose undertexts have been identified, in order to ensure accuracy and reliability in the analysis.<sup>12</sup>

Due to the current limitations of our knowledge of Syriac palimpsests, any survey necessarily remains preliminary in nature. Nevertheless, taking into account the results achieved in the study of palimpsests in other manuscript traditions, I hope this study provides insights that will contribute to the ongoing study of the palimpsestation and reuse of Syriac codices and of the culture of palimpsests in general.

A brief clarification regarding the terminology used throughout this study is necessary. The term 'palimpsest' here strictly refers to the older codex (or its part), that is, the codicological unit that has been reused and overwritten. Due to the inherent ambiguity of the term 'palimpsest' and its inadequacy for describing complex and composite palimpsest objects, the terms *codex antiquior* and *codex recentior* are employed. The former denotes the older codex (or its part) from which the parchment folios were drawn, while the latter refers to the newly produced codex. These terms can be applied to a manuscript only when the writing support of the *codex antiquior* was used (at least partially) during the production of the *codex recentior*. However, if the parchment folios from a *codex antiquior* were employed to repair an already existing manuscript, then the term *codex recentior* cannot be applied.

As we shall see, more complex scenarios are possible, including the reuse of folios from multiple *codices antiquiores* for one *codex recentior*, the reuse of folios from one *codex antiquior* for multiple *codices recentiores*, and also for repairs.

The underwriting, regardless of the number of *codices antiquiores* represented, is referred to as the *scriptio inferior*, while the overwriting is termed the *scriptio superior*. In the case of so-called double palimpsests, where a *codex antiquior* was overwritten twice (*bis rescriptus*), thus bearing three layers of writing, the lowest and chronologically primary layer is termed the *scriptio ima*, while the middle layer is termed the *scriptio media*.

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<sup>12</sup> See the table of palimpsests with identified *scriptio inferior* in the Appendix to this article. The table also features bibliographic references relating to the manuscripts discussed throughout the article.



## 2 *Codices antiquiores*: Age

All known Syriac codices that have been palimpsested<sup>13</sup> date back to the period between the fifth and tenth centuries. However, as only a few *codices antiquiores* from the tenth century are represented (e.g. no. 93),<sup>14</sup> it would be safe to narrow the production period to the fifth through ninth centuries. This time frame aligns with the period when parchment was the standard writing support for Syriac manuscripts; during the ninth century, we observe the beginning of a gradual transition to paper.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, it is instructive to have comparative figures for each century.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 1:** Number of (identified) Syriac *codices antiquiores* per century.

Century	Number of Syriac <i>codices antiquiores</i>	Century	Number of Syriac <i>codices antiquiores</i>
Fourth–fifth		1 Eighth	2
Fifth	5	Eighth–ninth	4
Fifth–sixth	8	Ninth	12
Sixth	43	Ninth–tenth	1 (?)
Sixth–seventh	13	Tenth	1
Seventh	7		
Seventh–eighth	3		

The largest proportion of *codices antiquiores* dates back to the sixth century, with only six (or slightly more) datable to the fifth century. The seventh century accounts for some seven to twenty. The number drops significantly for the eighth century, but rises again rather notably for the following century.

It is difficult to give an immediate explanation for such fluctuations. However, we may speculate that the high number of sixth-century manuscripts is pri-

<sup>13</sup> In this and subsequent sections of the study, the statistical computations rely on the data extracted from the list of palimpsests with identified *scriptio inferior* (as presented in the Appendix), thus offering only an approximate estimate of the extant evidence.

<sup>14</sup> Numbers refer to the entries in the table found in the Appendix.

<sup>15</sup> Borbone, Briquel Chatonnet and Balicka-Witakowska 2015, 252–253; Briquel Chatonnet 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Six *codices antiquiores* have not been assigned any date in the literature and therefore are not taken into consideration. The copy of Jacob of Edessa's *Grammar* (no. 104) that was erased (and, according to Wright, prepared for reuse) but never overwritten is noted with a question mark.

marily due to the overall vulnerability of older manuscripts to wear and tear. Additionally, this profusion of sixth-century manuscripts may indicate intense manuscript production during the period, resulting in an abundance of older codices during subsequent centuries.<sup>17</sup>

Only two Syriac *codices antiquiores* that have preserved their original colophons are known to date, one from the fifth and the other from the sixth century. The former is preserved within London, BL, Add MS 14512, the tenth-century Syriac Orthodox festal hymnary, which is presently defective, with many of its quires lost. Currently comprising 144 folios, it is palimpsest throughout. When Wright catalogued this manuscript, he discerned parts of three originally independent Syriac codices that were used by a tenth-century scribe. Wright dated all three *codices antiquiores* to the sixth to seventh centuries solely on palaeographic grounds.

Of the three *codices antiquiores*, one containing the Book of Isaiah (no. 20) captured the attention of Eugène Tisserant, a future cardinal of the Catholic Church and head of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. In 1910, Tisserant had the opportunity to study the palimpsest first-hand. Remarkably, he succeeded in deciphering much of the *scriptio inferior* during his examination and noticed the colophon. Although only partially legible, the colophon clearly indicates the year of the codex's completion: 771 of the Seleucid era, corresponding to 459/460 CE.

Only three folios have been preserved from the second dated Syriac palimpsest within the Codex Arabicus (Sin. arab. 514), an exceptional *codex recentior* pieced together from parts of nineteen *codices antiquiores*.<sup>18</sup> Among these is a three-folio fragment containing the final section of the Epistle to the Hebrews, followed by a colophon (no. 54). Though the text of the colophon is not entirely legible, enough remains to ascertain the year of the manuscript's production: 863 of the Seleucid era, corresponding to 551/552 CE.

### 3 *Codices antiquiores*: Genres of erased texts

A cursory examination of Syriac palimpsests with identified *scriptio inferior* leaves no doubt that manuscripts containing biblical content constitute the majority among all palimpsests. To be more precise, they comprise more than half the

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<sup>17</sup> Regular, non-palimpsest, sixth-century Syriac manuscripts have also been preserved in large numbers (see Brock 2012a, 43–44).

<sup>18</sup> For this manuscript, also see Sections 12 and 13.

palimpsests with identified *scriptio inferior* (59 out of 106). However, it is important to note that the genuine proportion is not as heavily skewed towards the Bible when compared to other genres. Our current picture is somewhat distorted due to the relative ease of identifying biblical texts.<sup>19</sup> Palimpsests containing patristic, theological, apocryphal, and monastic works, on the one hand, and liturgical texts, on the other, form two further significant groups of erased texts, comprising twenty-nine and twelve manuscripts respectively. Among the erased texts, those pertaining to scientific genres are the least represented. The disproportionately low representation of scientific works can be partially explained by the greater difficulty in identifying them. This challenge arises from the fact that palimpsests may be unique witnesses to the works in Syriac (such as no. 103) and even (in case of translations) to their Greek originals (as no. 102).

## 4 *Codices antiquiores*: Reasons for reuse

Several of the main reasons that scholars have recognised as possible conditions for codices' reuse also apply to Syriac palimpsests.<sup>20</sup>

First is the obsolescence of a work or a particular version thereof. As examples, one could mention the Old Syriac version of the Gospels (replaced by the Peshiṭta);<sup>21</sup> the Melkite Tropologia (replaced by respective liturgical books pertaining to the Byzantine rite);<sup>22</sup> the Four Gospel books (replaced by Gospel lectionaries

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<sup>19</sup> This consideration is missing in the studies of Andrea Schmidt (2009, 170–171) and Angela Zautcke (2021, 93–94, 98–99).

<sup>20</sup> Discussed, for instance, in Lowe 1964, 69–71; Crisci 2003; and Kohlbacher 2009, 270–274 and *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> The so-called Old Syriac version of the Four Gospels came into being some time around the third century and was replaced by the Peshiṭta version of the New Testament (which became the standard) around the turn of the fifth century. Among a few manuscript witnesses attesting to the Old Syriac version that have survived only one is non-palimpsest (for a comprehensive survey, see Haelewyck 2019). Zautcke attempts to downplay this factor in the reuse of the manuscript copies containing the Old Syriac Gospels (Zautcke 2021, 99–100).

<sup>22</sup> Tropologion is the oldest liturgical hymnal, comprising the hymns for the weekly, annual, and fixed cycles that later on became distributed (including a thorough revision of the content) between dedicated liturgical books, such as the Oktoechos, the Triodion, and the Menaion. The liturgical tradition of the Middle Eastern Christians pertaining to the Chalcedonian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch was largely influenced by the liturgical rite of Jerusalem until the Byzantine reconquest of north-west Syria (969–1084) that brought about a systematic introduction of contemporary Constantinopolitan liturgical usage (for a broader context of liturgical Byzantinisation, see Galadza 2018).

that were more convenient to use within a liturgical setting);<sup>23</sup> and the apocryphal *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (CANT 57), *Infancy Gospel of James* (CANT 50), and *Dormition of the Virgin Mary* (CANT 123–124) (all largely replaced by more developed recensions).<sup>24</sup> Additionally, changes in theological preferences rendered many works of early Syriac literature obsolete. For instance, the writings of Ephrem of Nisibis (nos 70–73), regarded today as one of the most prominent authors of Syriac Christianity, were generally not copied during the Middle Ages; instead of reading his authentic works, monks preferred a large group of non-authentic writings of deeply penitential character that were nonetheless attributed to Ephrem in the manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> Another category of obsolete texts comprises scientific literature, including two medical works (nos 101, 102) and one herbal (no. 103).<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, codices impaired by damage or mutilation, often lacking opening or concluding quires, were prime candidates for reuse. Some of the studied Syriac palimpsests clearly display their deficient condition. For example, one can mention such notable *codices antiquiores* as the Old Syriac Gospels in the Codex Sinaiticus Syrus (Sin. syr. 30) and the Syriac Galen Palimpsest.<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, considering the vast number of recycled biblical manuscripts, we cannot disregard the possibility of duplication or even overabundance. In other words, during times when parchment was in high demand or animal stocks were scarce or too expensive, or both, a recourse to biblical manuscripts, especially when multiple copies were available, seems to have been a self-evident solution.

Another factor that could have played a role is of palaeographic nature. During the ninth century, we can observe the beginning of a general shift to a more cursive form of handwriting and the gradual formation of the so-called Serṭo script.<sup>28</sup> It remains unexplored what impact this change in handwriting had on the circulation of older manuscripts copied in regular Estrangela.<sup>29</sup> However, it seems rather symptomatic that this development took place within the Syrian Orthodox milieu, from

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23 Liturgical lectionaries, containing the biblical readings selected and arranged according to the liturgical calendar, appear in the Syriac Christian milieu towards the ninth century (see Brock 2006, 270–272).

24 A survey of this group of apocryphal writings in Syriac can be found in Desreumaux 2005.

25 On this development in the reception of Ephrem, see Kessel 2023c.

26 For reasons leading to the virtual disappearance of scientific manuscripts, see Brock 2004a, 10.

27 See also Section 11 for more details. Defective condition and specifically the loss of quires was determined during the study of several other palimpsests: London, BL, Add MS 17191 (Baars 1970, 528); Add MS 14507 (Dirksen 1963, 349); Add MS 14512 (Tisserant 1911, 86).

28 First noticed in relation to palimpsests in Brock 2015, 161.

29 A comparative presentation of different types of Syriac handwriting can be found at <<https://hmmschool.org/syriac/>> (accessed on 15 February 2024).

which we have the largest number of *codices recentiores*. In contrast, the use of Estrangela (albeit with some minor development) continued in the East Syriac tradition, where the reuse of older codices, while not absent, was certainly less active.

The real-life situation could have naturally involved a combination of several factors. For instance, among the multiple available biblical codices, the ones chosen for palimpsesting were not in use either because of the outdated version of the text that they contained, because they lacked liturgical rubrics, or because they were defective.

Notably, many of the factors leading to the change in perception of a codex and its usefulness took place in the Syriac Christian milieu during the ninth century. These factors include the appearance of lectionaries, the gradual substitution of the earlier Jerusalem rite with the rite of the Great Church, the decline in the use of Syriac as the language of the sciences, and the formation of the cursive form of writing. This should explain why the ninth to tenth centuries saw the most active reuse of older Syriac codices.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, it is worth emphasising that, regardless of genre or precise identification of a text, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that any of the known Syriac palimpsests were erased due to their content being deemed non-compliant with the current dogmatic or theological position of the Church – in other words, as heretical. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Generally speaking, the vast majority of all palimpsests contain texts without any hint of non-canonicity or non-orthodoxy, such as the Bible, liturgical texts, and the writings of the Church Fathers.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to highlight that the reasons outlined above depict what could be termed an ‘in-house’ scenario of reuse, that is, when a *codex recentior* was produced in the same location that held a *codex antiquior* destined for reuse.<sup>32</sup> However, we should also distinguish another scenario, in which dismantling and eventual reuse took place in different locations. As illustrative examples, one could mention the Book of Sirach being reused for a copy of the Midrash on Proverbs in Hebrew in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries (no. 19) and the Book of Ezekiel reused in the eleventh century for a Jewish liturgical Piyyut for the Sabbath (no. 28), also in Hebrew. The folios taken from these *codices antiquiores* must have been transported from a distance before they reached the Jewish scribes. Such

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<sup>30</sup> Reuse of Syriac manuscripts was noted as a salient feature of ninth-century Syriac manuscript production in Brock 2015, 161–162. See also Section 8 below.

<sup>31</sup> It is, however, this very idea that ‘heretical’ texts were erased that animated the beginnings of the interest in Syriac palimpsests. One might think, for example, of Rendel Harris’s quest for Tatian’s *Diatessaron* at the turn of the twentieth century (Falcetta 2018, 332–336 and *passim*).

<sup>32</sup> See also Section 13.

provision of writing material inevitably involves trade.<sup>33</sup> Understanding the factors that led an ancient codex into the parchment market and subsequently to a non-Christian scribe warrants special attention.

## 5 *Codices antiquiores*: Never overwritten folios

Occasionally, one may encounter the effaced folios within the *codices recentiores* that lack a *scriptio superior*. This happens, for example, when the scribe completed copying the text and opted to leave the remaining folio(s) empty. However, there is also another, somewhat distinct, situation in which folios from a *codex antiquior* remain devoid of a *scriptio superior*. In this case, we encounter folios where the text has been effaced, yet they were never used in the production of a new codex. It is easy to imagine how during the production of a *codex recentior* some folios could remain unused. Alternatively, if the parchment folios reached the scribe through the parchment market along with many others, it simply may not have been their turn to be overwritten. Most probably there were a multitude of such leftovers in the monasteries, but only a few have survived to the present day.

For instance, three folios from a ninth-to-tenth-century codex containing an otherwise unattested *Grammar* by Jacob of Edessa (d. 708 CE) were transferred from Dayr al-Suryān to the British Museum (no. 104). According to Wright, the text on these folios was washed away for reuse.<sup>34</sup> Given that no folio from the same codex has been found, it appears probable that only this manuscript fragment reached the monastery of Dayr al-Suryān, where it remained unused.

A slightly different situation is presented by a sixth-century copy of Ephrem of Nisibis's *Prose Refutations* (no. 70). As will be shown in Section 8, this codex was reused in 823 CE in Egypt. The newly produced manuscript, London, BL, Add MS 14623, is palimpsest throughout. However, it seems the scribe did not require as much parchment as the *codex antiquior* provided and left two quires unused (today, London, BL, Add MS 14574, fols 1–19). Interestingly, in this instance, the text of the two quires was not effaced, suggesting that the scribe prepared the folios as needed, probably completing the task personally.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> It has been suggested that the manuscript of Christian content reached the Hebrew scribes via trade (Sokoloff and Yahalom 1978, 111; Vollandt 2023, 242).

<sup>34</sup> There is also a further half-folio from the same codex. However, despite the fact that it is partially covered with overwriting in Arabic, it is not clear if the Syriac text was effaced.

<sup>35</sup> A further, yet somewhat different, case of partly reused codex deserves to be mentioned. As demonstrated by Sebastian Brock and Alexey Muraviev, eleven palimpsest folios preserved

## 6 Time span between production of a *codex antiquior* and its reuse for a *codex recentior*

The time span between the production of a Syriac codex and its eventual reuse varies significantly. The shortest interval observed is approximately 100–150 years, although examples of such speedy reuse are rare (e.g. nos 72, 81, 84). In contrast, the longest duration between the primary production (fifth to sixth century) and the secondary reuse of a codex (twelfth to thirteenth century) is approximately 600 to 700 years (e.g. nos 3, 23, 63, 64, 74). On average, the time span between the primary and secondary production of a manuscript is between 250 and 400 years. Most palimpsests belong to this category.<sup>36</sup>

## 7 *Codices antiquiores*: Reuse for repair

Many Syriac manuscripts preserved to this day show signs of repair, such as binding reinforcement, re-inking, and replacement of missing folios and quires. These repairs would have been carried out at various times throughout a manuscript's lifespan. To fill the gaps, parchment from older codices was often used, with the text corresponding to the missing portion written over the erased pages.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, we find second-hand parchment employed to reinforce bindings or as fly-leaves.<sup>38</sup>

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within the composite manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, syriac 378 contain in the *scriptio inferior* the text of the *Julian Romance* (no. 106). Copied in the sixth century, they may have originally belonged to the manuscript London, BL, Add MS 14641 (Brock and Muraviev 2000, 17). At the same time, this Paris manuscript fragment may have originally formed part of the so-called Codex Syriacus Primus, a ninth-century Melkite monastic miscellany of uncertain origin that, regrettably, was destroyed in 1940 (Géhin 2017, 137–141). Provided the relationship between the manuscript London, BL, Add MS 14641 as a *codex antiquior* and the later reuse of its section for the production of Codex Syriacus Primus is confirmed (the authors do not provide any evidence in support of the claim), it would offer a unique attestation for a Syriac manuscript that connects the two Egyptian monasteries.

<sup>36</sup> See Schmidt 2009, 164–167.

<sup>37</sup> See Schmidt 2009, 162.

<sup>38</sup> The flyleaves deriving from Syriac codices and currently present in different Syriac, Greek, and Arabic manuscripts at Sinai were recently studied in Géhin 2020. The reuse of available Syriac codices for repair is well documented for the collection of Dayr al-Suryān (Evelyn-White 1932, 439–458). A similar practice of parchment reuse for repair and binding was common in other

Such attention to a defective manuscript was probably motivated by practical concerns: repair activities were cost-efficient, and only manuscripts in demand – either actively used or revered as sacred objects – prompted their custodians to invest in repairs. Indeed, manuscripts repaired using parchment from older codices reflect the demands of a monastic community: one can find among them lectionaries (e.g. nos 8, 102), as well as collections of hagiographic (e.g. no. 21) and monastic (e.g. no. 82) works.

Chronologically, such repairs – documented in both Melkite and Syrian Orthodox contexts – that involved reusing older parchment codices coincide with the peak period of Syriac manuscript reuse. Most of these repairs date to the ninth to tenth centuries (nos 12, 21, 24, 25, 41, 55, 56, 58, 78, 82, 88), with only a few examples from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries (nos 40, 93). While the exact source of these reused folios remains unknown, it is likely that they originated from the same stock of parchment that provided the material for new codices. As presented in Section 12 of this article, positive evidence exists for this practice of reusing parchment fragments for both repairs and new manuscript production (e.g. no. 93).

Given that the same older codex could provide writing material for (at least) two distinct purposes, there is a methodological aspect that deserves consideration. The reuse of parchment folios for new codices pertains to new production, while their reuse for existing codices concerns repair of already available manuscripts. Therefore, chronologically, the reuse occurred contemporaneously with new production; however, repairs followed the original production of the codex, and thus the addition of replacement folios should be distinguished from the production of the main part of a defective codex. Neglecting this stratification can lead to an erroneous pre-dating of the reuse and misinterpretation of the codex's history. Such an infelicitous merging of the two types of reuse can be observed in the lists of Syriac palimpsests prepared by Andrea Schmidt and Angela Zautcke,<sup>39</sup> highlighting the need for caution when dealing with palimpsests.<sup>40</sup>

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traditions, for example, in Islamic Arabic (Déroche 2006, 46; Hirschler 2020), Byzantine Greek (Hunger 1989, 38–40), Latin (Ammirati 2023), and other languages (see e.g. Powitz 1996; Ryley 2022).

<sup>39</sup> Schmidt 2009, 165–166; Zautcke 2021, 96–98.

<sup>40</sup> This was already noted (for Schmidt's list) in Brock 2015, 161. For the following manuscripts that feature in Zautcke's list, the dates of their production – instead of repair (in one case, a later insertion) – are provided: Sin. syr. 2 (sixth century; no. 44), syr. NF 3 (eleventh century; nos 52, 89, and 90), syr. NF 23 (tenth century; nos 45, 55). On this basis, the author goes on to claim that in the case of Sin. syr. 2, the fifth-century Four Gospel book was reused a century later for the production of another copy of the Four Gospels (Zautcke 2021, 100)!



## 8 *Codices recentiores*: Languages

The vast majority of reused Syriac manuscripts are found in Syriac *codices recentiores*. Significantly less represented are *codices recentiores* in Arabic (e.g. Sin. arab. 514; Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287; Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup.; Sin. arab. 588 – all apparently of Melkite origin). Exceptionally rare are *codices recentiores* in Georgian (e.g. Sin. georg. 49) and Hebrew (e.g. Cambridge, University Library, T-S 12.743 and T-S 12.754, both from the Cairo Genizah). Equally uncommon are instances of Syriac palimpsest folios reused for the production of Greek manuscripts.<sup>41</sup>

## 9 *Codices recentiores*: Age

If we exclude the reuse of parchment folios for the repair of existing codices,<sup>42</sup> then the total number (irrespective of language) of *codices recentiores* amounts to fifty-six.<sup>43</sup>

**Table 2:** Number of *codices recentiores* (in different languages) per century for which the parchment from at least one Syriac *codex antiquior* was reused.

Century	Number of <i>codices recentiores</i>	Century	Number of <i>codices recentiores</i>
Seventh or eighth	1	Tenth	10
Seventh–eighth	1	Tenth–eleventh	4
Eighth	1	Eleventh	7
Eighth–ninth	2	Eleventh–twelfth	3
Ninth	12	Twelfth	1
Ninth–tenth	10	Twelfth–thirteenth	2
		Thirteenth	2

<sup>41</sup> Intriguingly, all known examples feature the Greek as *scriptio media*: Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Akz.-Nr. 481/207–208 (no. 5); Sin. georg. 49 (no. 35); and Sin. arab. 514 (no. 53).

<sup>42</sup> See Section 6.

<sup>43</sup> Two *codices recentiores* have not been assigned any date in the literature and therefore are not taken into consideration. Double palimpsests with Syriac present in the *scriptio ima* are counted as independent *codices recentiores*.

The period between the ninth and eleventh centuries marks the peak of activity in the reuse of Syriac codices. Apart from the Codex Sinaiticus Syrus (whose date is debated: some scholars argue for 698 CE, others for 797 CE), the earliest *codices recentiores* probably go back to the end of the eighth to the beginning of the ninth century (e.g. nos 4, 31, 106). A particularly active phase of reuse occurred during the ninth to tenth centuries, when half of all *codices recentiores* were produced. After the tenth century, the number of manuscripts produced using reused parchment significantly declined, but the process continued, at a slower pace, until the thirteenth century. Exceptionally, Syriac manuscripts were also reused in later times. One of the most recent examples is Harvard, University Library, MS Syr. 37, a copy of Gregory Bar Hebraeus's *Grammar* produced in 1554 CE using parchment folios drawn from an earlier, as yet unidentified, manuscript.<sup>44</sup>

Let us now briefly survey six dated *codices recentiores*, all in Syriac. The earliest dated manuscript produced on the basis of recycled parchment needs little introduction, as it is the renowned Codex Sinaiticus Syrus (Sin. syr. 30), notable for its palimpsested copy of the Old Syriac Gospels (no. 32; Fig. 1). The manuscript was produced by a monk named Yuḥannan the Stylite at the monastery of Mar Qonon near Ma'arrat Meṣrēn, 'in the chora of Antioch'.<sup>45</sup> In addition to the ancient copy of the Old Syriac Gospels, the scribe reused folios from two other Syriac codices and two Greek ones. Unfortunately, the colophon is defective, leading to uncertainty regarding its production date. While the year 779 CE has been widely accepted in scholarship,<sup>46</sup> a recent proposal by David Taylor has provided additional support for an alternative interpretation, namely 698 CE.<sup>47</sup> Although the exact date of the manuscript holds significance for the history of palimpsests in general and for the reused folios in this manuscript in particular, regardless of which date proves correct, Codex Sinaiticus Syrus remains the oldest dated *codex recentior*.

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<sup>44</sup> Goshen-Gottstein 1979, 51.

<sup>45</sup> The precise location of the monastery is unknown. For Ma'arrat Meṣrēn (today Ma'arrat Miṣrīn, some 50 km south-west of Aleppo), see Todt and Vest 2015, vol. 2, 1475–1477.

<sup>46</sup> Géhin 2017, 77.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor 2020, 11–12, n. 31.



Fig. 1: Sin. syr. 30, fol. 7<sup>r</sup>. *Scriptio inferior*: Luke 8:50–9:6 (Old Syriac version). 2 cols, the right-hand side column slightly trimmed; *scriptio inferior* running in parallel with the *scriptio superior*. Pseudo-colour image processed by Keith Knox, © St Catherine's Monastery, Mt Sinai.

The next dated *codex recentior* is a monastic miscellany, London, BL, Add MS 14623, copied by the Syrian Orthodox monk Aaron from Dara in the Thebais region of Upper Egypt in the year 823 CE.<sup>48</sup> This manuscript is palimpsest throughout and contains Ephrem of Nisibis's *Prose Refutations* in its *scriptio inferior* (no. 70). For a large part of this work, the palimpsest serves as the unique extant witness. Although the presence of Syrian Orthodox monks in Egypt during the period is well attested,<sup>49</sup> the absence of the monastery's name in the colophon may suggest that the monk Aaron was an itinerant monk, who came from Mesopotamia and was travelling in Egypt. Some three decades later, between 851 and 859 CE, the book was donated to the monastery Dayr al-Suryān by monks of another Syriac monastery in Egypt, known as Mar Jonah, located in Marea, not far from Alexandria.

The third dated *codex recentior*, London, BL, Add MS 14651, is a Syrian Orthodox collection of saints' lives produced in 850 CE. While no further details about the circumstances of the manuscript's production are known, its association with the large group of manuscripts brought to Dayr al-Suryān by its abbot Mushe of Nisibis in 932 suggests it was likely produced in the Syro-Mesopotamian region. This manuscript is palimpsest throughout, with its writing support deriving from a sixth-to-seventh-century copy of the Four Gospels (no. 36).

The fourth dated *codex recentior*, a Melkite collection of monastic texts commonly known as Codex Syriacus Secundus,<sup>50</sup> was copied in the year 882 CE by a certain Theodosius in the monastery of Mar John near Beirut. According to Werner Strothmann, one section of the codex is palimpsest: the reused *codex antiquior* with the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy dates back to the sixth to seventh centuries (no. 9).

The fifth dated *codex recentior*, another Melkite miscellany of monastic and hagiographic works, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623, was produced at St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in 886 CE by a scribe called Theodosius, whom Paul Géhin proposed to identify with the scribe of the Codex Syriacus Secundus mentioned earlier.<sup>51</sup> The second half of the manuscript (fols 105–226) is palimpsest, made up from folios derived from various codices in five languages: Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic (no. 79).

<sup>48</sup> On this manuscript see also Schmidt 2009, 171–174.

<sup>49</sup> See Fiey 1972–1973; Van Rompay and Schmidt 2001; Den Heijer 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Until 2006, when it was sold at Christie's, the manuscript had been part of the Cornelius J. Hauck Collection of the Cincinnati Historical Society. Its current location is, unfortunately, unknown.

<sup>51</sup> Géhin 2017, 154.

The sixth dated *codex recentior* was produced towards the end of the eleventh century by the priest Samuel, son of Quryaqos. Working at Dayr al-Suryān, he reused a unique eighth-to-ninth-century codex (no. 102) containing the Syriac version of otherwise lost commentary on some of the medical works of Galen, composed by the Alexandrian iatrosophist Gesios who flourished during the second half of the fifth century. The medical manuscript was reused both for the production of new codices and for repair. In 1088 CE, Samuel copied a commentary on the Revelation (London, BL, Add MS 17127), apparently employing the parchment drawn from the medical manuscript alone. The following year, he produced a lectionary (London, BL, Add MS 14490), for which he used not only the folios from the medical manuscript but also fresh parchment. In addition to these two manuscripts, Samuel employed parchment folios from the same medical manuscript to repair a large lectionary dating to 824 CE in two volumes: London, BL, Add MS 14486 (three replacement folios), London, BL, Add MS 14487 (eight replacement folios), and, possibly, a tenth-to-eleventh-century Syrian Orthodox festal hymnary (Dayr al-Suryān, Syr. 41 (twenty-one replacement folios)).<sup>52</sup>

## 10 *Codices recentiores*: Origin, ecclesiastical milieu

As has just been presented, we have precise information regarding the date and place of production for only a few Syriac *codices recentiores*. Geographically, the extant Syriac *codices recentiores* concerning whose origin we have information document the practice of reuse in the Syro-Mesopotamian region (Sin. syr. 30; London, BL, Add MS 14651), Upper (London, BL, Add MS 14623) and Lower Egypt (London, BL, Add MS 17127; BL, Add MS 14490), the Beirut region (Codex Syriacus Secundus), and Sinai (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623). These regions largely represent the core territories of Syriac Christianity, particularly associated with the Syrian Orthodox and Melkite traditions, during the medieval period. While the Syro-Mesopotamian region was the heartland of Syriac Christianity, the manuscript activity in Egypt and Sinai was closely related to the presence of the monasteries of Dayr al-Suryān and St Catherine's Monastery.

Despite the absence of historical details documenting the production of a very large number of extant Syriac *codices recentiores*, it is highly probable that they originate from the same geographical area. The same applies to known *codices recentiores* with *scriptio superior* in other languages: Arabic and Georgian *codices*

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<sup>52</sup> For another manuscript that was repaired by Samuel, see Brock 2012b, 14.

*recentiores* are predominantly of Melkite origin, all originating from the region of Palestine and Sinai, and Palestinian origin has been proposed for the Hebrew *codices recentiores* produced out of Christian manuscripts.<sup>53</sup>

It is easy to notice that nearly all extant Syriac *codices recentiores* are affiliated with the two traditions of Syriac Christianity: Syrian Orthodox and Melkite. It is crucial, however, to highlight that the absolute numbers of extant *codices recentiores* and the proportion of them belonging to each tradition may not accurately reflect the actual historical situation. This is primarily because the survival of the majority of *codices recentiores* is owed to the collections of two monasteries, Dayr al-Suryān and St Catherine's. It has been rightly observed that the majority of ancient Syriac manuscripts owe their preservation to these two monasteries, and the same applies to *codices recentiores*.<sup>54</sup> It is important to acknowledge that the collections of these monasteries somewhat distort our perspective, and therefore we must exercise caution when making definitive statements regarding manuscript production in the respective traditions.

In this context, it is not surprising to observe the conspicuous scarcity of *codices recentiores* of East Syriac origin. Generally speaking, the relatively low number of surviving East Syriac manuscripts compared to those belonging to the Syrian Orthodox and Melkite traditions does not indicate a lower rate of manuscript production within the Church of the East (given the vast expansion of the Church of the East, manuscript production rather must have been substantial); instead, it has to do with the low survival rate due to various internal and external factors.<sup>55</sup> That East Syriac *codices recentiores* existed is proved by the manuscript fragment Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, syriaque 390/A, which dates back to the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, according to Françoise Briquel Chatonnet.<sup>56</sup> All ten folios of this fragment are palimpsest and contain an unidentified Syriac text that was probably copied in the seventh to eighth centuries, as estimated by the cataloguer.

Considering the reuse of Syriac *codices*, it is crucial to remember, as emphasised elsewhere in this study,<sup>57</sup> that the location in which a *codex recentior* was produced may not be the same as the location in which a *codex antiquior* was dismantled and prepared for reuse. Currently, no ready solution exists to clarify the issue for each *codex recentior*. However, when we deal with *codices recentiores* which were pieced together from parts of multiple *codices antiquiores*, it is

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53 Sokoloff and Yahalom 1978, 110.

54 Brock 2004b, 18.

55 See Brock 2004b, 21.

56 Briquel Chatonnet 1997, 102–103.

57 See Sections 3 and 13.

highly probable that these *codices antiquiores* were not kept in the same location but rather brought in from elsewhere.

## 11 *Codices recentiores*: Genres

Syriac *codices recentiores* predominantly contain texts appropriate for the monastic milieu, including patristic, monastic, and hagiographic works and, of course, liturgical books. Other genres, such as science and philosophy, are exceptionally rare (e.g. the *Commentary on Porphyry's Eisagoge* by Proba, no. 85).<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the content of *codices recentiores* in Arabic and Georgian is relevant to the life of a monastic community, such as hagiography, monastic literature, and liturgical texts.<sup>59</sup>

## 12 The making of a *codex recentior*: Patterns of reuse

Although actual palimpsest-making techniques are not documented as such in the Syriac tradition, we can observe different styles and approaches in the reuse of codices.<sup>60</sup>

The reuse of parchment folios for the creation of a new quire often necessitated adjustments in order for them to fit the required format. Apart from that, scribes generally do not seem to have been particularly concerned with other issues, such as the order of folios of the *codex antiquior* or the orientation of the overwriting in relation to the undertext.

For instance, Sin. syr. 30, the oldest dated *codex recentior*, is made up of eighteen quires of ten folios each. Quires i–xiv consist exclusively of bifolia drawn from an ancient copy of the Old Syriac Gospels. The bifolia were used as bifolia in the new codex, which were arranged randomly and trimmed (see Fig. 1).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See Schmidt 2009, 169–171.

<sup>59</sup> See Rapp 2023, 43.

<sup>60</sup> A study by Abigail Quandt and Renée Wolcott (2018 [2019]) is the only available examination of a Syriac palimpsest by professional conservators of manuscripts with many insights regarding the techniques of palimpsestation.

<sup>61</sup> Bensly, Harris and Burkitt 1894, xxv–xxiii and xv–xix. For the identification of the Greek undertexts, see Voicu 1984; Guignard 2015; Rossetto 2023, 92.

For quire xv, the scribe used only one bifolium from the Gospel codex, while the remaining four bifolia were sourced from three other older codices, two in Syriac and one in Greek. For quires xvi–xvii, the scribe employed parchment from the same two additional Syriac codices, while the final quire, xviii, was produced from bifolia from yet another Greek codex. Clearly, the scribe initially opted to use a substantial copy of the Old Syriac Gospels. However, upon exhausting its parchment folios, he turned to writing material from four other codices. The nearly seamless transition from the Gospel book's folios to the mixed use of two Syriac and one Greek codex, with a final quire sourced from a further codex, allows us to make several assumptions. Firstly, the Gospel book was probably available to the scribe in a defective condition (according to the reconstruction, the palimpsest Gospel codex lacks two quires).<sup>62</sup> Secondly, the folios from three codices used for quires xv–xvii possibly represent the entirety of writing material available to the scribe (the status of the final quire remains unclear, as there might have been additional folios that the scribe did not require for his new production).

Another example is a ninth-century manuscript containing the Syriac version of Galen's treatise *On Simple Drugs*, which probably consisted of twenty-two quires in its original condition. However, only fourteen of these quires were reused in the eleventh century for the production of a Melkite liturgical book, today known as the Syriac Galen Palimpsest, which is kept in a private collection in Washington DC.<sup>63</sup> The original bifolia were cut in two and each folio was turned into a bifolium (see Fig. 4). Reconstruction of the original medical manuscript makes it clear that during the production of the *codex recentior* the sheets were arranged in a haphazard manner.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, one can notice that the first three and final four quires are completely missing, suggesting that the medical codex was defective and lacked several quires at the time of reuse.

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<sup>62</sup> Bensly, Harris and Burkitt 1894, xix.

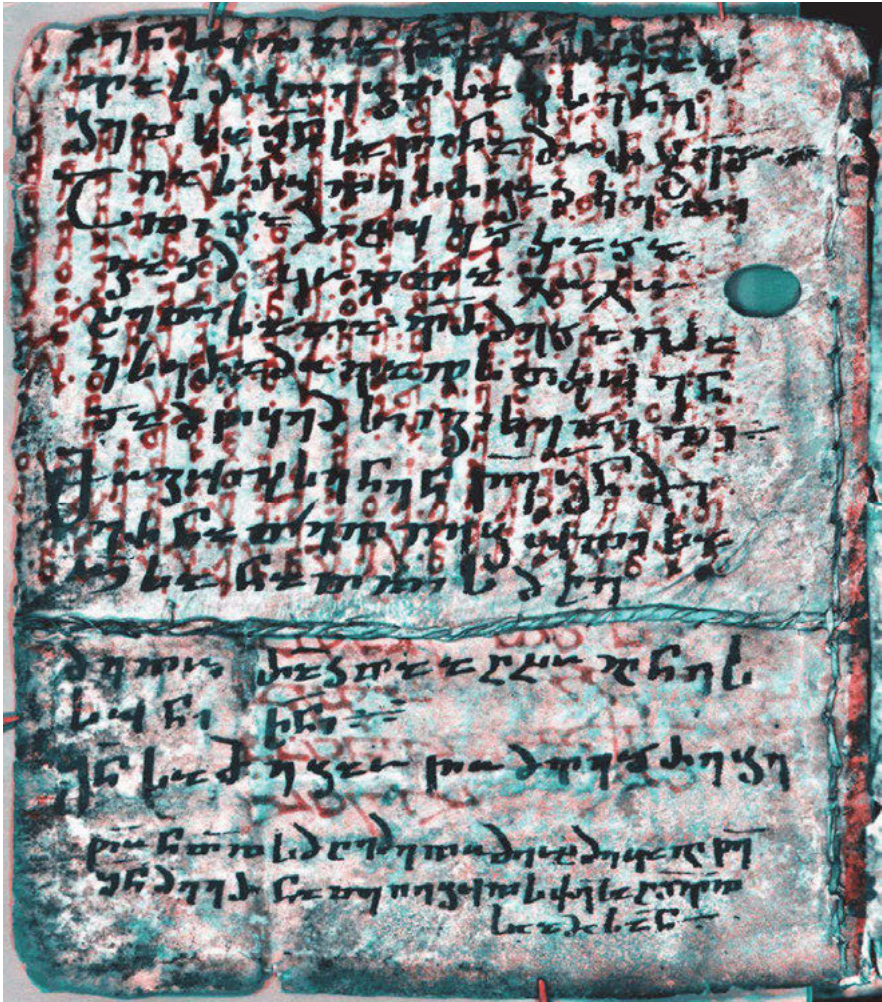
<sup>63</sup> Afif et al. 2018 [2019], 147.

<sup>64</sup> Afif et al. 2018 [2019], 133–146.





Fig. 2: Sin. arab. 514, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>. *Scriptio ima*: Judith 14:10–?; 2 cols, the right-hand side column trimmed; *scriptio ima* running in parallel with the *scriptio superior*. *Scriptio media*, turned by 180°: patristic florilegium, featuring the beginning of an extract attributed to Athanasius (of Alexandria?); 1 col. Pseudo-colour image processed by Keith Knox, © St Catherine's Monastery, Mt Sinai.



**Fig. 3:** Sin. georg. 49, fol. 48<sup>r</sup>. Folio made from two fragments deriving from independent codices stitched together: (a) (upper fragment, with lower text turned by 270°) *Life of Pelagia*, (b) (lower fragment, with lower text turned by 180°) Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 13:21–22). Pseudo-colour image processed by Keith Knox, © St Catherine's Monastery, Mt Sinai.



**Fig. 4:** Syriac Galen Palimpsest, fols 117<sup>r</sup> + 124<sup>v</sup>. *Scriptio inferior*, turned by 90°: Galen, *On Simple Drugs*; 2 cols. Canonical variates analysis (CVA) with post-processing by William I. Sellers, © Owner of the Syriac Galen Palimpsest and the University of Manchester, Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported Access Rights.

As for the adjustment of format, it is worth noting that, during the first millennium, the format of Syriac manuscripts underwent changes and, generally, the size of regular codices decreased.<sup>65</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the reused writing material was subject to specific treatment in order to make it appropriate for a new codex. Two types of modification are most common:

1. bifolium cut in half, and the resulting two sheets folded and rotated by 90° or 270° to become two bifolia (see Fig. 4); and
2. original bifolium employed as a bifolium, either rotated by 180° or running in parallel with the *scriptio superior* (see Figs 1 and 2).

In both cases, the resulting bifolium also could have been trimmed (although exact correspondence in formats is also possible). More rarely, one comes across other types of reuse: a folio used as a singleton, a bifolium used as a folio, and even small pieces stitched together to make up one folio or bifolium (see Fig. 3).

<sup>65</sup> Mango 1991, 175–176 with fig. 17; Borbone, Briquel Chatonnet and Balicka-Witakowska 2015, 258.

Additionally, one can observe a remarkable lack of consistency in the orientation of the reused folios, as different folios deriving from the same *codices antiquiores* often appear in random orientation.<sup>66</sup>

### 13 Reuse of one *codex antiquior* for multiple *codices recentiores*

The available evidence for Syriac palimpsests may give the impression that one older codex was reused to produce only one new codex. Until recently, instances of reuse of the same *codex antiquior* for multiple codices were few and appeared to be exceptional. However, as research on palimpsests advances and more similar cases are uncovered, it becomes apparent that this practice was quite common.

The first such older codex was spotted by William Wright, who noticed portions from the same *codex antiquior* in four manuscripts (no. 93). Based on his findings, the reuse can be reconstructed as follows: a tenth-century lectionary was dismantled and reused for the production of two manuscripts during the eleventh to twelfth centuries. One was of monastic content (London, BL, Add MS 14589; 74 fols, eleventh–twelfth centuries) and the other was liturgical (London, BL, Add MS 17137; 24 fols, twelfth century). Both newly produced manuscripts share another common feature: they are palimpsest throughout, made from parts originating from several Syriac manuscripts. Apparently, some folios of the lectionary remained and were later used, in the thirteenth century, to repair two Gospel books. Each of these Gospel books (London, BL, Add MS 14451 and Add MS 14452) contains one folio from the same lectionary, employed to fill the gap and overwritten with the corresponding missing text. Given that both Gospel books are currently in defective condition, it is possible that more folios were reused during the repairs. Importantly, one reused folio contains a note, added by the same hand that wrote the Gospel text, reporting on the repair of the books at Dayr al-Suryān in the year 1221/1222 CE.<sup>67</sup> While the place of production of the two earlier manuscripts (London, BL, Add MS 14589 and Add MS 17137) is unknown due to their defective condition and the loss of the colophons, considering this historical information it is likely that the initial dismemberment and production of the two earlier *codices recentio-*

<sup>66</sup> This, however, may have varied from scribe to scribe. For example, a consistency in orientation was noticed in the Syriac Galen Palimpsest (Quandt and Wolcott 2018 [2019], 44).

<sup>67</sup> See Evelyn-White 1932, 448–449.

res also took place at Dayr al-Suryān. This example illustrates how one codex could be reused (most probably in one location) both for the production of new manuscripts and for repairs over a period of roughly 150 years.

Wright recognised parts of yet another *codex antiquior* in several Syriac manuscripts (no. 102). This codex was presented in Section 8 among the dated *codices recentiores*.

Today we can add a few more examples. Two manuscript fragments, Sin. syr. NF 37 (24 fols) + syr. NF 39 (18 fols), originally belonged to two different codices, both of monastic content, produced around the ninth to tenth centuries. The significant differences in handwriting prevent us from attributing them to the same scribe, and no other *membra disiecta* of the two original codices are known. While studying the undertexts of the two fragments, which are palimpsest throughout, Sebastian Brock not only identified their content as a rare copy containing the Old Syriac Gospels but also persuasively argued – thanks to the presence of exact joins – that both belonged to the very same *codex antiquior* (no. 33).

Finally, I would like to mention two Christian Arabic manuscripts, the Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest (Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287) and the Codex Arabicus (Sin. arab. 514), both well-known important *codices recentiores* produced from parchment folios deriving from multiple codices in various languages, predominantly Syriac.<sup>68</sup> While the origin of the Codex Arabicus is known (it was copied by Thomas of Fustat around the turn of the tenth century, possibly at Sinai), nothing certain is known about the Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest. It is, however, plausible that it shares the same origin as the Codex Arabicus and may have been copied by the same scribe.<sup>69</sup>

Interestingly, among the multiple *codices antiquiores* reused for the production of these two Christian Arabic manuscripts, some folios originally belonging to the same codices can be found in both. One of them is an early-fifth-to-sixth-century copy of the *Infancy Gospel of James* (no. 61): the Codex Arabicus contains three folios from this codex, while the Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest has eleven. The direct relationship between the two sets of folios is confirmed by one exact join.<sup>70</sup>

Based on the examples provided, several important observations can be made regarding the reuse of manuscripts in the Syriac milieu. Firstly, the practice of reusing folios from one *codex antiquior* for multiple *codices recentiores* was more common than the extant evidence suggests. It appears evident that scribes had the

<sup>68</sup> See also Section 13 below.

<sup>69</sup> Kessel 2023a, 108; Tarras 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Kessel 2023a, 108. Though no exact join has been found for another *codex antiquior* containing an unidentified homily with verses from the Old Testament, it is likely that one folio from this codex is present in the Codex Arabicus and two folios in the Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest (Kessel 2023a, 108).

freedom to distribute recycled folios across different new productions, especially when they had access to a stack of parchment sheets drawn from various manuscripts, probably stored together in a disorganised manner.

Another conclusion is that when a *codex recentior* was produced using only one *codex antiquior* (or a significant portion of it), it is highly likely that this *codex antiquior* was dismantled and prepared for reuse in the same location as that in which the *codex recentior* was produced. Additionally, it is observable that parchment folios from an older codex could be employed for both the production of *codices recentiores* and for repairs.

It is nevertheless possible that folios from dismantled codices could serve as writing support (as well as for repairs) for a relatively long period, stretching beyond a century. Therefore, it cannot be taken for granted in every case that the dismantling and preparation of parchment for reuse immediately preceded its reuse.

## 14 Typology of *codices recentiores* according to the number of reused *codices antiquiores*

When examining the erased undertexts in different *codices recentiores*, one can often find the presence of folios deriving from different *codices antiquiores* (and frequently in different languages). In general, their number can vary from one folio up to a couple dozen. On the basis of the number of reused *codices antiquiores*, all *codices recentiores* can be divided into two groups. The first includes those manuscripts produced from folios deriving from between one and five *codices antiquiores*; the second group represents those (termed here ‘mega’) manuscripts made from a significantly larger number of *codices antiquiores*. It goes without saying that, given the defective condition of many *codices recentiores*, with missing folios and quires, it is possible that in their complete form they featured folios from additional reused manuscripts. Nonetheless, even with this caveat in mind, one can easily notice a clear distinction between the two groups.

Indeed, there seem to have been quite a lot of *codices recentiores* produced using one *codex antiquior* and so have the *scriptio inferior* in only one language. By contrast, when the number of reused codices reaches five, we come across the *codices recentiores* in languages other than Syriac, particularly Greek. This trend becomes particularly prominent in the second group of *codices recentiores*, those that were made of a dozen reused codices and even more.

Below I provide selected examples of *codices recentiores* in relation to the number of reused *codices antiquiores*.

1. *Codices recentiores* made of one *codex antiquior* (all palimpsests throughout):
  - London, BL, Add MS 14623 (823 CE, Thebaid of Egypt, 88 fols): Ephrem of Nisibis, *Prose Refutations*
  - London, BL, Add MS 14651 (850 CE, 217 fols): Four Gospels
  - London, BL, Add MS 17191 (ninth–tenth centuries, 70 fols): Ezekiel
  - London, BL, Add MS 14615 (tenth–eleventh centuries, 89 fols): unidentified liturgical book
  - Washington DC, private collection, Syriac Galen Palimpsest (eleventh century, 226 fols) (Fig. 4), Syriac version of Galen’s *On Simple Drugs*
  
2. *Codices recentiores* made of two *codices antiquiores*:
  - Sin. syr. 49 (tenth century, 161 fols): (a) Philoxenos of Mabbug, *Ascetic Homilies*, (b) complete (?) Old Testament
  - London, BL, Add MS 14507 (tenth–eleventh centuries, 212 fols): (a) (fols 139–205) Judges, (b) baptismal rite
  - London, BL, Add MS 17206 (eleventh–twelfth centuries, 88 fols): (a) (fols 1–42) liturgical canons, (b) (fols 43–87) unidentified text in Estrangela
  
3. *Codices recentiores* made of three *codices antiquiores*:
  - London, BL, Add MS 14496 (tenth century, 93 fols): (a) Joshua, Judges, (b) unidentified text in Estrangela, (c) Severus of Antioch, *Against John the Grammarian* (CPG 7024)
  - London, BL, Add MS 14512 (tenth century, 144 fols): (a) Isaiah, (b) unidentified discourse against the Jews, (c) discourses by Jacob of Serugh
  
4. *Codices recentiores* made of four *codices antiquiores*:
  - London, BL, Add MS 17135 (tenth century, 189 fols): (a) patristic florilegium, (b) unidentified hymns, (c) unidentified liturgical text, (d) another unidentified liturgical text
  - London, BL, Add MS 14589 (eleventh–twelfth centuries, 74 fols): (a) Gospel lectionary, (b) another Gospel lectionary, (c) unidentified theological text, (d) Severus of Antioch, *Hymns* (CPG 7072)
  
5. *Codices recentiores* made of five *codices antiquiores*:
  - Sin. syr. 30 / Codex Sinaiticus Syrus (698 or 779 CE, 181 fols) (Fig. 1): (a) Old Syriac Gospels, (b) *Acts of Thomas*, (c) *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*, (d) Gospel of John in Greek, (e) homilies from the corpus of Ephraem Graecus

- London, BL, Add MS 17136 (tenth–eleventh centuries, 151 fols): (a) Gospel of John in Greek (double palimpsest), (b) unidentified text in Syriac (double palimpsest), (c) Pauline Epistles in Syriac, (d) unidentified liturgical text in Syriac, (e) unidentified text in Syriac
6. ‘Mega’ *codices recentiores* made of numerous *codices antiquiores*:<sup>71</sup>
- Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623 (886 CE, Sinai, 227 fols): a total of nine *codices antiquiores*: one Armenian, three Christian Palestinian Aramaic, one Greek-Arabic, three Greek, one Syriac<sup>72</sup>
  - Sin. arab. NF 8 + 27 + 28 (second half of the ninth century, Sinai (?), 128 + 13 + 16 fols): a large (not decisively established) number of reused *codices antiquiores* in Greek, Arabic, Latin, and Syriac. So far only one palimpsest folio (actually, only a small piece stitched with several other to form a bifolium) in Syriac has been noticed, but it remains unidentified<sup>73</sup>
  - Sin. arab. 514 / Codex Arabicus (ninth/tenth centuries, Sinai (?), 175 fols) (Fig. 2) with a total of nineteen *codices antiquiores*: eighteen Syriac and one Greek-Arabic<sup>74</sup>
  - Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287 / Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest (ninth–tenth centuries, Sinai (?), 162 fols) with a total of approximately eleven *codices antiquiores*: approximately seven Syriac, one administrative text in Arabic, two Qur’ans, and one Greek<sup>75</sup>
  - Sin. georg. 49 (tenth century, Sinai (?), 119 fols) (Fig. 3): a total of approximately twenty *codices antiquiores* with texts in Syriac, Greek, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Coptic, and Georgian<sup>76</sup>
  - Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup. (tenth–eleventh centuries, Sinai (?), 140 fols) with a total of approximately twenty *codices antiquiores*,

71 The number of folios relates to the codex in its present condition and does not take into account (if applicable) any *membra disiecta*. The actual number of similar mega *codices recentiores* is larger but I deliberately selected only those that feature reused Syriac codices.

72 Only the second half of the codex (fols 105–226) is produced from the recycled folios; for a description of the undertexts, see Giuffrida, Németh and Proverbio 2023, 38–40.

73 For a description of the undertexts, see <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>> (hereafter: *SPP*) under ‘Arabic NF 8’ and ‘Arabic NF 28’ (accessed on 15 February 2024; the project did not include Sin. arab. NF 27). For the reused Greek *codices antiquiores*, see also Rossetto 2023, 67–73.

74 For the Syriac undertexts, see Kessel 2023a. For the Greek undertext, see Rossetto 2023, 67.

75 The description of the undertexts by Lewis (1902, ix–xxvii, xxx–xxxiv) requires an update (cf. Coakley 2018, 84–88).

76 For the undertexts (many of which remain unidentified), see *SPP* under ‘Georgian 49’ (accessed on 15 February 2024). For seven reused Greek *codices antiquiores*, see also Rossetto 2023, 75–76.



among them one Greek, one Latin-Greek, one Greek-Arabic, one Qur'an, twelve Hebrew, four Arabic manuscripts of unidentified content, and one Syriac.<sup>77</sup>

Only one mega *codex recentior* – Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623 – has preserved precise information regarding its production date and place (886 CE, Sinai). For two other manuscripts, we know their scribes, who were both active at Sinai: one, Thomas of Fustat, at the turn of the tenth century (Sin. arab. 514)<sup>78</sup> and the other, Ioane Zosime, in the second half of the tenth century (Sin. georg. 49).<sup>79</sup> Although the place of copying for the remaining three (Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287; Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup.; and Sin. arab. NF 8) is uncertain, Sinai remains one of the most plausible candidates.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, it is not unlikely that Or. 1287 was copied by the same scribe as Sin. arab. 514. It is also important to note that Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287; Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup.; and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623 were originally kept at St Catherine's Monastery until their removal sometime around the end of the nineteenth century.

While trying to contextualise the production of such mega *codices recentiores* at Sinai, it is important to bear in mind that they were produced during the earliest period of the manuscript production at St Catherine's Monastery and, as a matter of fact, one of them – Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623 – is the oldest known securely dated codex produced at St Catherine's in any language.<sup>81</sup> During this vibrant period in the monastery's history, various cultural and economic factors must be considered. Given the likely limited resources, Nancy

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<sup>77</sup> Strangely, the *scriptio inferior* on fols 127, 130, 133, and 140 was identified differently, either as Syriac (Löfgren and Traini 1975, 18) or as Arabic (Sirat et al. 2008, 147). For the *codices antiquiores* featuring Greek, see Pasini 1997, 1–9 and Pasini 2002. Reused Hebrew manuscripts were studied in Sirat et al. 2008. Despite the loss of the colophon, André Binggeli's finding that several folios originally belonging to Sin. gr. 35 were reused for Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup. supports its Sinaitic origin (Binggeli 2016, 88–89).

<sup>78</sup> On Thomas, see Tarras 2019.

<sup>79</sup> On Ioane Zosime, who, before moving to Sinai resided at the monastery of Mar Sabas in Palestine, see Aleksidze and Chitunashvili 2022, 122–126.

<sup>80</sup> On Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287 and Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup., see also Tuerlinckx 2009, 196–199. Another possible venue for the production of such manuscripts could be Palestine and the monastery of Mar Sabas in particular. The two monasteries maintained strong ties during the period under consideration, with both people and manuscripts moving between them (see Rapp 2020).

<sup>81</sup> Ševčenko 2010, 241–246; Géhin 1998, 158–160 (both scholars point out the fact that it is highly challenging to assign the origin of a given manuscript to Sinai).

Ševčenko characterises the monastery's production during this early period as 'fairly utilitarian, intended for the use of its own community and nearby metochia; it was executed by individuals working within the monastery, but without the apparatus of a full-scale workshop'.<sup>82</sup>

And regarding the scribal activity of the two known scribes – Thomas of Fustat and Ioane Zosime – of these mega *codices recentiores*, it remains unclear how to account for the fact that, while some codices were produced exclusively on the basis of reused codices, others were made from fresh parchment.<sup>83</sup> One may easily imagine that the scribes tried to use cheap, second-hand parchment for the manuscripts produced for the needs of the local community but at the same time could procure enough fresh parchment for a codex that was commissioned.

What unites all these *codices recentiores* is not only their production using writing supports from a large number of *codices antiquiores* in various languages but also the fact that the actual portion of the *codex antiquior* that was reused is often very small, sometimes corresponding to just one single leaf or even less. For instance, out of the nineteen *codices antiquiores* reused for the production of Sin. arab. 514, sixteen occupy fewer than ten folios in the newly produced volume. Similarly, in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623, out of nine reused codices, only one is represented by more than ten folios in the newly produced book. Another common feature is the presence of double palimpsests, appearing in nearly all of them.<sup>84</sup>

The large number of such *codices antiquiores* represented by only a few reused folios makes it unlikely that this is a matter of coincidence (that is, that the remaining portions of the same *codices antiquiores* were reused for other manuscripts that simply have not survived). Rather, it strongly suggests that only this specific portion of the *codex antiquior* was available for reuse. If this is indeed the

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<sup>82</sup> Ševčenko 2010, 258. The intensive acquisition of books for the monastery by Bishop Solomon at the end of the tenth century (Swanson 2004) likewise indicates that the manuscripts were in high demand at St Catherine's.

<sup>83</sup> Two other – both non-palimpsest – manuscripts are known to have been produced by Thomas: Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, MS 4225 and Bryn Mawr College Library, BV 69. Several further Georgian codices copied by Ioane Zosime that include reused parchment drawn from multiple Christian Palestinian Aramaic *codices antiquiores* are known (Brock 2012b, 8–11 and Brock 2012c, 488–493); however, many of his codices were made from new parchment (see the list in Aleksidze and Chitunashvili 2022, 125). From Ioane Zosime we have a unique indication within the codex Sin. georg. NF 2 where he explicitly mentions the use of new parchment (Aleksidze and Chitunashvili 2022, 155).

<sup>84</sup> In the case of Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup., the presence of double palimpsests is so far not certain.

case, then it is highly likely that such *codices antiquiores* were not dismantled at Sinai but were brought there – probably already in dismembered form – from a distance (otherwise they would not have been represented by only a few reused folios).<sup>85</sup> While at Sinai, this procured writing support provided the material for book production for any community present at that time in the monastery. Thus, we see mega *codices recentiores* in Syriac, Arabic, and Georgian, indicating equal access to parchment for the scribes of different communities.

By any means, such assorted recycled writing material in different languages, formats, and condition was of significantly lower value in comparison with newly produced parchment. We cannot even exclude that it was traded as manuscript waste primarily intended for the repair of books or binding reinforcement.<sup>86</sup>

If this reconstruction is tenable, it has one important (yet negative) implication regarding the *codices antiquiores*. Namely, the presence of any portion of a reused codex (in any language) in such a mega *codex recentior* does not imply that this codex was available at the monastery before its dismantling; rather it is more probable that it was brought there in dismembered condition from elsewhere. The origin, place, and time of the dismantling of such codices should therefore remain open questions.

The proposed typology of *codices recentiores* based on the number of reused *codices antiquiores* does not allow for a chronological development. In other words, there is no progression in the number of reused codices over time. For example, the *codices recentiores* which were produced using only one *codex antiquior* were made during the ninth through eleventh centuries. During the same period, we can observe the production of *codices recentiores* pieced together from parchment folios drawn from up to two dozen *codices antiquiores*. Hence, the

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<sup>85</sup> A remarkably similar condition of reused parchment can be observed among the palimpsests of Christian content found in the Cairo Genizah: ‘It may be assumed that the Jews did not employ new or usable Christian manuscripts. This may be surmised from the composition of the manuscripts. [...] Thus, it seems that when palimpsest quires were made up, remnants of various manuscripts were utilized by choosing from among them usable sheets. In such a way it was possible in this case to make a five-sheet quire derived from the remnants of at least three different manuscripts’ (Sokoloff and Yahalom 1978, 111).

<sup>86</sup> I plan to publish elsewhere an example showing that the parchment deriving from the same Syriac codex was reused to repair an already existing manuscript and as a writing material for a new manuscript. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that already mentioned Georgian scribe Ioane Zosime, besides producing new manuscripts, also took care of some – perhaps not only Georgian – codices that were in poor condition. Interestingly, for such repairs Ioane employed parchment folios, some of which originally belonged to Syriac codices (see Brock 2012c, 484). For the possible parchment market origin of the reused codices in general, see also Rapp 2023, 50–51.

number of *codices antiquiores* that were reused seems to depend on local circumstances and does not have a chronological correlation.<sup>87</sup>

## 15 Double palimpsests

Syriac *codices antiquiores* were typically reused only once. However, the secondary reuse of overwritten parchment folios may have been more common than the extant evidence suggests. Among the Syriac manuscripts acquired by the British Museum in the nineteenth century from Dayr al-Suryān, Wright distinguished only one such specimen: several folios in the manuscript London, BL, Add MS 17136 contain two layers of underwriting in Syriac, both of which remain unidentified. However, at the same time, in the Codex Arabicus (Sin. arab. 514) alone, double palimpsest folios originating from seven different (palimpsest) codices can be discerned (see, for example, Fig. 2). The prevalence of double palimpsests (featuring combinations of *scriptio ima*, *scriptio media*, and *scriptio superior* in different languages) is particularly notable among the mega *codices recentiores* produced at Sinai. This concentration of the production of such peculiar codices in one location suggests, as proposed above, the trade of writing material as its origin.

It is worth emphasising that Syriac codices reused more than twice are not known. Aziz Atiya's assertion that the Codex Arabicus contains five layers of writing has not been substantiated during my own study of the manuscript.<sup>88</sup>

## 16 General conclusions

The examination of Syriac palimpsests undertaken in the present study allows us to make some general observations. Although comprehensive statistics on the production of Syriac manuscripts are lacking, it appears that the reuse of Syriac codices for the creation of new ones was overall a rather marginal phenomenon. However, this form of manuscript production seems to have been more prevalent in regions distant from the heartland of Syriac Christianity, such as Sinai and the

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<sup>87</sup> Such chronological development was recognised in the reuse of manuscripts at the Bobbio monastery, beginning with individual codices and ending with the so-called *promptuarium* that provided the stock of parchment folios both for the production of new codices and for repairs (Beeson 1946, 182–183).

<sup>88</sup> For example, in Atiya 1967, 75–76. For a fresh examination of this manuscript, see Kessel 2023a.

Nitrian Desert, where resources were often limited.<sup>89</sup> The economic backdrop of the reuse of manuscripts in the Syriac Christian milieu remains to be thoroughly investigated.<sup>90</sup>

When examining Syriac palimpsests, it is imperative to exercise utmost caution regarding the factors that significantly influenced the survival and extent of existing manuscript evidence. Specifically, similar to ancient Syriac manuscripts in general, the collections of two Egyptian monasteries, Dayr al-Suryān in the Nitrian Desert and St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, account for the vast majority of known palimpsests.<sup>91</sup> The overall landscape of manuscript reuse in the Syriac Christian tradition would have looked markedly different if we had access to otherwise lost evidence. The uneven distribution is underscored by the fact that, while there exist numerous *codices recentiores* of Syrian Orthodox and Melkite origin, *codices recentiores* of East Syriac origin are very scarce. This disparity caused by the different survival rates should always be kept in mind.

The plentiful evidence we have at our disposal for Dayr al-Suryān and St Catherine's Monastery enables us to recognise both monasteries not only as the places of preservation of manuscripts (and palimpsests) but also as centres of active recycling and reuse of manuscripts.

Syriac parchment codices were primarily reused for the production of new Syriac manuscripts between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, with the peak activity observed during the ninth to tenth centuries. The extant *codices recentiores* are mostly of Syrian Orthodox and Melkite origin and were produced in the Syro-Mesopotamian region, Upper and Lower Egypt, Palestine, and Sinai. Less common was the reuse of Syriac codices for the production of manuscripts in other languages, including Arabic, Georgian, Greek, and Hebrew. The majority of *codices recentiores* predominantly feature liturgical, monastic, and hagiographic works, reflecting the needs of the Christian monastic community.

Syriac manuscripts that have been reused and overwritten typically date back to the fifth to ninth centuries, with the largest number originating from the sixth century. Only two palimpsests have retained their colophons, which are dated to

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<sup>89</sup> For a possible connection between the two monasteries in the form of a partly reused Syriac manuscript, see n. 35 above.

<sup>90</sup> It also would be interesting to compare the economic factor with other places of active manuscript reuse. For example, Charles Beeson once stated with regard to the codices reused at the Bobbio monastery: 'Palimpsests are the result of poverty and the scarcity of parchment. The monks of Bobbio were a poor community' (Beeson 1946, 183). For the economic factors, see also Lowe 1964, 68–69; Cavallo 2001, 9–11.

<sup>91</sup> For the role of Dayr al-Suryān in the preservation of ancient Syriac manuscripts, see Brock 2004b. For the significance of the collection of St Catherine's Monastery, see Brock 2011.

459/460 CE and 551/552 CE. The palimpsests contain texts of various genres; the predominance of biblical texts requires a caveat, as these texts are easier to identify compared to other genres.

Reasons for the reuse of Syriac manuscripts include the obsolescence of texts or specific versions thereof, their defective condition, and the abundance of duplicates. The transition to cursive writing in the Syrian Orthodox community during the ninth to tenth centuries also may have played a role in the reuse of older Estrangela codices, but its precise impact remains to be assessed. Overall, the ninth to tenth centuries seem to be a period when several impactful factors gained increased prominence. Importantly, no known palimpsest appears to have been recycled on account of its non-orthodox content.

The *codices recentiores* that were produced from previously used parchment can be divided into two groups based on the number of *codices antiquiores* that furnished the writing material. The first group includes *codices recentiores* (as a rule, in Syriac) made of parchment drawn from one to five Syriac codices. The second group covers those *codices recentiores* (in Syriac but also in other languages, such as Arabic and Georgian) that were pieced together from writing material originating from a significantly larger number of *codices recentiores*, ranging from nine to approximately twenty. Notably, in the second group, the *codices antiquiores* that furnished the parchment for the ‘mega’ *codices recentiores* are represented by codices copied in a plethora of languages: Syriac, Greek, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Arabic (with both Christian and Islamic content), Armenian, Hebrew, Coptic, and Latin.

A further classification can be made regarding the provenance of the writing material obtained from the Syriac *codices antiquiores*. Based on available evidence, it is possible to distinguish two types. The first type comprises Syriac manuscripts that were taken apart and prepared for reuse in the same place as that in which a resulting *codex recentior* was eventually produced. By contrast, those Syriac manuscripts that were dismantled (and likely prepared for reuse) elsewhere and then reached a new location, probably through trade routes, fall under the second type.

The differentiation between these two types of provenance has significant implications. Firstly, in the case of in-house recycling, one can reasonably assume that the *codex antiquior* was kept locally (how and when it came there is of course a different matter). Secondly, it is probable that such a *codex antiquior* would be reused in its entirety, whether in complete or defective condition. Thirdly, the dismantling and preparation for reuse would most probably immediately precede the production of a *codex recentior* (although it is possible that a remaining part of the *codex antiquior* could be still available for a considerable time).

Conversely, when the recycled writing material comes from a distance, we typically encounter not entire *codices antiquiores* but rather their parts, which are usually relatively small in size, consisting of a couple of quires, several bifolia, a few folios, or even less. While it is probable that in each case a complete (perhaps already in its defective condition) older codex was prepared for reuse, it is conceivable that during the handling by traders, folios from various codices became mixed up and reached customers in a random manner. Furthermore, there could be a considerable time lapse between the dismantling of the *codex antiquior* and its eventual reuse for a *codex recentior*. While Syriac palimpsests of the first type of provenance are more common, the second type includes the mega *codices recentiores*, all of which possibly originate from Sinai, where they were produced between the ninth to tenth or eleventh centuries. The inferior quality of writing material used for the production of mega *codices recentiores* allows us to assume that it may have circulated as assorted manuscript waste, primarily intended for repair or binding.

In light of what has been just outlined, it appears natural that the parchment originally belonging to a single Syriac codex could be employed in multiple *codices recentiores*. Several existing examples indicate that this was a fairly common practice.

The parchment sheets obtained from dismantled Syriac codices were used not only for the production of new codices but also for the repair of defective books. Sometimes both types of reuse were carried out by the same individual. The period during which writing material from Syriac codices was employed for repairs coincides with the period of peak activity in the production of *codices recentiores* – that is, the ninth to tenth centuries.

The study of Syriac palimpsests, akin to deciphering erased texts, faces obstacles due to physical constraints and the loss of significant amounts of evidence. The history of Syriac codices that were covered with one or two layers of writing is difficult to trace, but what is invisible or lost often can be reconstructed. Just as the study of erased texts benefits from both direct and indirect evidence, understanding palimpsests requires scrutiny and a broader perspective. Bringing an effaced text to light necessitates meticulous attention to each visible character, alongside a comprehensive comparison with other relevant sources. Similarly, further research into Syriac palimpsests will benefit from both a detailed analysis of individual palimpsests and a comparative study of the culture of palimpsests as it developed during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>92</sup>

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92 For Greek palimpsests in the collection of St Catherine's Monastery, see the magnificent recent study Rossetto 2023. A comparative survey of palimpsests in the same collection can be

## Abbreviations

*BHO* = Paul Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 10), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1910.

*CANT* = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout: Brepols, 1992.

*CPG* = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vols 1–5 (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987.

*SPP* = Sinai Palimpsests Project website (<<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>>).

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found in Rapp 2023. Vollandt 2023 contains a survey of palimpsests found in three locations: St Catherine's Monastery, the Cairo Genizah, and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.



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## Appendix: An inventory of Syriac palimpsests with identified *scriptio inferior*

The inventory below provides a list of Syriac palimpsests with identified undertexts (thus, a large number of all the palimpsests the undertexts of which remain unidentified are excluded) arranged according to genres. Identification comprises either a detection of exact correspondence with other witnesses of a given work or (in the case of otherwise unattested works) through the extant ascription to a particular author. Each palimpsest is regarded as an independent codicological unit that may contain multiple works. Where sufficient evidence exists to suggest the initial contents, the table records this information accordingly (e.g. Pentateuch, Pauline Epistles). Regarding Sinai manuscripts, only the main manuscript part is indicated, while for possible *membra disiecta* the reader is referred to the study by Paul Géhin.<sup>93</sup> It is possible that some of the listed palimpsests originally formed a single codex (codicological unit); for a few known palimpsests, this is taken into consideration (see nos 22, 33, 61, 93, and 102). The inventory omits the precise indication of palimpsest folios (except for later replacements) to avoid excessive complexity. As far as the dating is concerned, I usually follow the dating proposed by Wright (for the BL manuscripts) and Géhin (for the manuscripts of St Catherine's Monastery); possible disagreement with regard to dating in available publications is not documented here. Bibliographic references are limited to the publications (or the website of the Sinai Palimpsests Project) that provide identification and, if available, editions; standard catalogues are not mentioned. Whenever possible, the works are cited with corresponding reference to *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (CPG), *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (CANT), and *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (BHO); the Syriac biblical codices are also accompanied by a siglum (e.g. '7pj2') used in the edition of the Old Testament Peshiṭta prepared by the Peshiṭta Institute.<sup>94</sup>

The shelf mark is followed by the date of the *scriptio inferior* (or *scriptio ima* if the codex is *bis rescriptus*). Information given after the abbreviation '*sup.*' includes the contents, origin and date of the *scriptio superior*. If relevant the same information is also given for the *scriptio media* ('*med.*'). For later replacements, the date of the repair is mentioned first and the date of the main codex is provided in angular brackets.

<sup>93</sup> Géhin 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Throughout the Appendix, the abbreviation 'BL' designates the British Library in London, and 'Syr. Orth.', Syrian Orthodox origin of a codex.

## Bible: Old Testament

### Complete Old and New Testament (?)

1. London, BL, Add MS 17195<sup>95</sup> (7pj2), sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Patristic florilegium – Syr. Orth. – tenth century

### Complete Old Testament (?)

2. Sin. syr. 49,<sup>96</sup> uncertain date  
*sup.*: Lectionary – Melkite – tenth century

### Pentateuch

3. Sin. syr. 27<sup>97</sup> (7pk14), fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Triodion – Melkite – eleventh–twelfth centuries

### Genesis

4. Sin. syr. NF frg. 28<sup>98</sup> + syr. NF frg. 74<sup>99</sup> [+ Sin. syr. NF 29 + syr. NF 74], sixth century  
*sup.*: John Chrysostom, *Commentary on John* (CPG 4425) – uncertain origin – ninth century
5. Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Akz.-Nr. 481/206 (ex Damascus, Qubbat al-Khazna),<sup>100</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Isaac of Nineveh, *First Part* – Melkite – eleventh century

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<sup>95</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 914–915.

<sup>96</sup> Kessel 2024, 117–119. For other parts of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 103–104.

<sup>97</sup> Lewis 1894, 42 and 129 (Appendix by Stenning). For a reconstitution of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 73–74.

<sup>98</sup> Only the undertext of the Sparagmata has so far been identified. For a reconstitution of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 187–188. Brock 1995a, 22–23; cf. *SPP* under ‘Syriac NF frg. 28’ (description by Brock).

<sup>99</sup> Brock 1995a, 70–71; cf. *SPP* under ‘Syriac NF frg. 74’ (description by Brock).

<sup>100</sup> Brock 1995b, 70; cf. Kessel 2020, 286.

6. Damascus, National Museum (ex Damascus, Qubbat al-Khazna),<sup>101</sup> no shelf mark, sixth century  
*sup.*: *Anaphora of James, the brother of the Lord* – Melkite – ninth–tenth centuries

### Exodus

7. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>102</sup> *scriptio ima*, seventh century  
*med.*: Syriac, unidentified (ninth century)  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

### Leviticus

8. Sin. syr. 15,<sup>103</sup> sixth century (later replacement of many folios)  
*sup.*: Praxapostolos – Melkite – uncertain date [eighth–ninth centuries]

### Numbers, Deuteronomy

9. Codex Syriacus Secundus<sup>104</sup> (6pk9), current location unknown, sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Melkite – 882 CE – Beirut region

### Numbers

10. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>105</sup> *scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: → no. 87  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

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**101** The undertext was first recognised by Joseph-Marie Sauget (1985, 309) and later identified by Brock (1995b, 70); cf. Kessel 2020, 269.

**102** Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under ‘Georgian 49’).

**103** Lewis 1894, 17–18 and 127–128 (Appendix by Stenning). For a reconstitution of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 50–53.

**104** The text of Numbers was first identified by Anton Baumstark (in Hiersemann 1922, 6). Text and detailed description are available in Strothmann 1977, 77–126. For a reconstitution of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 142–144.

**105** Kessel 2023a, 111, no. 1.



## Joshua, Judges

11. London, BL, Add MS 14496<sup>106</sup> (7pj1), sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Syriac Orthodox Euchologion – Syr. Orth. – tenth century
12. Sin. syr. 41<sup>107</sup> (7pj3), sixth–seventh centuries (later replacement of many fols)  
*sup.*: Liturgical psalter – Melkite – tenth century [seventh–eighth centuries]

## Judges

13. London, BL, Add MS 14507<sup>108</sup> (6ph11), sixth century  
*sup.*: Liturgical canons – Syr. Orth. – tenth–eleventh centuries
14. London, BL, Add MS 14667, fols 46–49<sup>109</sup> (7pk9), sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Prayers for different occasions – uncertain origin – tenth century

## 1 Samuel

15. Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Akz.-Nr. 481/207–208,<sup>110</sup>  
*scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: Greek, unidentified  
*sup.*: Arabic (unidentified) – uncertain origin and date
16. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>111</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

## 1 and 2 Kings

17. St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Syriac N.S. 17<sup>112</sup> (6ph2), sixth century  
*sup.*: Lectionary – Melkite – c. tenth century

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<sup>106</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 225, no. <1>.

<sup>107</sup> So far only the undertext in the *membrum disiectum* Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Or. 14237 has been identified (Peshitta Institute 1977, 510). For a reconstitution of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 91–94.

<sup>108</sup> Initial identification in Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 284, no. 1; detailed description in Dirksen 1963.

<sup>109</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 385.

<sup>110</sup> Kessel 2020, 276–277.

<sup>111</sup> Kessel 2023a, 111, no. 2. The fragment from the same *codex antiquior* present in the *membrum disiectum* Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. arab. 1066 received a siglum 7pk15 (see Kessel 2023a, 104).

<sup>112</sup> Pigulevskaya 1960, 14–16. No other parts of this manuscript are known (Géhin 2017, 223).

**Judith**

18. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>113</sup> *scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: → no. 87  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

**Sirach**

19. Cambridge, University Library, T-S 12.743<sup>114</sup> (7pk2), seventh century  
*sup.*: Hebrew Midrash on Proverbs – twelfth–thirteenth centuries

**Isaiah**

20. London, BL, Add MS 14512<sup>115</sup> (5ph1), 459/460 CE  
*sup.*: Festal hymnary – Syr. Orth. – tenth century
21. London, BL, Add MS 14646, fols 134–194<sup>116</sup> (9pk8), sixth century (fols 183–194: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Saints' lives – uncertain origin – tenth century [sixth century]

**Isaiah, Zechariah**

22. (a) Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>117</sup> *scriptio ima*, fifth–sixth centuries  
*med.*: unidentified homily in Syriac (ninth century)  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

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**113** Kessel 2023a, 111–112, no. 3.

**114** Text (transcribed by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, without identification) in Lewis and Gibson 1900, xviii, 94–97 (fragment no. xxvi). The identification was made by Victor Ryssel (see Lewis 1902, xxviii–xxix); a revised transcription can be found in McHardy 1976. See also Coakley 2018, 160.

**115** Initial identification in Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 251, no. 1; more detailed description in Tisserant 1911.

**116** Initial identification in Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 1087; more detailed description in Tisserant 1911, 92–94.

**117** Kessel 2023a, 112, no. 5.

(b) Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287<sup>118</sup> (7pk1), *scriptio ima*, fifth–sixth centuries

*med.*: unidentified homily in Syriac (ninth century)

*sup.*: Arabic monastic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

## Jeremiah

23. Sin. syr. NF frg. 75,<sup>119</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Index of lections – Melkite – thirteenth century
24. London, BL, Add MS 14459, fols 1–66<sup>120</sup> (6pk3), sixth century (fol. 12: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Four Gospels – uncertain origin – tenth century [sixth century]
25. London, BL, Add MS 17164<sup>121</sup> (6pk6), sixth century (fols 20, 34: later replacement)  
*sup.*: metrical homilies by Ephrem of Nisibis, Jacob of Serugh, and Isaac of Antioch – uncertain origin – ninth century [sixth–seventh centuries]

## Ezekiel

26. London, BL, Add MS 17191<sup>122</sup> (7ph9), sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Patristic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – ninth–tenth centuries
27. London, BL, Add MS 14628, fols 1–8<sup>123</sup> (7pk5), sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Questions and answers (unidentified) – Syr. Orth. – eleventh century
28. Cambridge, University Library, T-S 12.754<sup>124</sup> (6pk1), fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Hebrew Piyyut for the Sabbath – eleventh century

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**118** Lewis 1902, xxv–xxvi and 116\*–119\* (text); cf. Coakley 2018, 86–87 (part D).

**119** Brock 1995, 71; cf. *SPP* under ‘Syriac NF frg. 75’ (description by Brock). No other parts of this manuscript are known (Géhin 2017, 205).

**120** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 64.

**121** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 681, no. 2.

**122** Initial identification in Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 1015; more detailed description in Baars 1970.

**123** Initial identification in Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 1022; more detailed description in Tisserant 1911, 94–95 and Baars 1970.

**124** Text (identified and transcribed by Lewis) in Lewis and Gibson 1900, xx and 106 (fragment no. xxx). See also Coakley 2018, 160.

**Daniel**

29. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>125</sup> seventh century  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

**Amos**

30. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>126</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

**Bible: New Testament****Complete New Testament**

31. London, BL, Add MS 17196,<sup>127</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Patristic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – ninth century

**Old Syriac Gospels**

32. Sin. syr. 30 (Codex Sinaiticus Syrus),<sup>128</sup> fourth–fifth centuries  
*sup.*: Saints' lives – Syr. Orth. – 698 or 779 CE – Antioch region
33. (a) Sin. syr. NF 37,<sup>129</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Evagrius Ponticus, *On Prayer* (CPG 2452) – Melkite (?) – ninth–tenth centuries
- (b) Sin. syr. NF 39,<sup>130</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Diadochus of Photice, *Chapters* (CPG 6106) – Melkite (?) – ninth–tenth centuries

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<sup>125</sup> Kessel 2023a, 107 and 112, no. 4.

<sup>126</sup> Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under 'Georgian 49').

<sup>127</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 776.

<sup>128</sup> The palimpsest has had a complex research and publication history. The authoritative edition until today is Lewis 1910; a new edition is under preparation by Taylor. For the manuscript, see also Géhin 2017, 75–78.

<sup>129</sup> Brock 2016. No other parts of this manuscript are known (Géhin 2017, 189). A complete edition is under preparation by Taylor.

<sup>130</sup> Brock 2016. No other parts of this manuscript are known (Géhin 2017, 190). A complete edition is under preparation by Taylor.

### Old Syriac Gospels, Matthew

34. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>131</sup> *scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: Syriac version of Theodoret of Cyrillus's *Historia religiosa* (CPG 6222) (eighth century) → no. 68  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century
35. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>132</sup> *scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: Greek Apophthegmata Patrum (sixth–eighth century)  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

### Four Gospels

36. London, BL, Add MS 14651,<sup>133</sup> sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Saints' lives – Syr. Orth. – 850 CE

### Matthew

37. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>134</sup> *scriptio media*, ninth century  
*ima*: Syriac, unidentified (c. sixth century)  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century
38. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>135</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century
39. Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287,<sup>136</sup> fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Arabic monastic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE
40. Dayr al-Suryān, Syr. 10,<sup>137</sup> uncertain date (later replacement of one folio)  
*sup.*: Four Gospels – Syr. Orth. – twelfth–thirteenth centuries [510 CE, Edessa]

<sup>131</sup> The extant portion of the text is present only within the *membra disiecta*: Kessel 2022, 259–260, 262, 264.

<sup>132</sup> The extant text portion is present only in one of the *membra disiecta*: Kessel 2022, 260, 263–264; text in Kessel 2023b.

<sup>133</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3, 1103.

<sup>134</sup> Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under 'Georgian 49').

<sup>135</sup> Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under 'Georgian 49').

<sup>136</sup> Lewis 1902, xxiii–xxiv; cf. Coakley 2018, 86 (part C).

<sup>137</sup> Brock and Van Rompay 2014, 52.

41. London, BL, Add MS 14459, fols 67–169,<sup>138</sup> sixth century (fol. 74: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Four Gospels – uncertain origin – ninth–tenth centuries [sixth century]
42. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>139</sup> fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

### Matthew, John

43. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>140</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

### Mark, Luke, John

44. Sin. syr. 2,<sup>141</sup> fifth century (later replacement of many folios)  
*sup.*: Four Gospels – Melkite – uncertain date [sixth century]

### Luke, John

45. Sin. syr. NF 23,<sup>142</sup> fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Selected readings from the Gospels – Melkite – ninth–tenth centuries

### Luke

46. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>143</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

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138 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 68.

139 Initial identification in Gibson 1902, 510. The Gospel text was suggested by Atiya (1967, 78) to pertain to the Old Syriac version, but this was later disproved by Brock (1992). For a more detailed description, see Kessel 2023, 112–113, no. 6.

140 Initial identification in Gibson 1902, 509–510; detailed description in Kessel 2023, 113–114, nos 7, 9.

141 Lewis 1894, 2 and 124 (Appendix by Stenning). For a more detailed description, see *SPP* under ‘Syriac 2’ (description by Alain Desreumaux); for a reconstitution of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 28–30.

142 Identified by Géhin (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF 23’); cf. Brock 2009, 177.

143 Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under ‘Georgian 49’).

**Mark**

47. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>144</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

**John**

48. Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287,<sup>145</sup> fifth century  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE
49. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>146</sup> *scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: unidentified liturgical text in Syriac (eighth–ninth centuries)  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

**Acts**

50. Sin. syr. NF 66,<sup>147</sup> seventh–eighth centuries  
*sup.*: Liturgical – Melkite – ninth–tenth centuries
51. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>148</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

**2 Corinthians**

52. Sin. syr. NF 3 (flyleaves),<sup>149</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Horologion – Melkite – thirteenth century

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**144** Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under ‘Georgian 49’).

**145** Lewis 1902, xxiii–xxiv; cf. Coakley 2018, 86 (part B).

**146** Kessel 2023a, 113, no. 8.

**147** Identified by Binggeli (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF 66’). No other parts of this manuscript are known (Géhin 2017, 194).

**148** Kessel 2023a, 115, no. 10.

**149** Identified by Brock (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF 3’). No other parts of this manuscript are known (Géhin 2017, 181).

## Colossians

53. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>150</sup> *scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: (bilingual?) funeral service in Greek and an unidentified Arabic text  
 (ninth century)  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

## Hebrews

54. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>151</sup> 551/552 CE  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

## Pauline Epistles

55. Sin. syr. NF 23,<sup>152</sup> sixth century (fols 9–13: later insertion)  
*sup.*: Selected readings from the Gospels – Melkite – tenth century [ninth–tenth centuries]
56. London, BL, Add MS 14480,<sup>153</sup> sixth century (fols 62, 121: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Pauline Epistles – uncertain origin – ninth–tenth centuries [fifth–sixth centuries]
57. London, BL, Add MS 17136,<sup>154</sup> sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Severus of Antioch, *Hymns* (CPG 7072) – Syr. Orth. – tenth–eleventh centuries
58. London, BL, Add MS 17164,<sup>155</sup> sixth–seventh centuries (fols 16, 27, 38: later replacement)  
*sup.*: metrical homilies by Ephrem of Nisibis, Jacob of Serugh, and Isaac of Antioch – uncertain origin – ninth century [sixth–seventh centuries]
59. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>156</sup> *scriptio ima*, sixth century  
*med.*: Herbal in Syriac (eighth–ninth centuries) → no. 103  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

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<sup>150</sup> Kessel 2023a, 116, no. 12.

<sup>151</sup> Kessel 2021 and 2023a, 116–117, no. 15.

<sup>152</sup> Identified by Géhin (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF 23’). No other parts of this manuscript are known (Géhin 2017, 186).

<sup>153</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 85.

<sup>154</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 344–345, no. 3.

<sup>155</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 680–681, no. 2.

<sup>156</sup> Kessel 2023a, 115, 116, nos 11, 13, 14.



## Apocrypha

### ***Infancy Gospel of Thomas (CANT 57), Infancy Gospel of James (CANT 50), Dormition of the Virgin Mary (CANT 123–124)***

60. Sin. arab. 588,<sup>157</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Arabic Prophetologion – Melkite – tenth century

### ***Infancy Gospel of James (CANT 50), Dormition of the Virgin Mary (CANT 123–124)***

61. (a) Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287,<sup>158</sup> fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Arabic monastic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE  
 (b) Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>159</sup> fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

### ***Dormition of the Virgin Mary (CANT 123–124)***

62. Sin. syr. 30 (Codex Sinaiticus Syrus),<sup>160</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Saints' lives – Syr. Orth. – 698 or 779 CE – Antioch region

### ***Book of Mary's Repose (CANT 120)***

63. London, BL, Add MS 14665, fols 21–24,<sup>161</sup> fifth–sixth centuries  
*sup.*: Prayers – uncertain origin – twelfth–thirteenth centuries  
 64. London, BL, Add MS 17137,<sup>162</sup> fifth century  
*sup.*: Liturgical – Syr. Orth. – twelfth century

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157 Initial identification in Bensley, Harris and Burkit 1894, xvii–xix; more detailed description in *SPP* under 'Arabic 588' (by Kessel); text (*Dormition of the Virgin Mary*) in Hochstedler 2022 [2023].

158 Texts (*Infancy Gospel of James* and *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*) in Lewis 1902, 2\*–22\* and 22\*–115\*; cf. Coakley 2018, 85–86 (part A).

159 Initial identification in Gibson 1902, 510; detailed description in Kessel 2023, 117–118, nos 16, 17; text in Brock and Kessel 2017, 136–152.

160 Text in Lewis 1902, 150\*–157\* and (with some improvements) in Brock and Kessel 2017, 120–135. For the manuscript, see also Géhin 2017, 75–78.

161 Initial identification in Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 389, no. 2; text in Müller-Kessler 2022.

162 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 369, no. 2. For corrections, see Müller-Kessler 2020a.

***Acts of Thomas (CANT 245)***

65. Sin. syr. 30 (Codex Sinaiticus Syrus),<sup>163</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Saints' lives – Syr. Orth. – 698 or 779 CE – Antioch region

**Hagiography**

***Life of Symeon Stylites (BHO 1121)***

66. Sin. arab. 588,<sup>164</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Arabic Prophetologion – Melkite – tenth century

***Life of Pelagia (BHO 919)***

67. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>165</sup> sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

**Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Historia religiosa* (CPG 6222)**

68. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>166</sup> *scriptio media*, eighth century  
*ima*: Old Syriac Gospels (sixth century) → no. 34  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

***Life of Sergius and Bacchus (BHO 1052)***

69. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>167</sup> fifth century  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

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**163** Initial identification in Bensley, Harris and Burkitt 1894, xvi; text (by Francis C. Burkitt) in Lewis 1900, 23–44 and Lewis 1904, 192\*–228\*. For the manuscript, see also Géhin 2017, 75–78.

**164** Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under 'Arabic 588').

**165** Identified by Kessel (*SPP* under 'Georgian 49').

**166** The extant portion of the text is present only within the *membra disiecta*: Outtier 1984; Kessel 2022, 259–262, 264.

**167** Kessel 2023a, 119, no. 22.

## Patristics

### Ephrem of Nisibis, *Prose Refutations*

70. London, BL, Add MS 14623<sup>168</sup> [+ London, BL, Add MS 14574, fols 1–19 (not palimpsest)], sixth century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – 823 CE – Thebaid of Egypt

### Ephrem of Nisibis, *Against the Jews (?)*

71. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>169</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

### Ephrem of Nisibis, unidentified hymns

72. London, BL, Add MS 17136,<sup>170</sup> *scriptio media*, ninth century  
*ima*: Greek John (fourth–fifth centuries)  
*sup.*: Severus of Antioch, *Hymns (CPG 7072)* – Syr. Orth. – tenth–eleventh centuries

### Ephrem of Nisibis, Jacob of Serugh, hymns

73. Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287,<sup>171</sup> uncertain date  
*sup.*: Arabic monastic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

### Jacob of Serugh, *Homily on the Presentation in the Temple*

74. London, BL, Add MS 17137,<sup>172</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Liturgical – Syr. Orth. – twelfth century

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168 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 766; text in Mitchell 1912–1921.

169 Kessel 2023a, 106, 120, no. 25.

170 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 344, no. 1.

171 Lewis 1902, xxvi–xxvii and 125\*–132\* (text); cf. Coakley 2018, 87–88 (part G).

172 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 369, no. 2. The text was not recognised by Wright; the identification was made in Müller-Kessler 2020a and 2020b.

**Jacob of Serugh, *Homily on the Nativity***

75. Sin. georg. 49,<sup>173</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Georgian festal hymnary (*iadgari*) – tenth century

**Jacob of Serugh, *Homilies on Joseph***

76. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>174</sup> eighth–ninth centuries  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

**Philoxenos of Mabbug, *Ascetic Homilies***

77. Sin. syr. 49,<sup>175</sup> uncertain date  
*sup.*: Lectionary – Melkite – tenth century
78. Sin. syr. 5,<sup>176</sup> uncertain date (later replacement of many fols)  
*sup.*: Pauline Epistles – Melkite – tenth century [sixth century]
79. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.sir. 623,<sup>177</sup> seventh century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Melkite – 886 CE – Sinai

**Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistles* (CPG 1025)**

80. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>178</sup> *scriptio media*, ninth century  
*ima*: unidentified theological in Syriac (fifth century)  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

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173 The extant text portion is present only in one of the *membra disiecta*: Kessel 2022, 260, 262–263.

174 Kessel 2023a, 120, no. 26.

175 Kessel 2024, 118–119. For other parts of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 103–104.

176 So far only the undertext in the *membrum disiectum* London, BL, Or. 8607/I has been identified (Brock 1995b, 72–73); for other parts of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 32–34.

177 Giuffrida, Németh and Proverbio 2023, 40.

178 Kessel 2023a, 106–107, 119, no. 23.

**Abba Isaiah, *Asketikon* (CPG 5555)**

81. Sin. syr. NF frg. 53,<sup>179</sup> eighth–ninth centuries  
*sup.*: *Life of Ephrem of Nisibis* / Ephrem of Nisibis, *Hymns* – uncertain origin – tenth century

**John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* (CPG 4427)**

82. London, BL, Add MS 17164,<sup>180</sup> sixth–seventh centuries (later replacement of many fols)  
*sup.*: Arabic monastic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

**Severus of Antioch, *Against John the Grammarian* (CPG 7024)**

83. London, BL, Add MS 14496,<sup>181</sup> seventh century  
*sup.*: Syrian Orthodox Euchologion – Syr. Orth. – tenth century

**John Philoponus, *Arbiter* (CPG 7260)**

84. London, BL, Add MS 17215, fols 22–25,<sup>182</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Prayers and discussion of liturgical matters – Syr. Orth. – tenth–eleventh centuries

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<sup>179</sup> Identified by Brock (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF frg. 53’).

<sup>180</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 681, no. 3. On this manuscript, see also Schmidt 2009, 176–179.

<sup>181</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 225, no. <3>. On this manuscript, see also Schmidt 2009, 179–181.

<sup>182</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 388.

**Dioscorus of Alexandria, *Letter to Domnus, Bishop of Antioch* (CPG 5456) + objections to the sixth Ecumenical Council (?)**

85. London, BL, Add MS 17215, fols 7–8<sup>183</sup> + Dayr al-Suryān, Syriac Fragment 88,<sup>184</sup> seventh–eighth centuries  
*sup.*: Proba, *Commentary on Porphyry's Eisagoge* – Syr. Orth. – ninth–tenth centuries

**Patristic florilegium**

86. London, BL, Add MS 17135<sup>185</sup> [+ London, BL, Add MS 14523, fol. 38],<sup>186</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Liturgical canons – Syr. Orth. – tenth century
87. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>187</sup> *scriptio media*, ninth century  
*ima*: Numbers, Judith (sixth century) → nos 10, 18  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

**Council of Ephesus / Epiphanius, *Anakephalaiosis* (CPG 3765)**

88. London, BL, Add MS 17198,<sup>188</sup> sixth century (fols 1–6, 23–32: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Jacob of Serugh, homilies – Syr. Orth. – ninth–tenth centuries [seventh century]

**Liturgy**

**Tropologion**

89. Sin. syr. NF 3,<sup>189</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Horologion – Melkite – thirteenth century

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**183** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3, 1165 (without precise identification of the *scriptio inferior*). On this manuscript, see also Schmidt 2009, 174–176.

**184** Brock and Van Rompay, 426–427.

**185** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 294, no. 1.

**186** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 294. The palimpsest folio belongs to London, BL, Add MS 17135 but its undertext has not been so far identified.

**187** Kessel 2023a, 119–120, no. 24.

**188** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 503.

**189** Identified by Brock (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF 3’); see also Brock 2019.

90. Sin. syr. NF 3,<sup>190</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Horologion – Melkite – thirteenth century

### Hymns on Mary

91. Sin. syr. NF frg. 63,<sup>191</sup> sixth–seventh centuries  
*sup.*: Triodion – Melkite – eleventh century

### Prayers and hymns in honour of Mary

92. Sin. syr. 15,<sup>192</sup> uncertain date (later replacement of many fols)  
*sup.*: Praxapostolos – Melkite – uncertain date [eighth–ninth centuries]

### Gospel lectionary

93. (a) London, BL, Add MS 14452,<sup>193</sup> tenth century (fol. 58: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Four Gospels – Syr. Orth. – twelfth–thirteenth centuries [sixth–seventh centuries]  
 (b) London, BL, Add MS 14451,<sup>194</sup> tenth century (fol. 88: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Gospel of Luke – Syr. Orth. –1222 CE [fifth century] – Dayr al-Suryān  
 (c) London, BL, Add MS 14589,<sup>195</sup> tenth century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – eleventh–twelfth centuries  
 (d) London, BL, Add MS 17137,<sup>196</sup> tenth century  
*sup.*: Liturgical – Syr. Orth. – twelfth century
94. London, BL, Add MS 14589,<sup>197</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – eleventh–twelfth centuries

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**190** Identified by Brock (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF 3’); see also Brock 2019.

**191** Identified by Brock (*SPP* under ‘Syriac NF frg. 64’).

**192** Lewis 1894, 18 and 127–128 (Appendix by Stenning). For other parts of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 50–53.

**193** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 50.

**194** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 74–75.

**195** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 858–859, no. 2.

**196** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 370, no. 3.

**197** Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 858, no. 1.

### Lectionary (?)

95. Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287<sup>198</sup> (7pk18), *scriptio media*, seventh century  
*ima*: Syriac, unidentified  
*sup.*: Arabic monastic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

### Syrian Orthodox Euchologion

96. London, BL, Add MS 17135,<sup>199</sup> seventh century  
*sup.*: Liturgical canons – Syr. Orth. – tenth century

### Syrian Orthodox liturgical book, incl. *Anaphora of James*

97. London, BL, Add MS 14615,<sup>200</sup> eighth century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – tenth–eleventh centuries

### Severus of Antioch, *Hymns (CPG 7072)*

98. London, BL, Add MS 14589,<sup>201</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – eleventh–twelfth centuries

### Baptismal rite

99. London, BL, Add MS 14507,<sup>202</sup> seventh–eighth centuries  
*sup.*: Liturgical canons – Syr. Orth. – tenth–eleventh centuries

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198 Lewis 1902, xxvi and 120\*–121\* (text); cf. Coakley 2018, 87 (part E).

199 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 294, no. 3.

200 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 841–842; text (*Anaphora of James*) in Heiming 1950. On this manuscript, see also Schmidt 2009, 181–182.

201 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 859, no. 4.

202 Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 284–285, no. 2.



## Liturgical canons

100. London, BL, Add MS 17206,<sup>203</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Syr. Orth. – eleventh–twelfth centuries

## Sciences

### Galen, *On Simple Drugs*

101. Washington DC, private collection, Syriac Galen Palimpsest,<sup>204</sup> ninth century  
*sup.*: Parakletike – Melkite – eleventh century

### Gesios, commentary on Galen

102. (a) London, BL, Add MS 14490,<sup>205</sup> eighth–ninth centuries  
*sup.*: Lectionary – Syr. Orth. – 1089 CE – Dayr al-Suryān  
 (b) London, BL, Add MS 17127,<sup>206</sup> eighth–ninth centuries  
*sup.*: commentary on the Revelation – Syr. Orth. – 1088 CE – Dayr al-Suryān  
 (c) London, BL, Add MS 14486,<sup>207</sup> eighth–ninth centuries (fols 1, 3, 8: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Lectionary (first part) – Syr. Orth. – eleventh/twelfth century [824 CE, Ḥarrān]  
 (d) London, BL, Add MS 14487,<sup>208</sup> eighth–ninth centuries (later replacement of several fols)  
*sup.*: Lectionary (second part) – Syr. Orth. – eleventh/twelfth century [824 CE, Ḥarrān]  
 (e) Dayr al-Suryān, Syr. 41,<sup>209</sup> eighth–ninth centuries (fols 141–160: later replacement)  
*sup.*: Festal hymnary – Syr. Orth. – eleventh/twelfth century [tenth/eleventh century]

<sup>203</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 860, no. 1.

<sup>204</sup> After initial identification by Brock came intensive research that resulted in the identification of nearly every folio (Afif et al. 2018 [2019]). For other parts of the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 145–146.

<sup>205</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 161. On this *codex recentior* (and other related ones), see also Schmidt 2009, 182–186.

<sup>206</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 1021.

<sup>207</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 152.

<sup>208</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 154.

<sup>209</sup> Brock and Van Rompay 2014, 300–308. The identification of the undertext as belonging to the same *codex antiquior* was proposed in Kessel 2015, 226 but deserves a closer study.

## Herbal

103. Sin. arab. 514 (Codex Arabicus),<sup>210</sup> *scriptio media*, eighth–ninth centuries  
*ima*: Pauline Epistles (sixth century) → no. 59  
*sup.*: Arabic hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – c. 900 CE

## Jacob of Edessa, *Grammar*

104. London, BL, Add MS 17217, fols 37–38<sup>211</sup> + London, BL, Add MS 14665, fol. 28,<sup>212</sup>  
ninth–tenth centuries  
*sup.*: not overwritten

## Varia

### Calendar

105. Sin. syr. NF frg. 46,<sup>213</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Hagiographic miscellany – Melkite – ninth–tenth centuries

## *Julian Romance*

106. Codex Syriacus Primus,<sup>214</sup> sixth century  
*sup.*: Monastic miscellany – Melkite – ninth century

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<sup>210</sup> Kessel 2023a, 107, 121, no. 29.

<sup>211</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3, 1168–1172.

<sup>212</sup> Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3, 1172–1173 (although the half-folio is partly covered with writing in Arabic, it is not clear if the Syriac text was effaced).

<sup>213</sup> Brock 1995, 44–47; cf. *SPP* under ‘Syriac NF frg. 46’ (description by Brock). The undertext of another extant part of the same codex – Sin. syr. NF 57 – remains unidentified.

<sup>214</sup> The larger part of the codex is lost and the text has been identified in one of its *membra disiecta* by Brock (Brock and Muraviev 2000); for the manuscript, see Géhin 2017, 137–141.

Bernard Outtier

# A Georgian Palimpsest Folio in an Athonite Greek Manuscript

**Abstract:** The paper provides the edition and translation of the content of a Georgian palimpsest folio which was overwritten in Greek in the year 1475. The folio was taken from a Georgian manuscript that must have been copied at the beginning of the twelfth century in the Holy Monastery of Iviron and rewritten in Greek in the monastery of Konstamonitou, both on Mount Athos. The Greek codex that contains it is today kept in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, under the shelf number Coislin 285. The folio contains some of the stichera for the Vespers of 26 September, devoted to St John the Apostle. It is part of the Menaion translated at the Iviron by George the Hagiorite in the middle of the eleventh century. The text of the palimpsest fragment is very close to George's autograph (Athos, Iviron [hereafter: Ivir.], georg. 57) and preserves some stichera no longer in use in the Greek liturgy today. It has not been possible to reunite this folio with another manuscript copied at the Iviron.

## Introduction

The study of palimpsests is not a novel practice. In particular, Greek and Latin palimpsests have been studied for a long time, mostly with the limited technical means of former times.<sup>1</sup>

In the first part of the 1970s, I began gathering information on, up to that point, unknown Armenian and Georgian manuscripts, beginning of course with the ones kept in Paris. As everyone would have done, I first inspected both the unpublished and published catalogues of manuscripts of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Looking into the unpublished handwritten supplement to the *Catalogue des manuscrits arméniens et géorgiens* by Frédéric Macler,<sup>2</sup> kept in the Department of Oriental Manuscripts, I detected among the fragments today stored

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<sup>1</sup> Endeavours began to increase in the eighteenth century; see Albrecht 2015, 31 and Emanuel Zingg's contribution to the present volume.

<sup>2</sup> Macler 1908.

under the shelf number géorgien 30<sup>3</sup> not only one leaf of the so-called Khanmeti lectionary of Mount Sinai – the allegedly oldest non-palimpsest codex preserved in Georgian, datable to c. the seventh century<sup>4</sup> – but also four Georgian leaves that are double palimpsests, with two different Syriac layers underneath. These leaves formerly belonged to another manuscript from St Catherine's Monastery, namely, Sin. georg. 49.<sup>5</sup>

In Robert Devreesse's printed catalogue of the Greek manuscripts of the Fonds Coislin, under number 285, I found the following indication: 'in 1475, the monk Nikephoros, wanting to repair the gaps, substituted what was missing in the original text by supplying one folio torn out from an Armenian manuscript (f. 9)'.<sup>6</sup> According to the first cataloguer of the Coislin collection, Bernard de Montfaucon, codex 285 ('olim 354'; Diktyon 49426) comes from 'monasterii Constantis' on Mount Athos, which means, I suppose, the monastery of Konstamonitou.<sup>7</sup>

Upon first inspection, the folio turned out not to be an Armenian palimpsest, as supposed by Devreesse, but a Georgian one,<sup>8</sup> written in *nuskhuri* minuscules in twenty-seven lines per page. In being reused, the folio was turned upside down (180°). While this was readily ascertainable with the naked eye, deciphering the Georgian undertext and its identification was anything but an easy task.

When I started working on the leaf fifty years ago, no thesaurus of the Old Georgian language was available yet, and at that time I did not know the Byzantine liturgical texts in Georgian well enough to determine the content of the undertext. Many years afterwards, I could check the TITUS database, which aims to provide a compre-

<sup>3</sup> See <<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc137052>> and the digitised facsimiles listed there. All web addresses (URLs) referred to in this article were last accessed on 12 June 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Outtier 1972. The main part of the Khanmeti lectionary codex is today kept in the University Library of Graz as ms. 2058/1; see Zammit Lupi 2023 for codicological details and Erich Renhart's contribution to the present volume on another manuscript of the Graz collection that comes from St Catherine's Monastery.

<sup>5</sup> Outtier 2022. The work on these palimpsests is still in progress; see now Outtier 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Devreesse 1945, 269: 'en 1475, le moine Nicéphore [...] désireux de réparer les brèches suppléa par un feuillet de parchemin arraché d'un manuscrit arménien (f. 9) ce qui manquait à la pièce du commencement' (all translations mine, unless otherwise indicated). The Greek text in the upper layer is John Chrysostom's *Fifth Homily on the Incomprehensibility of God* (PG 48, 744–748; CPG 4318). In the former catalogue by Montfaucon (1715, 401), there is no mention of the added folio, nor that it is a palimpsest.

<sup>7</sup> Montfaucon 1715, 401. On the development of the monastery's name, see Oikonomidès 1978, 10–11.

<sup>8</sup> The confusion between the Armenian and Georgian scripts has been quite common for quite some time and still occurs today. See Gippert et al. 2008, I-2 for the Georgian manuscripts among the New Finds of Mount Sinai bearing the (Greek) siglum AP.

hensive thesaurus of Old Georgian texts,<sup>9</sup> but I did not find any match there – probably the text was not yet included. Only recently, in December 2022, when I was asked about the leaf's contents by Victor Gysembergh, causing me to check the database again, was I now able to identify it: it is part of the translation of the Menaion of September worked out by George the Athonite in about the middle of the eleventh century at the Holy Monastery of Iviron.<sup>10</sup> This text had been added to TITUS in 2018 based on the critical edition by Lali Jgamaia.<sup>11</sup> More precisely, it is a fragment of the stichera for the Vespers of 26 September, the feast day of the Repose of John the Apostle.

Right before this paper was presented at the workshop 'Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective II', held in Hamburg in July 2023, I received the first multispectral photographs of this folio, thanks to the kind support of Gysembergh and the team at the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL), directed by Michael Phelps.<sup>12</sup> Having these images<sup>13</sup> and the critical edition at hand, it was now finally possible to render the text in full. It begins on fol. 9<sup>v</sup>, continuing on fol. 9<sup>r</sup>. The leaf was clipped to fit into the Greek codex, so one to four letters are lost at the beginning of the lines on fol. 9<sup>v</sup>, and one to four letters at the end of the lines on fol. 9<sup>r</sup>; the missing letters are reconstructed in accordance with the critical text and indicated by angle brackets in the following diplomatic edition. Note that the fragment bears the quire number 28 on fol. 9<sup>v</sup>, which therefore is likely to have been the initial page of the given quire.<sup>14</sup>

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9 See <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/texte2.htm#georgant>>.

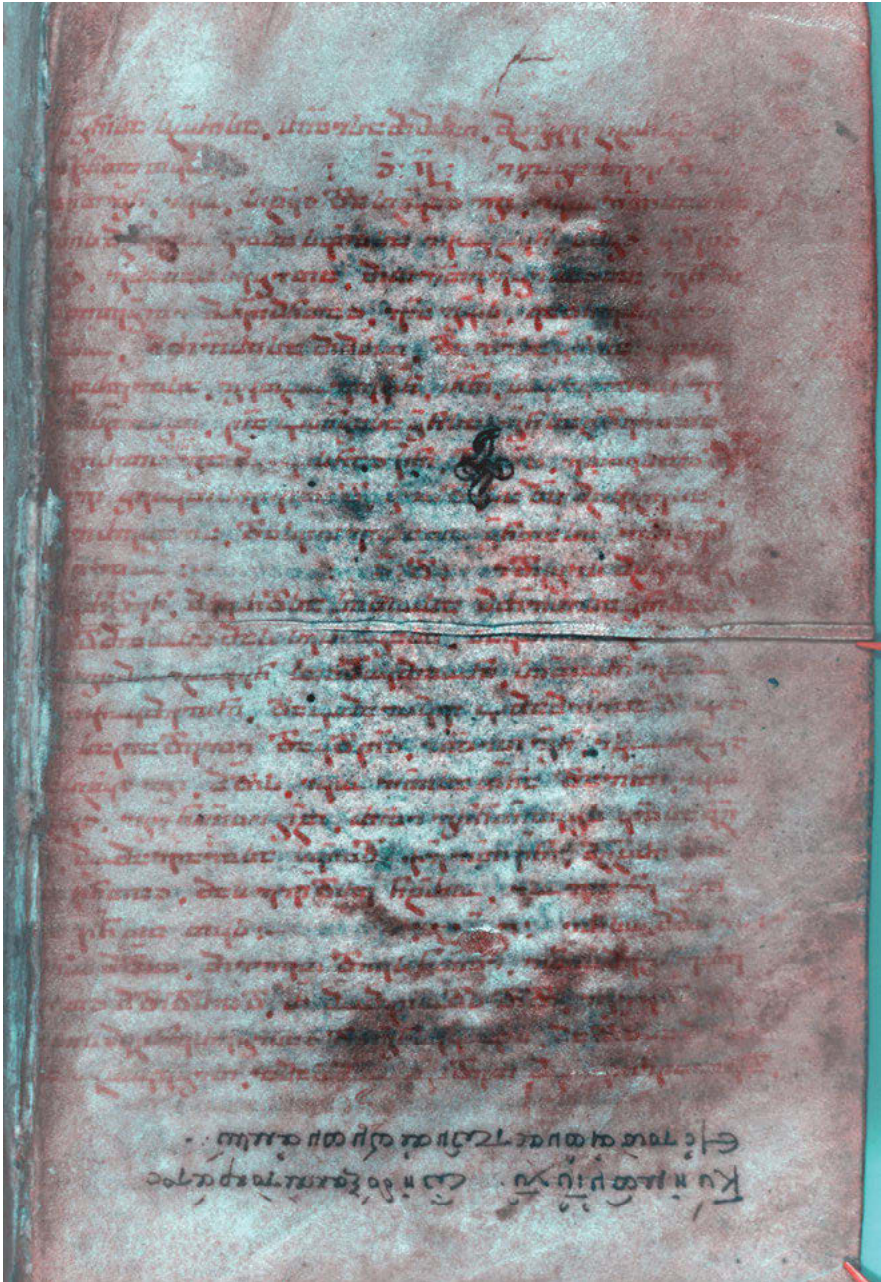
10 See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, xii, as to the Athonite and his work.

11 Jgamaia 2007. See <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcg/cauc/ageo/liturg/gmmensep/gmmen.htm>>.

12 The project website is at <<http://emel-library.org/>>.

13 The EMEL team took the raw images at the Bibliothèque nationale de France on 27 June 2023. The red-cyan pseudo-colour images reproduced as Figs 1 and 2 were processed by Jost Gippert using the Hoku software by Keith Knox (see <<http://www.cis.rit.edu/~ktpkci/Hoku.html>>) on 10 July 2023.

14 The text corresponds to Jgamaia 2007, 355a, l. 15–356b, l. 29, and 454a, l. 1–455a, l. 1. In the transcript, abbreviations are restituted and marked by round parentheses; curly braces indicate reconstructed letters within the text area, mostly from original rubrics, and angle brackets, reconstructed letters outside of the preserved text area. Hyphens are added where line breaks fall within a given word.



**Fig. 1:** Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Coislin 285, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>; pseudo-colour rendering of multispectral images (UV, 365 nm and IR, 735 nm); © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

9<sup>v</sup> ბი

<მის შ(ე)ნისა ს(ა)ხ(ი)ერისა. რ(ომ)ლისა მიმ(ა)რთ. მ(ე)ოხგ(უ)ეყ(ა)ვ ცხ(ო)რ(ე)ბ(ა)დ ს(უ)ლ-  
 <თ>ა ჩ(უ)ენთათჳს : {ჲ}(მა)ე: Ⴀ : {ჲ}იჰბადევედით  
 <ს>(ირვე)ლითგ(ა)ნ. იყო. სიტყ(უ)აჲ და სიტყ(უ)აჲ იგი. იყო ღ(მრ)თისა თ(ა)ნა.  
 <ღ(მრ)თისმ(ე)ტყ(უ)ელო ყ(ოვე)ლსა ს(ო)ფ(ე)ლსა იქუხენ. ს(ა)მ(ე)ბ(ა)ჲ. ყ(ოვე)ლად წ(მიდა)ჲ  
 <დ(იდე)ბ(ა)ჲ. ერთარსებითა. მით ღ(მრ)თეებისაჲთა. გ(ა)ნმა-  
 <ნ>ათლებ(ე)ლი მ(ო)რწმ(უ)ნ(ე)თაჲ. ვ(ითარ)ცა გ(ა)ქ(უ)ს. კადნიერებაჲ.  
 <ნეტ>არო. მ(ო)ძლ(უ)რისა მიმ(ა)რთ. და ღ(მრ)თისა შ(ე)ნისა ვ(ითარ)ცა ს(ა)-  
 <ყ>უარელსა. გვთხოვე ჩ(უ)ენ რ(ომელ)ნი სურვილით ვ-  
 <დ>ღ(ე)ს(ა)სწ(ა)ლ(ო)ბთ. წ(მიდა)სა ვს(ე)ნ(ე)ბასა შ(ე)ნსა გ(ა)ნსაცდელთა  
 <და> ჰირთაგ(ა)ნ<sup>15</sup> გამოვსნაჲ ჩ(უ)ენი. და წ(მიდა)ჲ ეკლესიაჲ და  
 <ი>ვევ შუჴპრველად. კლდესა ზ(ე)და მტკიცესა.  
 <მო>ძლ(უ)რებათა. და სწავლათა შ(ე)ნთასა. ღ(მრ)თშემ-  
 <ო>სილო : {ხუ}აჲ {ჲ}(მა)ე: Ⴀ : {ჲ}იდევისმ(ე)ტყ(უ)ელ(ე)ბ.  
 <შ>იეგრდენ. მკერდსა ს(ა)ღ(მრ)თოსა მ(ო)ძლურისა შ(ე)ნისასა  
 <სა>დ(უ)მლოსა მას სერობასა. საყ(უ)არ(ე)ლო ქ(რისტ)წსო<sup>16</sup>  
 <და მ(ი)ერ> გამოიხუენ საადუმლონი ს(ა)ღ(მრ)თონი გამო-  
 <უ>თქუმენი. და ჳმაჰყ(ა)ვ ჳმამლლად ჳ(მა)ჲ  
 <ი>გ> საწადელი და ყ(ოვე)ლად წ(მიდა)ჲ. პ(ირვე)ლითგ(ა)ნ. იყო სიტყ(უ)აჲ  
 <და> სიტყ(უ)აჲ იგი. მ(არა)დის იყო ღ(მრ)თისა თ(ა)ნა და ღ(მერ)თი იყო  
 <სი>ტყ(უ)აჲ. იგი ნათ(ე)ლი ჳ(ე)მმარი)ტი. რ(ომე)ლი გ(ა)ნ(ა)ნ(ა)ლეს ყ(ოვე)ლსა კ(ა)  
 <ცს>ა მომავალსა ს(ო)ფლ(ა)დ. ქ(რისტ)ე ღ(მერ)თი ჩ(უ)ენი. მ(ა)ცხ(ვა)რი  
 <ს(უ)ლ>თა ჩ(უ)ენთაჲ. მას ევე(დ)რე ნ(ე)ტ(ა)რო. იოვანე ს(უ)ლ  
 <თ>ა ჩ(უ)ენთა თჳს : – {ხუ}ანი: Ⴀ გ(უ)ერდი : {ნ}ირსო მ(ა)მ(ა)ო  
 <რ>ანო მ(ოვე)დით. მიიღეთ დღეს ნ(ა)თელი. ღ(მრ)თისმეცნიერე  
 <ბი>საჲ მდიდრად. რ(ამეთუ) მომიწოდს დიდი იგი ქ(ა)დაგი  
 <ღ(მრ)თისმეცნიერებისაჲ და გ(ა)ყუოფს მადლსა მისსა  
 <წ(მიდა)სა> უხუებით. ამას მოუხდეთ მწურვალედ.

‘(towards) your good teacher, with Whom intercede for us, for the life of our souls.

3<sup>rd</sup> mode, (after) ‘Imitate’: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. Theologian, in the whole world you burst out the all-holy Trinity, the glorification<sup>17</sup> with the substantiality of the divinity. An illuminator of the believers, since you have audacity, O blessed one, with your teacher and God, as beloved, beg for us who with desire celebrate your holy memory so that we may be delivered from tentations and plagues, and keep unshaken the holy Church on a firm rock by your teachings and learnings, O godly one!

Another (hymn). 4<sup>th</sup> mode, (after) ‘He glorifies’: You lent on the divine bosom of your teacher during the mysterious Last Supper, Christ’s beloved, and from there sprouted divine unutterable mysteries, and you shouted loud this desirable and all-holy sentence: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was always with God and the Word was God. He (is) the true light, who enlightens every man coming in the world, Christ our God, Saviour of our souls. Beseech Him, blessed John, for our souls.

Other (hymns). 1<sup>st</sup> mode plagal, (after) ‘Estimable father’: People, come, receive today the light of the knowledge of God opulently, because the great preacher of the knowledge of God calls me and divides generously his holy grace. Let us come to him fervently’

15 გ(ა)ნ (*g(a)n*) is added in smaller characters above the line; see below.

16 This word is illegible due to the parchment being folded at the given line.

17 The edition has the adverbial form დიდებად (*didebad*) ‘for glorification’, which works better here.

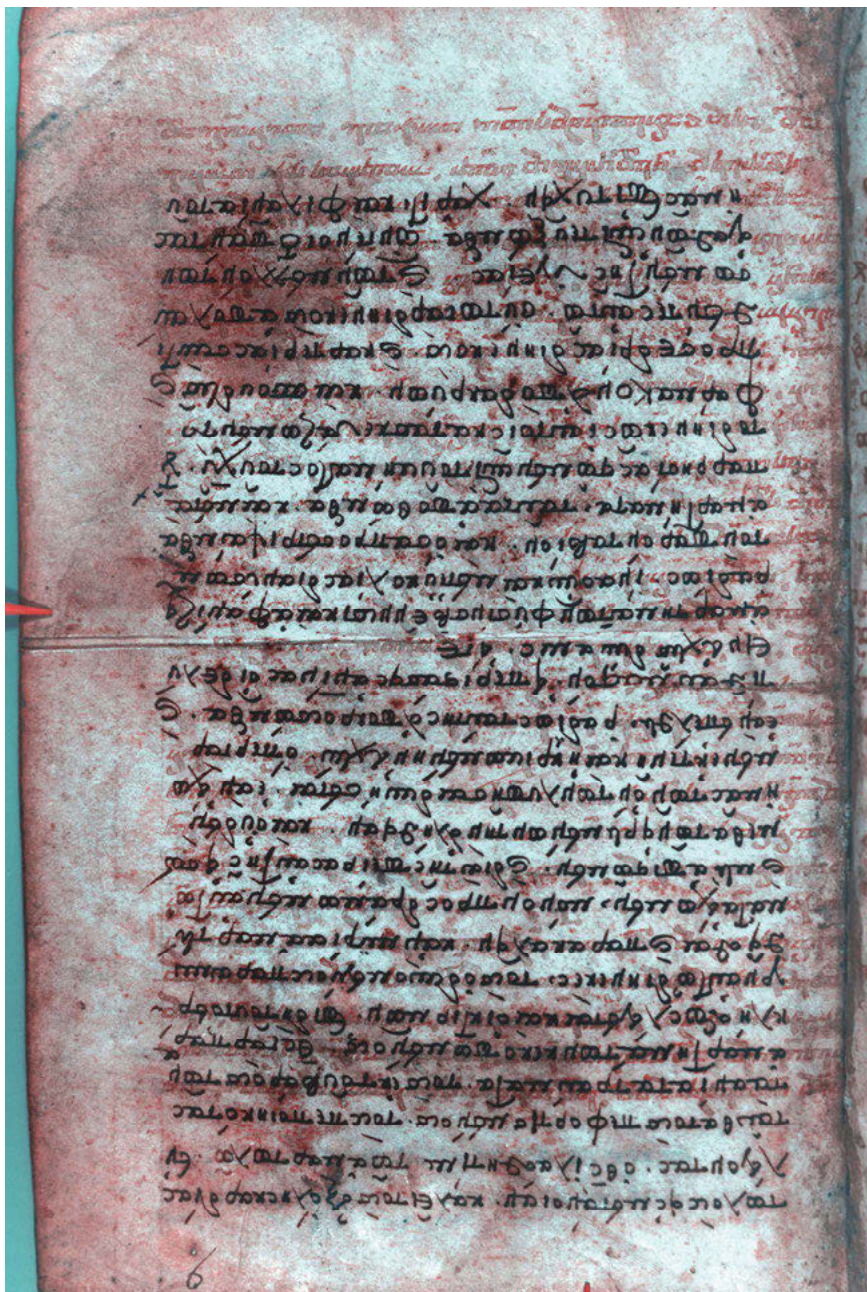


Fig. 2: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Coislin 285, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>; pseudo-colour rendering of multispectral images (UV, 365 nm and IR, 735 nm); © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.



9<sup>r</sup>

და გ(ა)ლბითა. ვაქოთ ღ(მრ)თისმ(ე)ტყ(უ)ლელზად მისი. და ჳ<მა>  
 ვყოთ ქ(რისტწ)ს საყ(ვა)რ(ე)ლო. რ(ომე)ლი მიეყრდენ მკერდსა მ<ისსა>  
 ი(ოვან)ე მ(ეო)ხ გ(უ)ყ(ა)ვ. ცხორებისათჳს. ს(უ)ლთა ჩ(უ)ენთასა:- <წი>-  
 დო მნათობო. ჭ(ე)შ(მარი)ტი იგი სიბრძნე ქ(რისტწ)ს ღ(მრ)თ(ისა)დ შეიყ(უ)არ<ე>  
 და კუალსა მისსა შეუღდეგ. რ(ა)ჟ(ამ)ს ს(უ)ლისა. შ(ე)ნისა <სი>-  
 წრფობამ(ა)ნ ღირსო. და ჳორცთა შ(ე)ნთა უბიწო<ე>-  
 ბამ(ა)ნ საყ(ვა)რ(ე)ლგყო მ(ე)უფ(ი)სა. და ნ(ა)თ(ე)ლსა მას ღ(მრ)თე<ე>ბი->  
 ს(ა)სა შეეყვანა. ამისთვისცა ღ(მერ)თშ(ე)მ(ო)სილო. ყ(ოვე)ლი ქ(უ)ყ(ა)ნან(ა)დ  
 შ(ე)ნ გნატრის ი(ო)ვან(ე) მ(ე)ოხგ(უ)ყ(ა)ვ ცხ(ო)რ(ე)ბისათ(ჳ)ს ს(უ)ლთა ჩ(უ)ეთა<სა>  
 {ყ(მა)}ი იგი დიდი ღ(მრ)თისა ს(ი)ტყვს(ა)დ. და ძე ქუბილისად <ქრისტწ>  
 მ(ო)ც(ი)ქ(უ)ლი ს(უ)ლ(ი)ერსა ამას კრებასა მომიწოდს მმ<ანო შე>-  
 მოკერბით უკუე ტაბლასა ამას ზ(ე)ცისასა ჳ<ს(ე)ნ(ე)ბ(ა)>-  
 სა მისსა და ვიშუებდეთ შუეზბითა მით ს(უ)ლ(ი)ერ<ითა>  
 და ვადიდოთ მიცვალებად მისი და მჳურვალ(ე)დ <იდა>-  
 ჭ(ა)დებდეთ ღ(მრ)თისმ(ე)ტყ(უ)ლელზისა წყ(ა)როო. ი(ოვან)ე. მ(ეო)ხ გ(უ)ყ(ა)ვ  
 {ქ(რისტწ)ს ქ(ა)დაგო. ქ(ა)ლ(უ)ლო ღ(მრ)თისმ(ე)ტყ(უ)ლო. შ(ე)ნ  
 ვ(ითარ)ცა ჭ(ე)შ(მარი)ტ(ი)სა <ქ(ა)ლ(უ)ლ(ე)>-  
 ბისა ყუავილსა. ქ(ა)ლ(უ)ლი წ(მი)დად. უბიწოდ ღ(მრ)თისმშ<ო>-  
 ბელი შეგვედრა ქ(რისტემ)ან ჳ(უარ)სა ზ(ე)და რად იყო რ(ომ)ლისა<ცა>  
 ძედ გიწოდა. ზ(ე)ცისა კ(ა)ცო. და ქ(უ)ყ(ა)ნისა ანგ(ე)ლ(ო)ზო-  
 ნესტო ღ(მრ)თისმ(ე)ტყ(უ)ლელზისაო. წ(მი)დისა ღ(მრ)თისმშოზ(ე)ლისა<  
 თ(ა)ნა მ(ა)რ(ა)დის მეოხგუყავ. მგალობელთ<ა>  
 შ(ე)ნთათჳს ნ(ე)ტ(ა)რო {ყ(მა)}: Ⴀ გ(უ)ერდი {წ}აღაცათუ ღ(მრ)თისა მ(ი)ერ  
 {შ}(ო)ც(ი)ქ(უ)ლო ო(ც)ვლისაო ღ(მრ)თისმ(ე)ტყ(უ)ლო. და მახარებელ<ო>  
 მაღალთა მ(ა)თ სადღ(უ)მლოთა. გამომთქუმელ ი<ქ>-  
 მენ და სიბრძნისა. დაფარულნი. სიტყ(უ)ანი იქუზენ>  
 პ(ირ)ველითგ(ა)ნი. განუცხადე. მ(ო)რწმ(უ)ნეთა და მწვ(ა)ლებ<ელ>-  
 თა არა იყოდ წარსწყმიდე. და ზრ(ა)ხვანი მ(ა)თ<ანი>

‘and praise with hymns his theology, and shout to Christ! Beloved, who leant on His bosom, John, intercede for us, for the life of our souls.

O great luminary, you loved the true wisdom of Christ God and you followed Him when, worthy one, the purity of your soul and the innocence of your body made the King love you and He introduced you into the light of divinity. For this reason, godly one, the whole universe blesses you, John; intercede for us, for the life of our souls.

The great voice of God’s Word and the son of thunder, Christ’s apostle, calls me to this spiritual assembly. Brethren, gather already to the heavenly table for His memory and let us rejoice with a spiritual joy and glorify His death and cry out to Him: source of theology, John, intercede for us [for the life of our souls].

Preacher of Christ, virgin theologian, Christ entrusted to you as to a flower of true virginity the immaculate Theotokos when He was on the cross, and He called you her son. Heavenly man and terrestrial angel, trumpet of theology, intercede always with the holy Theotokos for those who sing for you, O blessed one!

2<sup>nd</sup> mode plagal, (after) ‘Although by God’: Lord’s apostle, theologian and evangelist, you expressed the high mysteries and you burst out the hidden words of wisdom. You revealed ‘In the beginning’ to the believers, and you destroyed the ‘He was not’ of the heretics, and their thoughts’

Some questions arise. Given that the stichera are usually the most variable part of the canon for the commemoration of a saint, the first question is to what extent these hymns are still in use in the service today. Three of the stichera can indeed be identified. One is the first sticheron, of which only the end is preserved here and which is attributed to Theophanes the Branded, according to Jgamaia's edition;<sup>18</sup> it corresponds to the Greek hymn Τὴν τῶν Ἀποστόλων ἀκρότητα, attributed to the same author (*MR I*, 260). Similarly, the sticheron of the 4<sup>th</sup> mode, unassigned in the edition, can be identified with the hymn Ἀναπεσῶν ἐν τῷ στήθει τοῦ Διδασκάλου Χριστοῦ of Byzantios (*MR I*, 260), and the sticheron of the 2<sup>nd</sup> mode plagal, indicated as a work by Leontius (of Constantinople) in the Georgian edition,<sup>19</sup> with the hymn Ἀπόστολε Χριστοῦ, Εὐαγγελιστὰ Θεολόγε attributed to John the Monk (*MR I*, 261). The five other stichera are unknown in the Greek liturgical books used today; this fact underlines the great significance of George's translation for the history of the Byzantine liturgical monuments.

The next question is: how to assess the quality of the text? In her edition, Lali Jgamaia published, along with the critical edition, the wording of George the Athonite's autograph (Ivir. georg. 57, a selective sticherarion from September to May),<sup>20</sup> which aligns with our folio from fol. 5<sup>v</sup>, l. 25 to fol. 6<sup>v</sup>, l. 3. In a few readings, our folio differs from the critical text of the edition; e.g. in adding მ(არა)დის (*maradis*) 'always' in the quotation of John 1:1 (fol. 9<sup>v</sup>, l. 19).<sup>21</sup> The reading of the palimpsest here agrees with that of the autograph (Ivir. georg. 57, fol. 6<sup>r</sup>, l. 6; see Fig. 3), thus suggesting that this is the original wording and that the critical text should be emended accordingly. A peculiar case is the phrase განსაცდელთა და ჭირთა გამოჯსნაჲ ჩუენი (*gansacdelta da čirta gamoqsnay čueni*), literally, 'our deliverance of tentations and plagues', appearing in the critical edition in the second sticheron.<sup>22</sup> Here, the autograph contains the extended form ჭირთა გ(ა)ნ (*čirta gan*), which yields the better expression 'deliverance *from* the plagues' (Ivir. georg. 57, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>, l. 33), and this is again confirmed by the palimpsest (fol. 9<sup>v</sup>, l. 10), albeit in a peculiar way: the postposition გ(ა)ნ (*gan*) 'from' was here added secondarily above the line, thus witnessing both traditions at the same time. We may therefore conclude that our palimpsest fragment stems from a manuscript which had a very good text.

18 Jgamaia 2007, 354b, l. 27: თეოფანე.

19 Jgamaia 2007, 356b, l. 13: ლეონტი.

20 Jgamaia 2007, 453a–454b. See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 517–523 as to the codex.

21 The word is missing in Jgamaia 2007, 355b, l. 20.

22 Jgamaia 2007, 355b, l. 2.

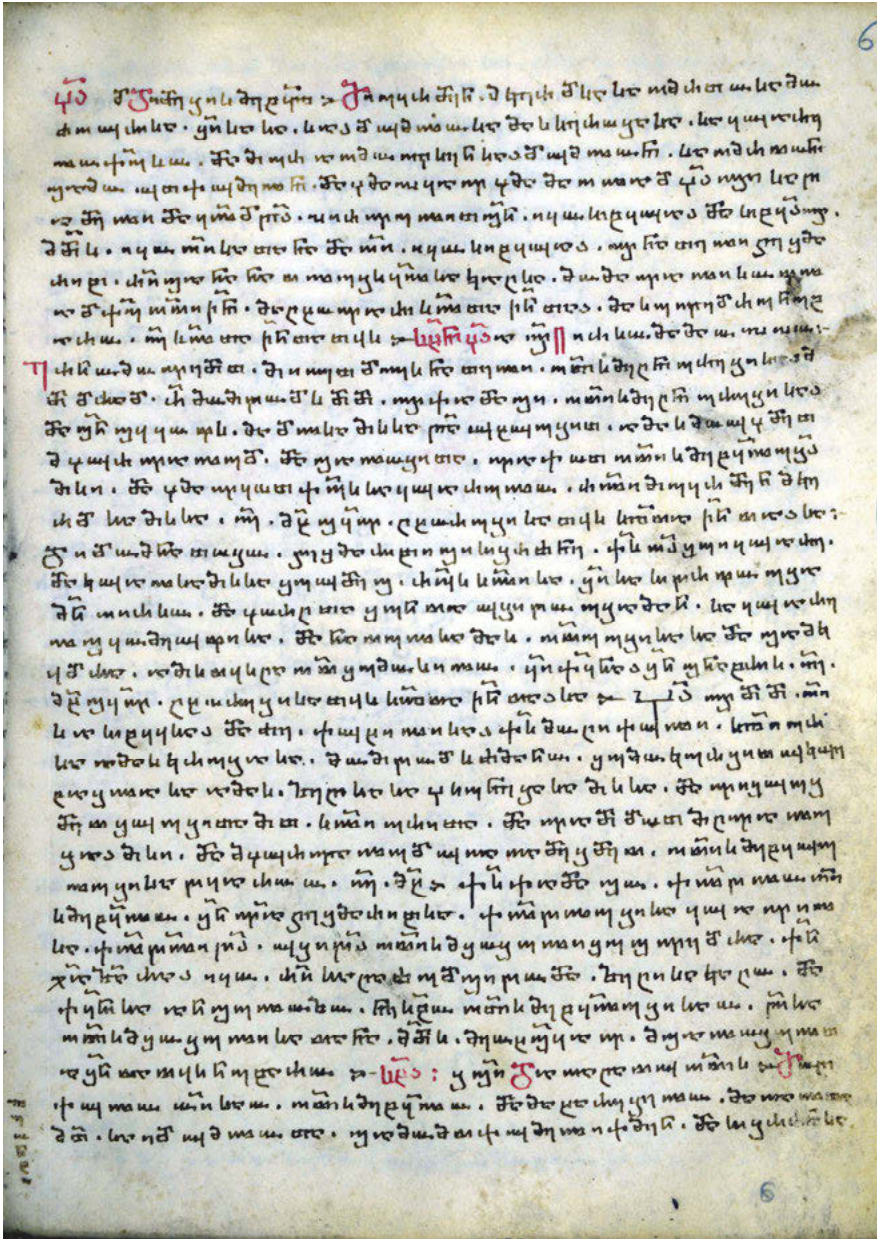


Fig. 3: Athos, Ivir. georg. 57, fol. 6'; © Ιερά Μονή Ιβήρων Αγίου Όρους.

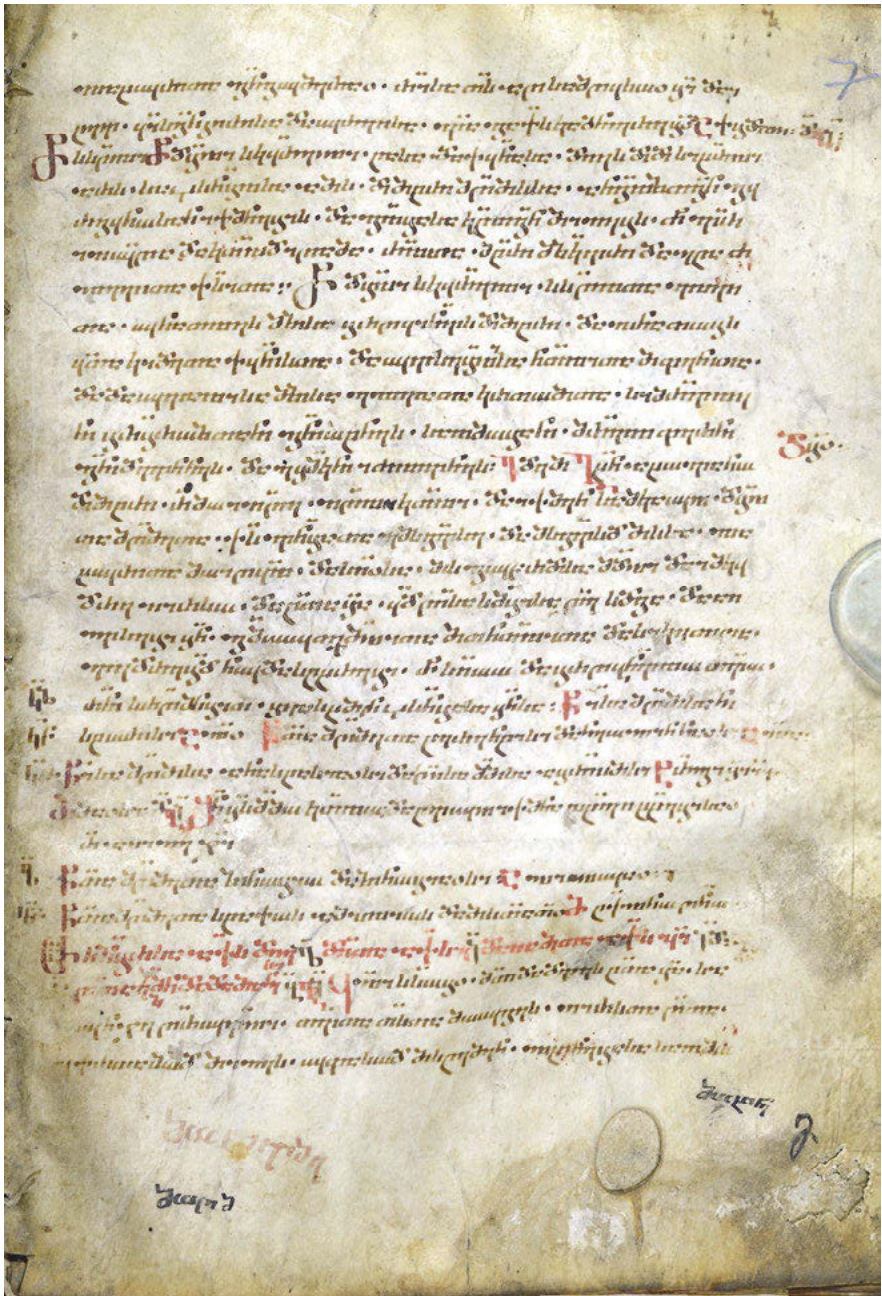


Fig. 4: Athos, Ivir. georg. 46, fol. 1r; © Ιερά Μονή Ιβήρων Αγίου Όρους.

The last question is whether it is possible to find out which codex the palimpsest folio was taken from. As a possible candidate we might think of Ivir. georg. 46, a selective all-year Menaion, which is defective in its initial part, today beginning with 23 October. Considering that sticheraria usually begin with September and that a few other fragments have been identified on Mount Athos that might stem from the missing part of Ivir. georg. 46,<sup>23</sup> our palimpsest might well fit into this lacuna, and the outer dimensions (Ivir. georg. 46: 230 × 175 mm; our folio: 223 × 153 mm) and the layout (Ivir. georg. 46: 28–31 lines per page; our folio: 27 lines) seem to support this. However, Ivir. georg. 46 usually has more letters per line than our palimpsest (37–43 vs 31–34 letters), and the hands can hardly be regarded as identical (see Fig. 4, showing Ivir. georg. 46, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>). What is more important is the quire number ԵԻ (= XXVIII), which appears centred at the top of fol. 9<sup>v</sup> of our fragment; today, Ivir. georg. 46 begins with quire number VI, thus leaving no space for more than five missing quires before it, and its quire numbers appear not in the centre but in the right corner of the top of the first recto (and, additionally, the lower left corner of the last verso) of each quire; furthermore, they are not written in bold *asomtavruli* majuscules but in thin *nuskhuri* minuscules. The idea that Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Coislin 285, fol. 9 stems from Ivir. georg. 46 must therefore be abandoned. Other Georgian sticheraria that cover the month of September can also be ruled out, as they cover 26 September, partly with the same stichera.<sup>24</sup>

To conclude, it is interesting to note that the monastery neighbouring Konstantonitou, Zographou, also possesses a (half-)folio taken from a Georgian manuscript of the Iviron, namely, the famous Oshki Bible, dated 978 (Ivir. georg. 1),<sup>25</sup> as well as a folio taken from Ivir. georg. 51, a Menaion of December and January, datable to 1080–1081.<sup>26</sup> A folio that might have derived from Ivir. georg. 46 has been detected bound as a flyleaf to the Greek Gospel manuscript no. 12 (formerly

<sup>23</sup> These portions concern 8–13, 21–22, and 24 September. See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 441–442.

<sup>24</sup> This is true of Ivir. georg. 71, fols 13<sup>f</sup>–16<sup>v</sup> (with the end of the first and beginning of the second sticheron on fol. 15<sup>v</sup>, ll. 11–21, including the reading  $\text{Ϝ}\text{ο}\text{ρ}\text{ο}\text{υ}\text{α}\ \text{Ϛ}(\text{α})\text{Ϟ}$  in l. 20; one folio is missing between fols 15<sup>v</sup> and 16<sup>f</sup>, the information in Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 608 must be corrected accordingly); Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 124, fols 102<sup>f</sup>–106<sup>v</sup> (with our passage extending from fol. 104<sup>f</sup>, l. 15 to fol. 104<sup>v</sup>, l. 23 (with  $\text{Ϝ}\text{ο}\text{ρ}\text{ο}\text{υ}\text{α}$  on fol. 104<sup>f</sup>, l. 21); and Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 137, fols 1<sup>v</sup>–4<sup>v</sup> (with the sticheron in the 2<sup>nd</sup> mode plagal contained on fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, ll. 18–26).

<sup>25</sup> See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 2 as to the fragment containing nos 2.10–19 and 24–32.

<sup>26</sup> See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 472 as to the fragment (covering 5 December).

48; Diktyon 29412) of the monastery of Philotheou,<sup>27</sup> the monastery neighbouring the Iviron, and a set of eight fragments from the Iviron comprising sixty-three folios found their way into the monastery of Simonopetra, from which they have recently been returned to the Iviron.<sup>28</sup>

How and when were these folios removed from the Iviron, and how did some of them come to be rebound in Greek manuscripts? It has been reported that during the Turkish occupation of Mount Athos, the library was the object of vandalism, resulting in the disintegration of many codices.<sup>29</sup> Even as late as the 1980s, after the Georgian collection of the Iviron had been microfilmed, Niphon, a hierodeacon of the Koutloumousiou *kellion* of St Euthymios, was busy binding Georgian manuscripts of the Iviron, and for some reason or other, he left out some leaves, which found their way into other Athonite monasteries.<sup>30</sup> The Georgian palimpsests preserved at the Iviron itself have been rewritten in Georgian,<sup>31</sup> but in the Greek-determined environment of Mount Athos, we may not be surprised to find palimpsests with a second layer in Greek, too.

## Abbreviations

CPG = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 2: *Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974.

MR = Μηναία τοῦ ὄλου ἐνιαυτοῦ, 6 vols, Rome: s.n., 1888–1902.

PG = Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 140 vols, Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1857–1866.

TITUS = *Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien*, <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>>.

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27 See Lambros 1895, 155, no. \*1811 for a rough description of the manuscript, with no indication of the palimpsest flyleaves, and Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 441 as to the fragment (covering 21–22 September).

28 See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, lv.

29 See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, xxi.

30 See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, lxiii.

31 See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 450–456 as to Ivir. georg. 47; 534–539 as to Ivir. georg. 59; and 683–687 as to Ivir. georg. 86. For further information, see Eka Kvirkevelia's contribution to the present volume.

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Erich Renhart

# An Ancient Armenian Text of the Gospel of John in a Graz Palimpsest: Preliminary Observations

**Abstract:** Being of Sinaitic provenance (but not necessarily origin), the ninth-century palimpsest codex Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2 has been described as a manuscript containing most interesting oracles along with the text of the Gospel of John in its lower layer. After the codicological reconstruction of the palimpsested book in its entirety and the discussion of the oracle sayings, it is time to promote reading the biblical text. This paper summarises these efforts and offers preliminary readings of peculiar text variants. Wording and pericopation (cutting the text into short sections) make evident that this text is an ancient version worthy of further study. This is expected to be carried out within the frame of a medium-term project. Investigating the Armenian John of the Graz palimpsest opens a window for subsequent comparison, such as with the Greek, Georgian, Caucasian Albanian, Syriac, and other versions.

## 1 Introduction

The Armenian undertext of the Georgian palimpsest codex Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2 belongs to the category ‘Divining Gospel’, a term coined by Jeff Childers<sup>1</sup> of the Abilene Christian University in Texas, for a manuscript combining oracle sayings with Gospel text. The underlying, effaced, and overwritten main text of the Graz palimpsest is that of the Gospel of John in Armenian. The full range of readable oracles accompanying it have already been published,<sup>2</sup> as has the complete codicology of the recycled book.<sup>3</sup>

The present article turns to the *biblical* content of the palimpsest – summarising to some degree what has already been published in German.<sup>4</sup> As a first step

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1 Childers 2020.

2 Renhart 2015, 115–149; see also Renhart forthcoming.

3 Renhart 2015, 48–58. For a précis in English, see Renhart 2022b. The Georgian overtext is a psalter.

4 See Renhart 2015, 92–114.

(Section 2), I reference the current lay of the land regarding the crucial question of dating the manuscript. Sections 3 and 4 deal with the literary genre and the integrity of the biblical text as presented in the Graz palimpsest. In Section 5, I outline the question of pericopation and chapter division, that is, the formation of text sections, from which I hope to get additional paratextual information on the age of the manuscript. The final part provides some short text samples taken from the effaced Armenian text and introduces the most relevant sources for further comparison – on the way to a critical edition of the Armenian John.

## 2 Dating the manuscript

It is one of the most difficult and sometimes delicate tasks to ascribe a time of origin to manuscript fragments and to palimpsests if we do not have explicit information (colophons, mentions of dates and names, and the like). Presumably, the Graz palimpsest with the text of John predates all extant dated Armenian manuscripts transmitting the biblical text of John. In our case, we would have to derive aspects indicative for dating from intrinsic factors, such as from palaeography and punctuation, from other specific observations like the distancing of letters or words in the current text, and so on. As such a dating cannot be but a rough approximation, I am considering obtaining more reliable data from a scientific analysis of the palimpsested parchment.

### 2.1 Palaeography

The first dating was done by Father Jacobus Dashian, a Mechitharist scholar in Vienna. He inspected photos of the manuscript in January 1897. His dating was obviously based on palaeographic observations, though they are not very detailed. Dashian, who had a sound knowledge of the Viennese collection, with its 3000 Armenian manuscripts, ascribed the text to the eighth to ninth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

A hundred years later, a closer look at palaeography substantiated Dashian's conclusion. A meticulous description of the letters with their near-to-calligraphic appearance was published some years ago.<sup>6</sup> This is the place to bring back to mind the most significant facts.

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<sup>5</sup> Dashian, in Oskian 1976, 312–313.

<sup>6</sup> Renhart 2015, 82–87.

### 2.1.1 Dot and comma

The punctuation is developed only to some degree. Predominantly, we find the dot *supra lineam* (*mijaket*) marking the end of a syntactical unit, a sign which does not necessarily correspond with a full stop.

Having read some 15% of the effaced text so far, we have twice encountered a sign comparable to our comma, on fols 23<sup>v</sup> and 36<sup>v</sup> (Fig. 1). This, in my view, points to a not too early stadium of Armenian palaeography.



Fig. 1: Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2, fol. 23<sup>v</sup>, the *comma* in oracle no. 77.

### 2.1.2 Double dot

The double dot to designate a full stop at the end of a textual unit was possible to identify in two instances so far, on fols 245<sup>r</sup> and 248<sup>v</sup> – another clue indicating a moderately developed stadium of Armenian writing.

### 2.1.3 Question marks

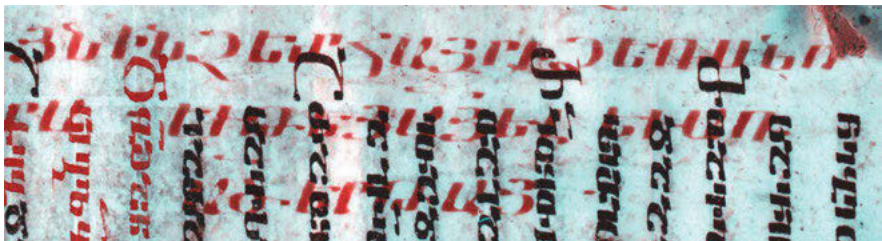
I have recently searched through our palimpsest specifically looking for the question mark, which was expected to appear here and there. Up until now I have not been able to detect a single instance of it, whereas it figures regularly in the Codex Etchmiadzin, a Gospel codex in majuscules dated 989 (today manuscript Yerevan, Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts [hereafter: *Matenadaran*], M 2374). This fact hints at a somewhat early date of genesis of our Armenian text, quite probably a bit earlier than hitherto assumed.

### 2.1.4 Spacing

There is another question which provides an additional aspect for dating: What about the *scriptio continua*, which tentatively would indicate a high age? The overwritten Armenian text shows blank spaces delimitating words between the letters only occasionally. The vast majority of lines, however, still stick to the ancient practice of the *scriptio continua*, placing the letters next to each other without significant space to group letters into words. Where we can identify a dot, we frequently see generous blank space before and, unless we find ourselves at the end of the line, following it.

### 2.1.5 Abbreviations

We can observe six instances where the Armenian text uses abbreviations, for the *nomina sacra* ‘Jesus’, ‘Christ’, ‘God’, ‘Lord’, ‘Jerusalem’, and ‘Israel’, in the oblique cases.<sup>7</sup> Whenever abbreviations show up, there is the corresponding mark (*patiw*) *supra litteras* (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2:** Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2, fol. 256', the *patiw* in standard form. John 13:3, end of section no. 210. First line: *scriptio continua*.

### 2.1.6 Miniaturised letters

At the end of a text line, we occasionally meet a letter superscript or – less frequently – even subscript. Letters in such positions are always miniaturised. This

<sup>7</sup> See Gippert 2019, 100 as to the Armenian undertext of the codex Athens, National Library of Greece (EBE), 637: ‘abbreviations are reserved for the *nomina sacra* “God” and “Lord”, “Jesus” and “Christ”, “Israel” and “Jerusalem”’.

practice does not necessarily mean that it is the concluding letter of a word (e.g. John 1:51; 5:26). I could not determine the rationale for this practice, but I assume it is to be seen in connection with the template (*Vorlage*) from which the text was taken.

### 2.1.7 Other signs

The Graz palimpsest does not show other signs which appear in later manuscripts: the Codex Etchmiadzin regularly has a double dot, which together with a swung dash indicates the end of a verse.<sup>8</sup> It also has an accent sign (*šest*).<sup>9</sup> There is no trace of anything similar to either of these in our palimpsest.

All the above observations underscore the need to palaeographically document not only the style of the letters but also punctuation and other signs as well.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2 Scientific dating methods

I consider it advisable to try to verify my palaeographic estimation through an investigation with the radiocarbon (or <sup>14</sup>C) method, taken from the natural sciences, though I am aware that this too can indicate only a rough period of time. Nevertheless, such an analysis would provide another clue for the crucial task of dating our manuscript, this time gained from an examination of the writing material.

## 3 Text category: Oracular vs liturgical vs biblical

Before dealing with the text itself, we should make clear the type of book we are confronted with. As repeatedly stated, the palimpsested codex was used for divination<sup>11</sup> – oracle telling augmented by a biblical text, which aims at bestowing on

<sup>8</sup> See Mkhitarian 1972, 28–29.

<sup>9</sup> For the punctuation system, see Helmut Buschhausen and Heide Buschhausen 2001, 157–159.

<sup>10</sup> We do not understand why the aspect of the historical development of punctuation and other signs was not included in the otherwise most valuable *Album of Armenian Palaeography* (Stone, Lehmann and Kouymjian 2002). See also the punctuation system of the Caucasus-Albanian palimpsests set out in Gippert and Schulze 2023, 173, and Gippert 2023, 117.

<sup>11</sup> For the Syriac tradition of such books, see Chapter 3 – ‘Divining Gospels: A Suppressed and Neglected Genre’ in Childers 2020, 51–84, which is based on London, British Library, Add MS 17119, a manuscript from the sixth to seventh century, and my review (Renhart 2022a).

the book and its use utmost authority. Hence, the question arises whether the biblical text (here the Gospel of John) is somehow affected by the oracular ambiance and the use of the text. This is definitely not the case.

If the biblical text is not contaminated by oracular practice, we might assume that it could have liturgical connotations of the kind we can see, for example, in lectionaries. In view of that, again, there are no traces at all, which would indicate liturgical or any other specific use of the Armenian text.

In other words: our erased Armenian text of John can be considered to be purely biblical. It does not appear to have been affected by oracular or liturgical practise. This, too, makes the Armenian John of Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2 a text witness of eminent weight.

## 4 Integrity of the text and readability

One peculiarity of the palimpsested book is that it makes use of the complete text of the Gospel of John. Going by what has been read up until today, we may conclude that there are no deliberate text omissions discernible. As expected of a copy of this age, the pericope on the adulteress (John 7:53–8:11) is not present,<sup>12</sup> for the episode is a late insertion into the canonical text corpus of John.<sup>13</sup>

Though there are good reasons to assume the integrity of the biblical text in the cleaned Armenian undertext, the present Georgian codex does not contain all the folios of its predecessor book. We are missing nineteen and a half folios from the palimpsested codex, folios that either have not been reused for our palimpsest or that have been lost after being reassembled to form what is now Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2.<sup>14</sup> Table 1 gives an overview of the missing verses.

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<sup>12</sup> The Armenian text transmission of John 7:53–8:11 was first summarised by Herklotz 1927. For a more recent appreciation, see Knust and Wasserman 2020, esp. 46–53, here 54: ‘It is quite possible that the *pericope adulterae* was introduced in the Armenian version during the fifth-century revision’.

<sup>13</sup> Beutler 2013, 262: ‘Keine griechische Handschrift vor dem 5. Jh. bezeugt den in Frage stehenden Text’. For a commentary on this pericope, see Willker 2015. The oldest known Gospel book containing the *adultera* pericope is the famous Codex Bezae (Cambridge, University Library, Nn II 41), dated end of the fourth to beginning of the fifth century.

<sup>14</sup> Actually, the first four folios of Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2 are not palimpsest, being a later addition. We may assume that the initial quire of probably palimpsested folios got detached and was finally lost. The Georgian text had to be supplied, a work carried out by the Georgian monk Ioane Zosime in the second half of the tenth century. See Renhart 2022b, 52, n. 6.

**Table 1:** Overview of missing verses, with section numbers indicated in parentheses.

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John 1:33–38a (13–14)
John 8:30–38 (133–136)
John 10:14–36 (163–170)
John 11:7–15 (175–176)
John 11:48–55 (189–190)
John 13:12–25 (213–216)
John 14:14 – 15:8 (227–234)
John 16:12–21 (245–248)
John 20:26–29 (303–304)
John 21:24–25 (317–318)

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The procedure of dismantling and dismounting the codex, effacing the text, and preparing many dozens of folios for reuse is expected to be time-consuming work. In most cases, the process would yield results of quite different quality. This can be easily seen in the example of Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2, too. The text was not scratched off but rather sponged, likely after having been submerged in bath for a period of time. The results, anyhow, are visible on the single folios, where traces of ink were able to survive as a pale brownish shade, as the phantom of a letter or whatever it may be. This is a stroke of luck for the researcher. With the help of technical means, we often succeed in making words and even whole text passages visible again. The grade of visibility and readability varies from only a few percent (when only a single or a few letters are to be distinguished with certainty) to 100%. The Graz palimpsest offers an average rate of readability of about 60%. This rate should soon considerably increase, since we have started multispectral imaging (MSI) and X-ray fluorescence scanning (XRF) with our partners at Universität Hamburg, who have plenty of experience with palimpsests.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sebastian Bosch and Greg Nehring (XRF), and Kyle Huskin and Ivan Shevchuk (MSI), under the guidance of Jost Gippert. The author is grateful to all of them for providing fantastic results.

## 5 The Armenian John of Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2: A well-structured text

I would now like to focus on a reality which has yet to be considered for the Armenian tradition at sufficient scale, that is, pericopation.<sup>16</sup> ‘Pericopation’ means cutting the whole text into smaller units. It is quite common that biblical texts are presented in a structured way depicting a series of narratives and other textual entities. One of the earliest and most influential systems of dividing the Gospel texts can be derived from the Eusebian canons,<sup>17</sup> outlined in the church historian’s famous letter to Karpianos.<sup>18</sup> These canons are a kind of concordance or synopsis, since they identify and put in parallel Gospel sections of identical content. The pericopation in our palimpsest in no way corresponds to the Eusebian system.

Sebastian P. Brock has convincingly made clear that numerous independent systems of pericopation circulated in the first millennium and beyond, though a growing consistency was seen from the seventh century onwards within the Syriac tradition.<sup>19</sup> Brock concludes: ‘It is remarkable how little relationship there is between these different systems in their choice of where to make breaks in the text’.<sup>20</sup>

Hence, we have some insight into the Syriac tradition in view of pericopating the Gospel text but close to nothing comparable concerning the Armenian tradition. It seems advisable to commence such studies on the basis of the oldest extant sources. Our palimpsest presents a most welcome sample to start with, since the pericopation of the text and its organisation are clearly discernable observations.

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<sup>16</sup> This paragraph is based on Renhart 2015, 97–104.

<sup>17</sup> See Crawford 2019 and Wallraff 2021, 26–27 and 155–158. The ‘Eusebian’ (or ‘Ammonian’) sections are present in, for example, the Codex Etchmiadzin, to which they were possibly added at a later stage, in the Georgian as well as in the Caucasian Albanian tradition (I am grateful to Jost Gippert for this hint).

<sup>18</sup> The Armenian text of the *Epistula ad Carpianum* is prefixed to the Gospel text in numerous manuscripts, as is the case with the Codex Etchmiadzin.

<sup>19</sup> Brock 2006, 118: ‘a remarkably uniform system of numbering is to be found in Syriac manuscripts from the seventh century onwards’.

<sup>20</sup> Brock 2006, 122.



## 5.1 Sections

Today, we are used to identifying a biblical passage by its chapter and verse numbers. This kind of text division and numbering is an invention of the second millennium. The chapters as we encounter them nowadays in nearly all printed Bible editions are associated with the name of Stephen Langton († 1228), superb scholar and archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>21</sup> His system of capitulation (denoting chapters) spread across the medieval world and had a standardising effect, bringing to an end the various other division schemes of the previous centuries.

The Armenian John of Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2 has a total of 318 sections. We find one section on each individual page. Assigned to each of these are ascending numbers centred on top of the pages. These are of identical size and quality and written by the same hand as the current Gospel text and the oracles.

Initially, I was inclined to presume some symbolic meaning of the number ‘318’.<sup>22</sup> However, after becoming aware of the multitude of pericopation systems in Christian Antiquity, I abandoned the question of an allegoric importance of that number. Anyhow, it would have been most difficult to demonstrate any weight and relevance of this number for the pericopation of our Armenian John.

**Table 2:** Gospel of John: synopsis of section numbers.

Source	Date	Tradition	Number of sections
Eusebian canon tables	4th c.	Greek etc.	232
London, British Library, Add MS 17119	6th/7th c.	Syriac	308
Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2	~ 800 CE	Armenian	318

Without plunging into details, we immediately see considerable variation in the formation of sections. The systems visible here cannot be harmonised. The manuscripts given for the Syriac and Armenian traditions belong to the same category of books: ‘Divining Gospels’ – oracle books in connection with the Gospel of John. Nevertheless, even these books of identic literary genre show entirely different

<sup>21</sup> See Schmid 1892, esp. 56–106. Langton’s chapters according to the oldest known manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 14417, fols 125<sup>r</sup>–126<sup>v</sup>) are given pp. 59–92; for the Gospel of John, comprising twenty chapters, see p. 85.

<sup>22</sup> For instance Abraham’s 318 ‘trained men’ (Genesis 14:14), or the purported 318 fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.

systems of organising their text units. Furthermore, such incongruence is true even for the later intra-Armenian tradition: the manuscript Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 9650, dated to the eleventh century, is another Armenian source of this kind.<sup>23</sup> It is the torso of a book. The Gospel text therein starts on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> with John 7:52, which has the section number 108; the highest section number is 236, found on fol. 49<sup>v</sup> and associated with John 17:16–19. Juxtaposing our Armenian witnesses and the Syriac source (London, British Library, Add MS 17119), we can discern three systems of section assignment, which are not congruent at all, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Divining Gospel manuscripts: synopsis of section assignment.

Source	From	Section To	Section
Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2	John 7:52	132 John 17:14–17	262
Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 9650	John 7:52	108 John 17:16–19	236
London, British Library, Add MS 17119	John 7:52	117 John 17:15–21a	255

Taking all these observations into consideration, we may draw the conclusion that it is worth dealing with this question in a more systematic way. It seems to be an interesting task to find out according to which criteria the section boundaries were chosen, since the units in our Divining Gospel manuscripts are much more refined than the Eusebian pericopes, the length of which was fixed mainly by the length of the narrated episodes.<sup>24</sup>

## 5.2 Subsections

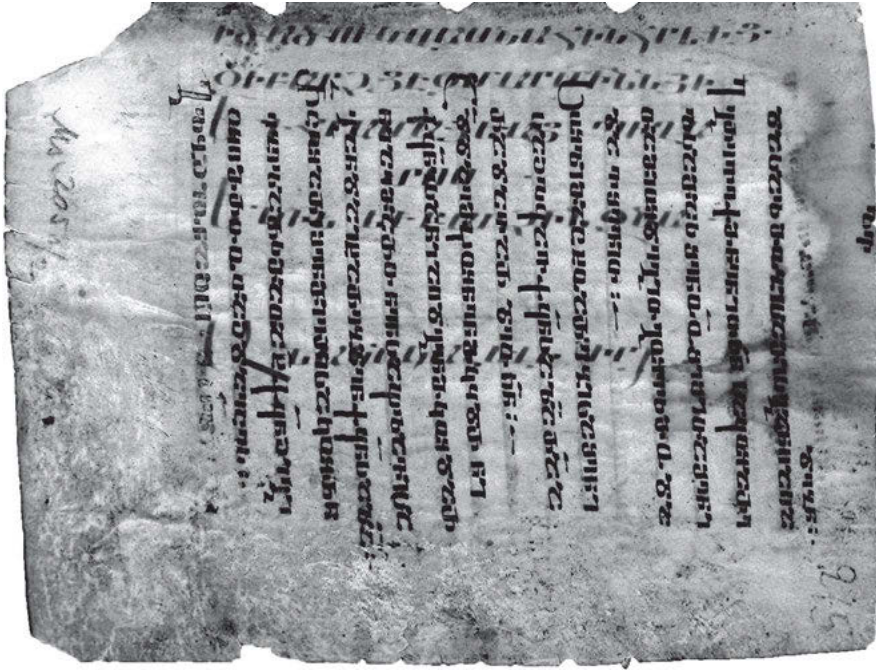
Each of the sections comprises one or more subsections – similar to, but by no means identical with, what much later came to be called ‘verses’.<sup>25</sup> The subsections of our palimpsest are of special interest. Their analysis is expected to provide additional aspects of text development, when compared with other manuscripts.

The pattern of subsections is made evident visually through layout and initial uppercase letters (Fig. 3).

<sup>23</sup> See Renhart forthcoming.

<sup>24</sup> See Schmid 1892, 96–97.

<sup>25</sup> The division into and counting of verses within the chapters of biblical texts first appeared in Faber Stapulensis’s *Quincuplex Psalterium*, printed in Paris in 1508. See Bedouelle 1979 and 1982; Schmid 1892, 106–117.



**Fig. 3:** Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2, fol. 275', end of section 292 (John 19:35–38). John 19:38b appears divided into two units (fourth and third line, and second line from the bottom). After some blank space follows the oracle (last line).

The copyist who committed the Armenian text to parchment made the subunits clearly distinguishable through three simple measures: (1) all subunits start with a new text line; (2) the scribe gave the initial letter of many subunits a prominent, that is, pre-salient, position, transgressing the area of the text block to the left; and (3) the initial uppercase letter extends over the height of two or more lines, depending on the shape of the character. In many cases, the placement of the last word or words of a subunit is in the middle of the line – but this is not implemented consistently. We would expect a dot at the end of the subunits, which is not always visible though. I could not detect any other sign to indicate the closure of such a text unit.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> As already indicated, the Codex Etchmiadzin has a double dot in connection with a swung dash [:-] at the end of some textual units, a givenness that remained uninterpreted in Helmut Buschhausen and Heide Buschhausen 2001. See Gippert 2023, 117 with regard to the Caucasian Albanian Gospel of John.

### 5.3 Conclusions on structure

Important texts, especially texts of authoritative claim like the Gospels, are said to have always been copied with specific care and attentiveness. There is much evidence that manuscripts sometimes had to be copied carrying over not only the words in the correct form but also the line or page breaks of the *Vorlage*. Apart from contentual questions, a systematic study of the reproduced text structures appears to be promising if it comes to identifying ‘families’ of text transmission. We cannot exclude the gaining of helpful hints from such metacontentual facts. Due to the age of its undertext, the Graz palimpsest would be an ideal sample to start such analyses for the Armenian biblical tradition.

As we do not know how fluid pericopation still was in the second half of the first millennium, we would like to take notice of structure-formative aspects as well. As argued above, in addition to the stadium of text development and palaeography, we have to take into consideration three hitherto neglected parameters to determine the age of the Armenian text of John with more precision, namely, punctuation, *scriptio continua*, and pericopation.

## 6 Armenian sources

Beda Künzle’s pivotal comparative study<sup>27</sup> of the manuscripts Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 2374 (a. 989, the Etchmiadzin Gospels) and M 6200 (a. 887, the Moscow Gospels) made evident the character of variations in two of the oldest Armenian texts of John. Considering further ancient Armenian witnesses should yield an even greater richness of readings. Indeed, our palimpsest provides additional evidence of a multifaceted text transmission. What is ahead of us is nothing less than a text-critical edition of the Armenian Gospel of John.<sup>28</sup>

This section gives just a first taste of the character of our Armenian John in a simplified synopsis of selected text samples (Section 6.1)<sup>29</sup> and hints at the wider landscape of relevant sources (Section 6.2).

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<sup>27</sup> Künzle 1984.

<sup>28</sup> As to that, I am on my way to setting up an international project.

<sup>29</sup> See Renhart 2015, 104–113.

## 6.1 The Graz palimpsest: Selected text samples

Table 4 juxtaposes the following sources: G = Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2; E = Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 2374 (a. 989), and Z = Zohrab-Bible.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 4:** Variants in the Armenian tradition of the Gospel of John.

Verse	Palimpsest reading	Contrasted reading	Category
John 1:6	ՅՈՎԱՆՆԷՍ (G)	ՅՈՎԱՆՆԷՍ (E)	Spelling of name
John 1:8	ԱՅԼ (G)	ԱՅԼ (Z)	Դ instead of Լ throughout
John 1:19	ԳՈՒՈՎԵՍ (G)	ԳՈՒՈՒՆՍ (E)	Personal pronoun, spelling
John 1:31	ՉԻ ՅԱՅՅՐՆԻ ԸՅԻ (G)	ՉԻ ՅԱՅՅՐՆԻ ԸՆՆԻՅԻ (E)	Different grammatical forms
John 1:50	ՊԱՅՍԻՎՆԻ ԵՍ ՅՍ ԵՒ ԱՍԷ ՑՆԱ (G)	ՊԱՅՍԻՎՆԻ ԵՍ ՆՍՍ ՅՍ ԵՒ ԱՍԷ (E)	Different syntax
John 2:15	ՉԱՐՋԱՌՍՆ ԵՒ ՉՈՉԻՎՐՍՆ (G)	ՉՈՉԻՎՐՍՆ ԵՒ ՉԱՐՋԱՌՍ (E)	Word order, inversion
John 5:13	Ի յԵՂՈՋԷՆ (G)	Ի յԵՂՈՋԷ ԱՆՅԻ (E and Z)	Different grammatical construction
John 7:35	ԱՍԵՆ (G)	ԱՍԵՆ (E and Z)	Different grammatical tense (frequent)
John 7:36	ՈՉ ԿԱՐԷՔ ԳԱԼ (G)	ՈՉ ԿԱՐԻՑԷՔ ԳԱԼ (E)	Different grammatical construction
John 11:31	ՄԻԻԹԱՐԵՆ ԶՆՈՍԱ (G)	ՄԻԻԹԱՐԵՆ ԶՆԱ (E)	Plural vs singular object
John 11:32	ԵՒ ԱՍԷ ԵԹԵ (G)	ԵՒ ԱՍԷ յԻՐ ԵԹԵ (E and Z)	Addition vs omission
John 14:5	ՉՃԱՆԱՊԱՆՆ (G)	ՉՃԱՆԱՊԱՆՆ (E)	Elision of a letter <sup>31</sup>
John 17:19	ՉԱՆՉՆ (G)	ՉԱՆՉՆ ԻՍ (E and Z)	Addition vs omission

Table 4 may suffice to give a first impression of the text variants to be found in G. As roughly indicated, the deviations from E and Z touch all parameters of text comparison, reaching from spelling variants to grammatical and syntactical features. Without any doubt, the Graz palimpsest will contribute considerably to enriching our knowledge of the ancient Armenian transmission of John. Due to its

<sup>30</sup> Zohrabean 1805.

<sup>31</sup> For this type of variation, see Hasmik Sargsyan’s contribution to the present volume.

age, G seems to be a prominent text witness alongside other sources of the Armenian tradition, which we mention in the next section.

## 6.2 Other Armenian sources

### 6.2.1 Gospel books dated and undated

The Armenian dated manuscripts do not go back beyond the year 800. It goes without saying that for the future critical edition, other undated Gospel books written in *erkat'agir* majuscules will also have to be consulted. The following list does not pretend to be exhaustive; rather, it references some of the main sources up to the end of the first millennium.<sup>32</sup>

- Etchmiadzin Gospel Book (Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 2374), dated 989 CE.
- Gospels of Tsughrut (Georgia, Tsughrut), dated 974 CE.
- Vehamor Gospels (Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 10680), late ninth/early tenth century.<sup>33</sup>
- Lazarean (or Moscow) Gospel Book (Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 6200), 887 CE.
- Queen Mlk'e Gospel Book (Venice, Mekhitarist Library, 1144), 862 CE.<sup>34</sup>
- our *codex rescriptus* (Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2), c. 800 CE.

### 6.2.2 Fragments and other palimpsests

We may safely assume that the vast majority of manuscript sources of this period (i.e. from the first millennium) are undated. Hence, their age normally has to be approximated on the basis of palaeographic criteria. Though we may consider this fact to be a disadvantage, there is a multitude of parchment fragments – *in situ* or detached from other books – extant in the libraries holding Armenian manuscripts. The Matenadaran of Yerevan alone has many hundreds of fragments with *erkat'agir* script on parchment. At present we are in the process of retrieving all

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<sup>32</sup> Among others, the Yerevan manuscript Matenadaran, M 9650 has to be considered as well: though dated to the eleventh century, it shows traces of ancientness (written in *erkat'agir*, absence of John 7:53–8:11, etc.).

<sup>33</sup> Thus according to Stone, Lehmann and Kouymjian 2002, 43. Earlier datings have been proposed elsewhere.

<sup>34</sup> I am very grateful to Aram Topchyan, Yerevan, who made accessible to me the Gospel manuscripts from the years 974, 887, and 862.

pieces with the text of John. We certainly should not ignore or neglect this corpus of text witnesses for our future edition.

Currently, a huge project is running in the aforementioned collection aiming at identifying all palimpsested manuscripts or parts of them.<sup>35</sup> These are being digitised using the most up-to-date MSI technologies. We hope to get access to further versions of the Armenian John through that initiative.

### 6.2.3 Other categories of texts

We consider lectionaries as an important genre of books for our purposes. Though their prime use is liturgical, they are of utmost importance since they too contain text passages of John. Such texts – if pertaining to the first millennium or slightly later – thus will have to be considered too. Additionally, there is the corpus of patristic Armenian writings, commentaries, *catenae*, and so on which provide quotes of John; they will have to be consulted, too.

## 6.3 The larger horizon

It seems to be clear that the Armenian Gospels emerged from a Greco-Syriac ambience. Although it is a complex and difficult task to identify the underlying substrata, we finally will have to look at these nourishing traditions, to better fix the place of the Armenian versions. The same is true in view of the impact of and on the neighbouring traditions, such as the Georgian and the Caucasian Albanian traditions.

## 7 Conclusion

The above deliberations reflect the current state of affairs surrounding Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2. I have so far identified 151 verses of the Armenian John, and the reading process will take some more months to accomplish. I am expecting good results from the MSI analysis being carried out at present at Universität Hamburg.

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<sup>35</sup> This is the Development of Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe) project; see Jost Gippert's contribution to this volume.

Future studies will put additional weight on several aspects which seem to be promising for further investigating our text on the way towards a text-critical edition:

- The edition will be based on a wide repertory of extant and accessible sources of the first millennium and beyond. This includes numerous dated and undated manuscripts, and it starts exploiting the vast corpus of fragments with *erkat'agir* script. This last mentioned category of sources has been largely disregarded up to now.
- The text of the Armenian John in Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 2058/2 will be contextualised, first by comparison with the other Armenian sources, and then by taking a look at the neighbouring traditions, such as the Greek, the Syriac, the Georgian, and the Caucasian Albanian versions. A first quick glance has already opened a rich landscape of interesting readings.
- In terms of methodology, the edition will also attempt to derive results through a systematic view on the pericopation style – a hitherto much neglected paratextual aspect.
- A closer look will be taken at palaeographic realities, studying the systems of punctuation and other signs. Thereby, I expect to find occasional hints allowing us to ascribe undated objects (especially fragments) to an earlier or later period of script development.
- I am on the way to submit a proposal for a research project in order to carry out these studies on a wider scale in the coming years.

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Jost Gippert

# Palimpsests from the Caucasus: Two Case Studies

**Abstract:** On the basis of two case studies, this paper illustrates the problems encountered in retrieving the content of palimpsests, which constitute the main type of written sources in the Christian languages of the Caucasus (Armenian and Georgian) from the first millennium of our era, and which are thus of utmost importance for a project devoted to the development of literacy in these languages. Using the example of the Georgian double palimpsest Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, it is shown how it is possible to identify a given text fragment by translating keywords into another language (here, Greek). In the case of the second example, the Armenian undertext of the Greek Gospel manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, supplément grec 1226, the focus is on determining the structure of the palimpsested codex, resulting in the postulation of a hitherto nearly undocumented type of a lectionary including saints' legends.

## 1 Introduction

The development of specific alphabetic scripts in the context of Christianisation in the early fifth century CE meant the beginning of literacy for three distinct ethnic groups in the Caucasus: Armenians, Georgians, and the so-called Caucasian Albanians. While the former two developed their written heritage steadily until the present day, the literacy of the 'Albanians' ended with the Arab conquest in about the eighth century, and only a few specimens of their language have survived, mostly in palimpsests detected in St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai.<sup>1</sup> For Armenian and Georgian, too, only a limited number of original written artefacts have been preserved from the 'early' centuries, that is, the period between the fifth and tenth centuries CE, and most of these, too, only in the form of palimpsested manuscripts.

Over the last twenty years, considerable progress has been made in stock-taking, digitising, and analysing these materials, mostly facilitated by the development of imaging techniques that can enhance the readability of undertexts

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1 For the present state of knowledge on the Albanian palimpsests, see Gippert 2023a, 104–141.

which were washed out, scraped off, or otherwise erased before being overwritten in later times. Leaving aside a few early attempts to decipher palimpsests from the Caucasus with the naked eye,<sup>2</sup> the first results of the application of more sophisticated means – beginning with ultraviolet photography and continuing with multispectral imaging – were published in four volumes of the series *Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi* in 2007–2010. These were, in fact, the first editions of palimpsests anywhere in the world based on multispectral images. The result of close cooperation among scholars from Europe and Georgia,<sup>3</sup> they comprise the oldest undertexts of the codex Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, georg. 2, an all-Georgian palimpsest stemming from Jerusalem that covers fragments from at least fourteen original manuscripts from c. the fifth to the tenth century in its lower layer,<sup>4</sup> as well as the two Georgian codices Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery (hereafter: Sin.), georg. NF 13 and 55, the only manuscripts known until the present day with undertexts in Caucasian Albanian,<sup>5</sup> alongside an Armenian,<sup>6</sup> a Georgian,<sup>7</sup> and a Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA) layer.<sup>8</sup> While the manuscript heritage of Caucasian Albanian has remained restricted to Sin. georg. NF 13 and 55, a great number of further palimpsests with Armenian or Georgian undertexts have meanwhile been detected. For Georgian, a special catalogue published in 2017 lists 124 items with a total of 10630 palimpsested pages that are stored at the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts in Tbilisi (hereafter: KKNCM);<sup>9</sup> for Armenian, the existing catalogues of the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts at Yerevan (hereafter: Matenadaran) indicate that at least 50 codices are palimpsests (at least partially), with more than 7500 pages concerned.<sup>10</sup> Beyond this, a large number of both Armenian and Georgian palimpsests have been located outside of the respective national repositories, in churches, monasteries,

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2 See Javakhishvili 1922–1923; Shanidze 1927; Blake 1932; Shanidze 1937; Kajaia 1984.

3 This cooperation was facilitated by the project *Neue Wege zur wissenschaftlichen Bearbeitung von Palimpsesthandschriften kaukasischer Provenienz*, kindly supported by the Volkswagen Foundation (2003–2008).

4 See the edition in Gippert, Sarjeladze and Kajaia 2007.

5 See the edition in Gippert et al. 2008.

6 See the edition in Gippert 2010.

7 See Gippert forthcoming a for details.

8 The CPA undertext of Sin. georg. NF 55, fols 19–20 was determined as pertaining to the Gospel of Mark by Alain Desreumaux s.a. See Christa Müller-Kessler’s contribution to the present volume, pp. 148–149, for a different proposal.

9 Kajaia et al. 2017; see Outtier 2022 for additional information.

10 A preliminary list is provided in Gippert 2024.

libraries, and museums both within the Caucasus<sup>11</sup> and on Mount Sinai and Mount Athos, as well as in Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, and elsewhere. Special projects devoted to their scientific analysis have been undertaken successfully since 2009.<sup>12</sup>

With the further development of imaging techniques within the Sinai Palimpsests Project,<sup>13</sup> the facilities for exploring palimpsests from the Caucasus have again advanced considerably over the past ten years. Due to these enhancements, especially the new method of transmissive light imaging, the reading rate of the Caucasian Albanian palimpsests of Mount Sinai has risen by at least 25%, now amounting to an average of approximately 85% – an increase that makes a new edition necessary.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, we are in a position now, for the first time ever, to also investigate the great bulk of other Georgian and Armenian palimpsests that witness the first centuries of Caucasian literacy, with the aim of determining the relations of the three Christian peoples, their Churches, and their languages in the first millennium of our era, both among each other and with the relevant surrounding powers. This is the objective of the Development of Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe) project,<sup>15</sup> which has been running since 2022 at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg.<sup>16</sup> In the following pages, I intend to illustrate on the basis of two case studies which obstacles we meet in dealing with Caucasian palimpsests and which methods we apply to overcome them.

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11 For example in Kurashi, in the Svanetia region of north-west Georgia; see Gippert 2013.

12 These projects are *Georgische Palimpsesthandschriften* (2009–2019) and *Palimpsest Manuscripts of the Matenadaran* (2017–2020), both kindly supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, Hanover.

13 This project was jointly run by the Holy Monastery of the God-trodden Mount Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL), and the UCLA Library and was supported by Arcadia Foundation (2012–2017); see <<http://sinaipalimpsests.org>> and <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu>>. The information available on the new website of the Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library (<<https://sinaimanuscripts.library.ucla.edu/>>) is abridged and partly misleading.

14 See Gippert 2023b for a preliminary account.

15 DeLiCaTe is supported by a European Research Council advanced grant.

16 The project members are, besides myself, Emilio Bonfiglio, Mariam Kamarauli, Eka Kvirkvelia, and Hasmik Sargsyan.

## 2 Case study I: The unidentified undertext of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90

The library of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai includes at least fifteen palimpsested codices (or fragments thereof) with an upper text in Georgian.<sup>17</sup> Most contain undertexts that are also in Georgian, either exclusively (Sin. georg. 10, NF 7, 59, 61, 84, 90) or alongside other undertexts (Sin. georg. 34, with one unidentified undertext in Greek; georg. 49, with undertexts in Arabic, Coptic, Greek, and Syriac; georg. NF 13 and 55, with undertexts in Caucasian Albanian, Armenian, and CPA; georg. NF 19, with undertexts in CPA and Greek).<sup>18</sup> Three of these palimpsests are of special importance to the history of Georgian literacy, as their lower layer comprises forms of the so-called *khanmeti* and *haemeti* periods, that is, the time between the beginning of Georgian literacy and c. the ninth century, which manifests itself linguistically in special morphological criteria. These three palimpsests are the one folio with Georgian undertext of Sin. georg. NF 13 (fol. 58)<sup>19</sup> and the sixty-four folios of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, two badly preserved manuscripts that actually represent one *codex rescriptus*.<sup>20</sup> The case of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 is all the more challenging as it is a double palimpsest: with the exception of but a few folios (NF 84, fol. 1; NF 90, fols 2–5, 19–22, 25, 28, 29), the lowest layer (written in *asomtavruli* script, i.e. Old Georgian majuscules, with *khanmeti* and *haemeti* forms) was first covered by a second layer (likewise written in *asomtavruli* but with no *khanmeti* or *haemeti* characteristics) before the latest layer was added (in *nuskhuri* script, i.e. Georgian 'ecclesiastical' minuscules). On the basis of their palaeographical and linguistic appearance, the three layers can be dated to the fifth to seventh, ninth to tenth, and tenth to eleventh centuries, respectively.

The lowest and the second layer each contain fragments of three different texts. For the lowest layer, these are extremely valuable specimens of biblical texts

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17 The Sinai Palimpsests Project (see n. 13) has treated the following Georgian codices of the collection: Sin. georg. 10, 34, 49; NF 7, 13, 19, 55, 59, 61, 71, 84, 90; NF frg. 68a, 72a, 73a.

18 Sin. georg. NF 71 and NF frg. 68a contain only undertexts in CPA; NF frg. 72a and 73a, only undertexts in Greek and Arabic. A special case is CPA NF frg. 16 which was catalogued as a fragment with an overtext in CPA and an undertext in Georgian (see <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>> under 'CPA NF frg 16'); the distribution of lower and upper layers is actually the opposite (see Gippert and Outtier 2021, 42 with n. 6; Outtier 2023, 171–174).

19 A tentative edition is provided in Gippert forthcoming a.

20 See the catalogue by Aleksidze et al. 2005, 430 and 433–434, and Gippert and Outtier 2021 for details. A similar case of two parts of one codex being catalogued separately is that of Sin. georg. NF 13 and 55.

(the first witness of a *khanmeti-haemeti* psalter<sup>21</sup> and fragments of a *khanmeti* version of the Gospel of Matthew)<sup>22</sup> as well as a *khanmeti* fragment of a homiletic text.<sup>23</sup> From the middle layer, a sequence of two homilies by John Chrysostom (on the Dormition of the Holy Virgin)<sup>24</sup> and the legend of St Febronia have been identified; the latter text, whose Georgian versions have remained unpublished so far, is at present being investigated by Mariam Kamarauli.<sup>25</sup> The sixth undertext, also from the middle layer, had yet to be identified when the descriptions for the Sinai Palimpsests Project were prepared; for the set of thirteen folios containing it (Sin. georg. NF 90, fols 3–6, 9–10, 15–18, 23–24, 38), the online catalogue simply states: ‘Title: Unidentified. Genre: Homiletics or hagiography. Primary Language: Georgian. Script: Asomtavruli. Script characterization: Small, clumsy and slightly slanted. Date: ca. 9th–10th c. CE (801 to 1000)’.<sup>26</sup> This aporia has now been overcome.

## 2.1 Identifying the text

The identification of the text was hampered, first of all, by the fact that the lower and the middle layer were applied line over line, one covering the other. Only four to five characters of the lowest layer, located in the outer margins, were not overwritten, which proved enough to identify it. In contrast to this, the middle layer was written very negligently, in slightly smaller (and slightly more slanted) characters over the lowest layer, which makes it extremely difficult to isolate. To illustrate this, Figs 1 and 2 show fol. 5<sup>v</sup> of Sin. georg. NF 90 in both a plain-colour image and in a pseudo-colour image based on multispectral photographs, and Fig. 3 highlights the left margin of the same folio with the lowest layer containing Psalm 88:12–18 as transcribed line by line in Table 1.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See Gippert and Outtier 2021 for a first account of this psalter version.

<sup>22</sup> See Gippert forthcoming b for a first account of this Gospel fragment.

<sup>23</sup> The text is Athanasius of Alexandria’s (or John Chrysostom’s) homily *In natalem Christi diem* (CPG 4560), a later version of which is contained in the so-called Sinai Mravaltavi (Sin. georg. 32-57-33) and other homiletic collections. See Gippert and Outtier 2021, 44 with n. 18 for details.

<sup>24</sup> The two homilies (CPG 5175.21 and 5175.22) are also contained in the Sinai Mravaltavi; see Gippert and Outtier 2021, 44 with n. 21.

<sup>25</sup> See Mariam Kamarauli’s contribution to the present volume.

<sup>26</sup> See Gippert and Outtier *s.a.*

<sup>27</sup> Figures 1 to 4 were processed by Keith T. Knox and kindly provided by the Sinai Palimpsests Project (<<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu>>, a publication of St Catherine’s Monastery of the Sinai in collaboration with EMEL and UCLA). In the following transcripts, angle brackets < > mark gaps

Of the middle layer on the same folio, only one sentence was somewhat legible. It covers the first three lines of the page, while the remaining lines yield only unintelligible chunks, as illustrated in Table 2 with Fig. 4.

The sentence in question was easily restorable as *da yovanes hkon<da gw>[rg]wni mravlita afntrakljita <pȧtio>snita : da saqdari didebisay da ...*, which can be rendered as ‘And John had a crown with many a precious carbuncle (“anthrax”), and a throne of glory, and ...’. It is clear that such a sentence could pertain to either a homiletic or a hagiographical context, including apophthegms, but it was not identifiable as such or in a similar form in the available databases: neither the TITUS corpus, which covers nearly all published Old Georgian text materials,<sup>28</sup> nor the Georgian National Corpus,<sup>29</sup> which is based upon it, yielded any comparable context, and the same is true of a plain Google search. It goes without saying that the only proper name included, *yovane* = John, did not help either, in contrast to the peculiar names that appear in the legend of St Febronia.<sup>30</sup>



**Fig. 1:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (plain-colour image).



**Fig. 2:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (pseudo-colour image, turned by 90°).

and lacunae, angular brackets [ ] show hard-to-read characters, braces { } indicate reconstructed characters, and round brackets ( ) mark resolved abbreviations.

<sup>28</sup> See <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/framed.htm?/texte/texte2.htm#georgiant>>.

<sup>29</sup> See <<http://gnc.gov.ge>>.

<sup>30</sup> See Mariam Kamarauli’s contribution to the present volume.



**Table 1:** Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>: lowest layer (Psalm 88:12–18).

<s>opeli da} {savseba}<y misi> {šen daxam}-  
 <q>[are] f: | črdiloy da} <bğow>{ari šen}  
 <še>[x]km{en}  
 <t>a[b]o[r]{i da hermoni saxelita šeni}-  
 <t>a hi{x}[a]{rebben}  
 <še>[n]i [mk]{lavi ars zliere}<bit>  
 <g>[an]z[ll]{ierdin qeli šeni da ağma}<ğl>-  
 <d>[in] ma{ržowenē šeni simartlit} | <da>  
 <g>anki{txwt ağ}[m]{a}<rtebowl>

**Fig. 3:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (pseudo-colour image, turned by 90°), left margin.**Table 2:** Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>: middle layer.

da yovanes hkon< >[rg]wni mrav-  
 lita a[ntrak]jita < >snita : da  
 saqdari didebisay da< >ebad :  
 x̃ {sada} gwrqwn{i va}<  
 da [ga]rdageb< >ri : da  
 ta nive owrt  
 s nebisa da{s}k ma  
 q/p scxa  
 [tavisagan {s}a

**Fig. 4:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (pseudo-colour image, turned by 90°), middle layer.

Considering that more than 90% of the existing Old Georgian homiletic and hagiographical texts are translations, mostly from Greek but sometimes also from Armenian and other languages of the Christian East, it seemed worthwhile to search for a similar context beyond Georgian. And, indeed, a search for close collocations of the name Ἰωάννης and the word στέφανος ('crown'), within a distance of max. three words, in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG)*<sup>31</sup> yielded eight hits, the fifth of which runs: Ἰωάννης στέφανον πολυτελεῆ λίθων τιμίων καὶ θρόνον ἔχων, καὶ ... (i.e. 'John, having a costly crown of precious stones and a throne, and ...'). We see here the clear equivalence of στέφανον with Georgian *gwrgrwni* ('crown'); λίθων τιμίων ('precious stones') with *antrakita patiosnita* ('precious carbuncle'); θρόνον ('throne') with *saqdari* ('throne'); and ἔχων ('having') with *akunda* ('had') – enough to suggest that the context in question, from the legend of St Xenophon and his sons,<sup>32</sup> is the same.

However, the given Greek passage could hardly be assumed to be the model of the Georgian text as it stems from a later version of the legend provided by Symeon Metaphrastes, who, as an author of presumably the tenth century, could not have left his traces in a Georgian palimpsest of Mount Sinai that is probably a century older. On the other hand, in the case of the given *Vita*, several pre-metaphrastic versions do exist in Greek, one of which might underlie the Georgian version. Of the various witnesses indicated in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*,<sup>33</sup> all unedited and therefore not included in the *TLG*, there are at least three that are easily accessible, namely those contained in the manuscripts Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter: BnF), grec 1613 (Diktyon 51235, c. fifteenth century; hereafter: U);<sup>34</sup> Sin. gr. 519 (Diktyon 58894, c. tenth century; hereafter: Y);<sup>35</sup> and Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30 (Diktyon 34287, c. tenth to eleventh centuries; hereafter: Z).<sup>36</sup>

31 See <<https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>>.

32 *Vita et conversatio sancti Xenophontis et filiorum ejus Joannis et Arcadii*; *BHG* 1878; *PG* 116, 1032, l. 52.

33 *BHG* 1877u-z; the second metaphrastic *Vita* registered as *BHG* no. 1879 also can be excluded as a later version.

34 Fols 7<sup>r</sup>–17<sup>r</sup> (see <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10722791q/f13.item#>>); *BHG* 1877u.

35 Fols 218<sup>ra</sup>–222<sup>rb</sup> (see <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279380538-ms/?sp=222>>); *BHG* 1877y.

36 Fols 263<sup>va</sup>–269<sup>vb</sup> (see <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279393739-jo/?sp=268&st=image>>); *BHG* 1877y.

## 2.2 The *Vita* of St Xenophon

The *Vita* of the fifth-century Constantinopolitan saint Xenophon, his wife Maria, and their sons John and Arcadius<sup>37</sup> does not exist in Greek alone. An Armenian version was published in the collection of saints' legends of 1874,<sup>38</sup> and an Arabic one in an article by Georg Graf in 1909.<sup>39</sup> More important for us, the legend also exists in Georgian, albeit not yet in an edited form (and therefore not included in any database). Of the fourteen manuscripts listed as containing this version,<sup>40</sup> two are of a considerable age, namely, Sin. georg. 52 (hereafter: S)<sup>41</sup> and Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 140 (hereafter: J).<sup>42</sup> Besides the legend of St Xenophon, S, a small codex (115 × 90 mm) consisting of ninety-nine folios, contains only one more hagiographical text, namely, the *Life of St Mamas*.<sup>43</sup> The two legends were obviously written by two different scribes, as witnessed by individual colophons they left on fols 52<sup>r</sup> and 99<sup>v</sup>, one by a certain *Ḳwirīḳe* (i.e. Cyriacus), who 'wrote down the Martyrdom of St Mamas for Mt Sinai' (without a date),<sup>44</sup> and one by the most illustrious Georgian monk of Mount Sinai, Ioane Zosime (John Zosimus), who worked in the monastery in the second half of the tenth century.<sup>45</sup> The latter's colophon is dated to the year (from Creation) 6587 and the 'chronicon' 202, which according to the Georgian time-reckoning system yields 982–983 CE,<sup>46</sup> probably the date of the binding undertaken by John;<sup>47</sup> it is conceivable that he was

37 Compare the miniature showing the four saints in the *Menology of Basil II* (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.gr. 1613, p. 351; <[https://digi.vatlib.it/pub/digit/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1613/iiif/Vat.gr.1613\\_0373\\_pa\\_0351.jp2/full/1204,/0/native.jpg](https://digi.vatlib.it/pub/digit/MSS_Vat.gr.1613/iiif/Vat.gr.1613_0373_pa_0351.jp2/full/1204,/0/native.jpg)>. St Xenophon was celebrated on 26 January.

38 *Vark'* 1874, 515–526; *BHO* 1246.

39 *BHO* 1247. My thanks are due to Konrad Hirschler, who made this publication available to me.

40 Gabidzashvili 2004, 356, no. 1156.

41 Fols 52<sup>r</sup>–99<sup>r</sup>.

42 Fols 173<sup>r</sup>–188<sup>r</sup>. The other codices listed in Gabidzashvili 2004 are the KKNCM manuscripts A-161 (1738), fols 123<sup>v</sup>–135<sup>v</sup>; A-230 (XIX), pp. 38–51; A-536 (1822), fols 77<sup>r</sup>–85<sup>v</sup>; A-1525 (1797), fols 36<sup>v</sup>–42<sup>v</sup>; S-134 (XVIII), fols 124<sup>r</sup>–137<sup>v</sup>; S-2646 (XIX), fols 21<sup>r</sup>–29<sup>r</sup>; S-3640 (XIX), fols 19<sup>r</sup>–28<sup>r</sup>; S-4581 (1827), fols 70<sup>r</sup>–79<sup>v</sup>; H-436 (XVIII), fols 1<sup>r</sup>–10<sup>r</sup> (aceph.), H-2281 (1793), fols 105<sup>r</sup>–119<sup>v</sup>; H-2385 (XIX), fols 37<sup>v</sup>–46<sup>v</sup> [!]; H-2819 (1848), fols 73<sup>v</sup>–81<sup>v</sup>.

43 Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–51<sup>r</sup>; *BHG* 1019; *BHO* 591 and 592.

44 For the colophon, see Garitte 1956, 188. In it, 'for Mt Sinai' may indicate that *Ḳwirīḳe*'s part was written in Jerusalem or Palestine.

45 For the colophon, see Garitte 1956, 189. Beyond John Zosimus, it mentions a certain Mikael (Michael) as the commissioner and a Giorgi (George) with no function indicated.

46 For the Old Georgian time-reckoning system, see Gippert 2018, 145.

47 The colophon refers to the binder (*šemmoseli*) only by the name of John (*iovane*), but it is probable that this is a self-reference, given that the monastery library has many Georgian books bound by him from this period.

also the scribe of the legend of St Xenophon.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to the Sinai codex, J is much larger (185 × 133 mm) and more comprehensive. Besides the legend of St Xenophon, it comprises five further hagiographical texts,<sup>49</sup> plus a prayer for penitence by Basil the Great that was translated by Euthymius, one of the founders of the Holy Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos.<sup>50</sup> The scribe, a certain Davitay,<sup>51</sup> has left several short notes in it<sup>52</sup> but no dating. The reference, in one of his notes, to the soul of Prochorus the Iberian, the founder of the Monastery of the Holy Cross near Jerusalem, suggests the time between the foundation of the monastery and the founder's death, that is, 1064–1066 CE, as a *terminus a quo*.<sup>53</sup>

The Georgian versions of St Xenophon's legend as contained in the Sinai and Jerusalem manuscripts are clearly related to the pre-metaphrastic Greek text. To illustrate this, it may suffice to compare the incipits as contrasted in Table 3.

<sup>48</sup> Garitte 1956, 189 even assumes John to be the 'author' (*auteur*) of the legend; this, however, is unlikely because of the existence of the palimpsested text.

<sup>49</sup> Two parts of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat (*BHG* 224), Alexis the Man of God (*BHG* 51), Onuphrius (*BHG* 1378), and Marina (*BHG* 1165). See the description in Blake 1925–1926, 141–142; the folio numbers it indicates have meanwhile changed, as visible in the microfilm of the Library of Congress: <<https://www.loc.gov/item/00271073355-jo/>>.

<sup>50</sup> The text (on fols 229<sup>v</sup>–237<sup>v</sup>) is styled 'Une longue invocation d'une belle main athonite implorant des bénédictions sur saint Euthyme' by Robert Pierpont Blake (1925–1926, 142), which is quite misleading; its title is *L(o)cvay sinanulisay berzuli targmnil c(mid)isa mamisa eptwme mtacmid(e)lis(a)y. Tkumuli cmidisa basilis mtavar-ebiskoposisay* ('Prayer of penitence, (in) Greek, translated by St Euthymius the Athonite, authored by St Basil the Archbishop') and its incipit is *O(wpa)lo ġ(mer)to čemo saxiero da mraval-mocq(a)(e)o, sašinelo ...* ('Lord, my God, benign and very merciful, terrifying ...'). This is obviously the *Oratio secunda ante lectionem* attributed to John Chrysostom (*CPG* 4688) in a version much closer to the Greek text (*PG* 63, 923–928) than the fragment contained in the manuscript Athos, Iviron, georg. 19, fols 200<sup>ra</sup>–202<sup>vb</sup> (see Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 206, no. VII.); the incipit of the latter corresponds by and large to Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 140, fol. 231<sup>r</sup>, l. 10 (*PG* 63, 923, l. 36).

<sup>51</sup> The last part was clearly written by a different scribe; the hand is characterised by, among other features, long descenders of letters in the last line, which we also find in manuscripts of the Holy Monastery of Iviron, such as georg. 16 (fols 280<sup>v</sup>, 282<sup>r</sup>, 312<sup>v</sup>), 33 (fols 6<sup>v</sup>, 13<sup>r</sup>, 14<sup>v</sup>, 43<sup>r</sup>, 79<sup>v</sup> etc.), 60 (fols 110<sup>v</sup>, 112<sup>v</sup>), 85 (see Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, pl. XIX), and the fragment 95y. Blake (1925–1926, 142) was certainly correct in styling this 'une belle main athonite'.

<sup>52</sup> On fols 86<sup>r</sup>, 188<sup>r</sup>, and 198<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Together with Prochorus, the colophon (on fol. 86<sup>r</sup>) mentions one Theodore and one Michael, as well as another Michael and one Saba as the 'spiritual brothers' of the scribe (*k(ri)st)je adide s(w)li proxoresi, t(evdor)jesi da m(i)k(ae)lisi da žmata č(e)mta s(w)liertay, m(i)k(ae)l da sabaysi, a(mi)n* ('Christ, exalt the soul of Prochorus, Theodore and Michael and of my spiritual brothers, Michael and Saba, amen!'). Of the latter names, only Saba's occurs in other sources relating to the monastery, naming a monk who was active in the late thirteenth century (Metreveli 1962, 36). Blake's dating of the codex ('XIII<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle') may be accepted for the 'Athonite' part but not necessarily for Davitay's.

**Table 3:** Incipits of St Xenophon's legend in comparison.

<p><i>gwtxrobdā čuen bertagani priad (&lt; J) didi vinme (vinme didi J) vitarmed (&lt; S) ksenepore (+ vinme J) iqo sepeculi (+ mdidari priad J). da ese moscrape iqo mcnebatā tws ġmrtisatā ...</i></p> <p>UZ: Δηγήσατο τις μέγας γέρων ὅτι Χενοφῶν τις γέγονε (&lt; Z) συγκλητικός ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν εὐπορίαν (+ ὑπάρχων Z) ἦν δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ σπουδαῖος περὶ τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ Θεοῦ ...<sup>54</sup></p> <p>Y: Δηγήσατο τις γέρων μέγας ὅτι Χενοφῶν τις γέγονε συγκλητικός· σπουδαῖος περὶ τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ Θεοῦ ...<sup>55</sup></p>	<p>‘One of the monks, very (&lt; J) great, told us that (&lt; S) a certain (&lt; J) Xenophon was a royal descendant, (+ very rich J), and he was eager for the knowledge of God ...’</p> <p>‘A great monk told (me) that a certain Xenophon became (&lt; Z) a senator over all plenty (+ being Z). And the man was also eager for the orders of God ...’</p> <p>‘A great monk told (me) that a certain Xenophon became a senator, eager for the orders of God ...’</p>
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Comparing the desinits, which in the Greek versions differ more strikingly, it becomes clear that the Georgian text is closest to the Greek text of the Paris manuscript grec 1613, as illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Desinits of St Xenophon's legend in comparison.

<p><i>x(olo) ksenepore carigo samoseli zazisay. da ganvida udabnod da cxonda mravaltā celta (dġeta J). da miemtswa (+ igi J) madlsa cinacarmetqvelebisa. da esret srul ikmna (kmnuli J) da (&lt; J) ganvida cxorebisa gan amis soplisa ...</i></p> <p>U: ὁ δὲ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς ὁ κύρις Ξενοφῶν λαβὼν ἑαυτῷ ἐσθῆτα τριχίνην ἐξήλθεν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον· καὶ ζήσας ἐκεῖ τὸν ὑπόλοιπον χρόνον τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ ἀξιωθεὶς προρρήσεων καὶ μεγάλων μυστηρίων οὕτως μετήλθεν τὸν βίον ...<sup>56</sup></p> <p>Y: καὶ ἐμβάλῃ τὸν φόβον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν ὅπως ἐπιτύχωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τῶν ἐπηγγελμένων ἡμῖν ἀγαθῶν ...<sup>57</sup></p> <p>Z: καὶ ἐμβάλῃ τὸν φόβον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν ἵνα μὴ τῆ ἀμελείᾳ καὶ ῥαθυμίᾳ ἡμῶν ἀπωλέσωμεν τὰ ἠτοιμασμένα ἡμῖν ἀγαθὰ ...<sup>58</sup></p>	<p>‘But Xenophon took a clothing of sackcloth and went into the desert and lived (there for) many years (days J). And he encountered the grace of prophecy, and thus he was accomplished and (&lt; J) left the life of this world ...’</p> <p>‘But her husband, Lord Xenophon, taking with himself a clothing of hair, went out into the desert. And having lived there the remaining time of his life, deemed worthy of prophecies and great mysteries, he thus passed this life ...’</p> <p>‘and that he would throw his fear into our souls so that we, too, attain the goods that we were promised ...’</p> <p>‘and that he would throw his fear into our souls so that we, too, will not lose by our indifference and sluggishness the goods that were prepared for us ...’</p>
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54 Paris, BnF, grec 1613, fol. 7<sup>r</sup>, ll. 3–5; Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30, fol. 263<sup>va</sup>, ll. 21–24.

55 Sin. gr. 519, fol. 218<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 22–24.

56 Paris, BnF, grec 1613, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>, ll. 11–16.

57 Sin. gr. 519, fol. 222<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 28–31.

58 Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30, fol. 269<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 14–19.

As both the incipits and the desinits show, there is a striking difference between the Georgian and the Greek texts, which consists in the name of Xenophon appearing as *ksenepore* in the former, as if representing a Greek \*Ξενοφόρος,<sup>59</sup> thus reminding us of the name form *ascanāfer*, which is used for St Xenophon in the Ethiopian synaxarium. Whether or not this rather presupposes a Greek Ξενόφρων, as proposed by Paul Peeters,<sup>60</sup> must remain open for the time being.

### 2.3 Restoring the palimpsested text

With the two Old Georgian witnesses of the legend as well as the closest Greek version at hand, the text of the Sinai palimpsest can now be restored with high confidence. It may be noted that instead of the presumed adverb *sada* ('where'), the passage appearing on fol. 5<sup>v</sup> contains the name of Xenophon's second son, Arcadius (*arḱadi*). Table 5 illustrates the text in question as it can be established by comparing the other witnesses available.<sup>61</sup>

**Table 5:** Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>, middle layer: restored text.

<p><i>da yovanes hkon</i>&lt;da g&gt;<b>[rg]wni mrav-</b>  <i>lita a[ntrak]jita</i> &lt;paṭio&gt;<b>snita : da</b>  <i>saqdari didebisay da</i> &lt;gances&gt;<b>ebay :</b>  <i>x(olo)</i> [<i>arḱad</i>]{<i>is</i>} <b>gwrwnṭi va</b>&lt;rsḱowl&gt;<i>aoani</i>  <b>da</b> {<i>tax</i>}{<i>ti</i>} <b>gardageb</b>&lt;owli da ž(owa)&gt;<b>ri : da</b>  <i>[ağ]{dges}</i> [<i>or</i>]<b>nive owrt</b>&lt;iertars d&gt;<i>{a owtxrob}</i>-  <i>{de}s čow[e]neb[a]sa da</i> [<i>rk(ow)</i>]{<i>a</i>} [<i>dedo</i>]-  <b>p[alman kmarsa ma]s cxa</b>[<i>d a</i>]{<i>s da</i>}&lt;<i>s</i>&gt;-  <b>[ta tan]{a} gan</b>{<i>cese</i>}&lt;<i>bowl arian</i>&gt;</p>	<p>'And John had a crown with many a precious stone, and a throne of glory and a commandment (staff). But Arcadius (had) a crown with stars and a covered throne and a cross. And both narrated to each other the apparition, and the lady said to (her) husband: "It is obvious, they are arranged with the (angelic) hosts!"'</p>
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<sup>59</sup> Greek personal names are usually represented in Georgian in their vocative form; compare *kriṣṭepore* rendering Χριστόφορος.

<sup>60</sup> *Acta Sanctorum* 1925, 142.

<sup>61</sup> Sin. georg. 52, fols 86<sup>r</sup>, l. 4–86<sup>v</sup>, l. 9; Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 140, fols 183<sup>v</sup>, l. 16–184<sup>r</sup>, l. 6; Paris, BnF, grec 1613, fol. 14<sup>r</sup>, ll. 3–9; Sin. gr. 519, fol. 220<sup>vb</sup>, ll. 24–33; Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30, fol. 267<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 27–39. Characters that were correctly read before the parallels were identified are printed in bold.

On this basis, we can now attempt to evaluate the relationship of the palimpsested text to its parallels. A few observations may suffice to illustrate this.

The restitution of *gancesebay* ('commandment staff') in l. 3 is based on both S and J, which have *saqdari gancesebisay* ('a throne of commandment') and *saqdari da gancesebay* ('a throne and a commandment (staff)'), respectively. In contrast to this, with the addition of *didebisay* ('of glory') the palimpsest (P) comes closer to the Greek text of all three compared witnesses (U, Y, Z), which have θρόνον ἔνδοξον καὶ σκήπτρον ('a glorious throne and a sceptre'); only Y adds ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ('in his hand').<sup>62</sup> The published Armenian text (A) has neither 'throne' nor 'sceptre'.<sup>63</sup>

With the restitution of *gwrgrwni mravlita antrakita paṭiosnita* ('a crown with many a precious carbuncle'), the palimpsest again comes closer to the Greek witnesses, which have στέφανον πολυτελεῖ ἔκ λίθων τιμίων ('a costly crown from precious stones'); Y shows another deviation here, adding περικείμενον αὐτῷ ('surrounding him') after στέφανον.<sup>64</sup> In contrast to the Greek, the two later Georgian witnesses do not support the restitution of *paṭiosnita* ('precious'). They read *gwrgrwni mravlita tualita antrakita šemḳuli* ('a crown adorned with many a carbuncle stone') (S) and, even more deviant, *gwrgrwni margaliṭita da tualita antrakita šemḳuli* ('a crown adorned with pearl(s) and carbuncle stone(s)') (J). It is obvious that the introduction of *margaliṭita* ('with pearl(s)') in the latter version is due to a distortion of *mravlita* ('many'), which we find in both the palimpsest and in S, in its turn probably reflecting the Greek πολυ- ('many') in the compound πολυτελής ('costly', lit. 'of many expenditures'). The Armenian text (A) reduces the description to the mere *psak patowakan yoyž* ('very precious crown'),<sup>65</sup> which, however, supports *paṭiosnita* ('precious') by using its etymological counterpart, *patowakan*.<sup>66</sup> In any case, the restitution of *paṭiosnita* must be regarded as certain, as no other Georgian word with a pertinent meaning ends in *-snita* in its instrumental case.

The close relation of the palimpsested text with the Greek versions can also be shown in other passages of the legend. For instance, on fol. 4<sup>r</sup> we find the expression *okroy ganowqves* ('they distributed gold'), clearly matching the

<sup>62</sup> Sin. gr. 519, fol. 220<sup>vb</sup>, l. 27.

<sup>63</sup> *Vark* 1874, 522, ll. 33–34.

<sup>64</sup> Sin. gr. 519, fol. 220<sup>vb</sup>, l. 25.

<sup>65</sup> *Vark* 1874, 522, ll. 34.

<sup>66</sup> Both are derived from a Middle Iranian word meaning 'honour' (Georgian *paṭiv-i*; Armenian *patiw*). See Andronikashvili 1966, 263–265; Olsen 1999, 258.

Greek χρυσίον διαδόντες (διαδόσαντες Y) ('distributing gold'). Both S and J extend this to *okroy da vecxli ganuqves* ('they distributed gold and silver'); A again shows nothing comparable. Further down on the same folio, we can restore *samoselita samonaz<onoebis>ayta*, which would mean something like 'with a dress of being for (or belonging to) monks', with the instrumental reflecting the Greek construction ἐν μοναχικῇ καταστάσει ('in a monastic dress') with the preposition ἐν (Y adds ὄντα 'being'). S and J render this in a more explicit way as *emosa mas samoseli monazontay* ('he wore the clothing of monks'), which in its turn matches A with *zgec'eal ēr zgest miaynakec'i* ('he was clad in the dress of a monk').

Summarising these observations, we may conclude that the text of the Sinai palimpsest comes closest to the Greek versions of U and Z, thus represent an earlier stratum of the legend; the two later Georgian versions (S and J) as well as the Greek manuscript of Mount Sinai (Y) provide a somewhat more elaborate text (with additions and rephrasings), sometimes also matching the Armenian legend (A), which otherwise appears rather abridged. Of course, the general picture can be ascertained only when the legend has been established *in toto*, which is one of the tasks of the DeLiCaTe project.

### 3 Case study II: A palimpsest of mixed content?

One of the most voluminous Armenian palimpsests that is kept outside of the Matenadaran is Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226 (Diktyon 53890), a codex consisting of 249 folios whose upper text comprises the four Gospels in Greek with the Eusebian canon tables and liturgical appendices, probably of the thirteenth century. The fact that it represents a palimpsest with an Armenian undertext has been long acknowledged.<sup>67</sup> Together with Bernard Outtier, I first inspected this codex during a sojourn to the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 2013. Our visit was primarily devoted to the Georgian palimpsest géorgien 5 of the same collection,<sup>68</sup> with the aim of compiling a complete set of multispectral

<sup>67</sup> See Astruc and Concasty 1960, 395 and <<https://archivesetmanuscrs.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc24296j>>. The codex is registered under no. 1294 in Gregory's and no. ε3023 in Soden's index of Greek Gospel manuscripts.

<sup>68</sup> See <<https://archivesetmanuscrs.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc13713s>> and <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8596867k>>.



images of both palimpsests; unfortunately, the camera system we used broke after two days, so that we could take only a reduced set of images in the violet range (440 nm) of the Armenian palimpsest. On all seventy-four folios thus photographed, the remnants of an erased layer written in Armenian majuscules (*erkat'agir*) could be made out; in general, the undertext appeared turned by 90° or 270° against the Greek overtext, with two folios each of the present manuscript representing one folio of the palimpsested codex. The Armenian layer was clearly arranged in two columns throughout, with 24–25 lines per column; there was no indication that considerable parts were cut off in preparing the codex for reuse.

In the lower margins of several folios, Outtier detected Armenian notes, obviously added by a later hand. His list,<sup>69</sup> which included personal names like *sandowxt* ('Sandukht'), *trdat* ('Trdat'), *hrip'simē* ('Hripsime'), *dawit' or i down* ('David of Dvin'), and *georgios* ('George'), but also denominations like *giwt xač'in* ('Finding of the Cross'), suggested offhand that the content of the Armenian layer could be hagiographical in nature. This assumption was largely confirmed by the identification on fol. 17<sup>r</sup> of a passage from the short version of the legend of St Shushanik, a female saint of the second half of the fifth century who is venerated by both the Armenian and the Georgian Churches. Table 6 shows a passage from St Shushanik's legend as established on the basis of the violet image of fol. 17<sup>ra</sup> (Fig. 5);<sup>70</sup> illegible characters were restituted by collating the printed edition of the legend.<sup>71</sup> The text passage describes the first controversy of the saint with her husband:

(... Var)dan, and of Vardan, Shushan, who was given in marriage to the Anthypatos, the leader of the Georgians; who because of human fear (or) of special intentions concerning his daughter, had entered the Zoroastrian faith of the magi, for which the blessed Shushan, not agreeing with him, reproached him and confronted him with God and ...

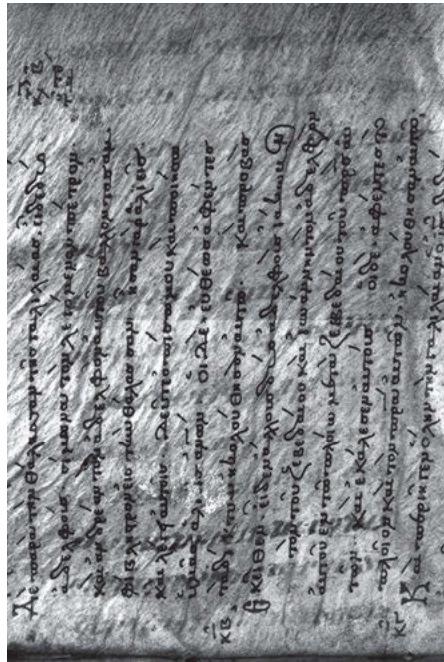
<sup>69</sup> My sincere thanks are due to Bernard Outtier who made his list (of nine entries) available to me. On the basis of the BnF's digitised microfilm (<<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b110048562>>), it has meanwhile been extended to around sixty entries, with quite a number of doublets.

<sup>70</sup> Note that due to the technical restrictions of the system used in 2013, four partial images had to be taken for each page.

<sup>71</sup> *Vkayabanowt'wn* 1853b, 50, ll. 15–24; Abuladze 1938, 50 [123], ll. 8–17. A digital version is available at <[https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/arm/agio/agio.htm?agio178.htm#Mart\\_Sus\\_B\\_](https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/arm/agio/agio.htm?agio178.htm#Mart_Sus_B_)>.

**Table 6:** Passage from the legend of St Shushanik (fol. 17<sup>ra</sup>).

{*dan ew i vardana sowrb*}  
 {*šowšann .*} [o]{*r towaw kin an*}-  
 {*t'ipatreay vrac'*} [*araj*]nor-  
 {*din . or yałags*} [*m*]ardka[n]  
 [*z*]erk{*eti manawand t'e ij*  
*kamac' vas[n]*} {*dster iw*}-  
 [*roy emowt and*] *zradeš-*  
 [*takan awrinaw*]k' [*mogow*]-  
 [*t'eann . orowm oč' hawa*]-  
 [*neal eranelwoyn šowša*]-  
 [*na*] *yandiman[ēr]* *zna*  
 [*ew araj*]ji [*ark*]anēr *za(stowa)c ew*

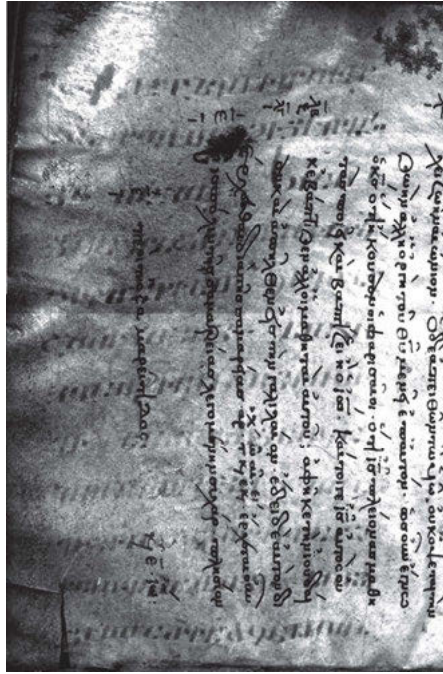
**Fig. 5:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 17<sup>ra</sup> (spectral image in the violet range).

### 3.1 A multiple-text manuscript?

Doubt was soon cast, however, on the assumption that the codex represents, in its lower layer, a mere collection of saints' legends. This initial conjecture was challenged by the identifiable text on several pages that turned out to be of biblical origin, with longer passages from both the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles found. For instance, Matthew 16:16–19 was detected on fol. 29<sup>r</sup>, Luke 1:26–38 on fol. 172<sup>r</sup>, and Hebrews 6:11–12 on fol. 191<sup>r</sup>. Table 7 exhibits the text of Luke 1:29–32 on fol. 172<sup>va</sup> (Fig. 6). Leaving orthographical features aside, the transcript reveals but a few minor differences as compared to the Armenian Vulgate such as, for example, the addition of *iwr* ('her (own)') in *xorhēr and mits iwr* ('she pondered in her mind') in the first line. A remarkable divergence is met with in verse 31 (l. 7), where instead of *ylasjir* ('you will become pregnant') we read *ylasjis*, as indicated in the transcript.

**Table 7:** Luke 1:29–32 (Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 172<sup>va</sup>).

[xorh]ēr and mi[ts iwr]  
 [t'e] {o}[r]pēs [in]č' ic' ē ofjo-  
 yns ays : | Ew asē  
 c'[na hre]šta[kn] mi [erk]<sup>n</sup>-  
 č'ir mariam 'zi g[ter]  
 šnorhs ya(stowaco)y . | ew aha  
 ylasj[is] ew cnc'es or-  
 di . ew [koč'es]c'en za-  
 nown [nora] y(isow)s : | na e-  
 hic'i m[ec] ew ordi barj-  
 [re]loy koč'es'ci ew ta-  
 c'ē nma t(ē)r a(stowa)c zat'o'in

**Fig. 6:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 172<sup>va</sup> (upper part; spectral image in the violet range).

Apart from hagiographical and biblical texts, the palimpsest also provided passages from works that belong to the homiletic and historiographical genres. For instance, the text on fol. 42<sup>va</sup> could be determined to stem from a treatise on Mount Tabor and the miracle of Transfiguration, attributed to the fifth-century author Elisaeus (Elišē, 410–475),<sup>72</sup> and a passage from the same author's most well-known work, the *History of Vardan and the War of the Armenians*, was also de-

72 On the treatise, which was actually the report of a pilgrim's visit, and its attribution to Elišē, see Thomson 1967, 27–29; Stone 1986, 105–106. For another perspective, see Pane 2018, 7–8 and the literature cited there.

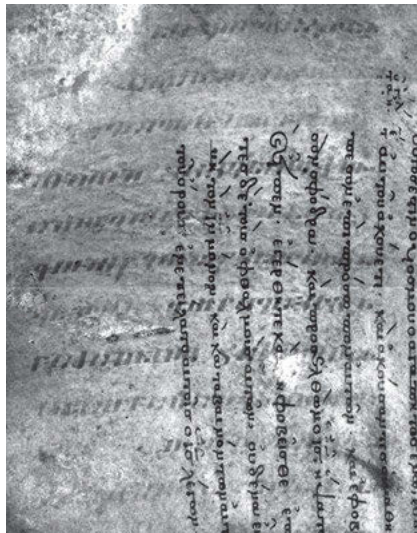
tected (on fol. 246<sup>r</sup>).<sup>73</sup> Table 8 shows the transcript of the former passage, which is about divine services undertaken on Mount Tabor:

... with words, and there are some who worship with alternate voices. They never keep a pause when exhausted, delegating the tasks among each other, groups by groups, by distributing the Psalter sections across the three churches, in a community without finishing. They have an order of service(s) for daytime and night, but in the evening ...<sup>74</sup>

The passage was again established by collating the printed edition.<sup>75</sup>

**Table 8:** Efišē's treatise on Transfiguration (fol. 42<sup>va</sup>).

{baniwk} . ew [ē zor pa]šten  
 {p'oxox}{akan jay}{niwk}  
 {zd}{a}darofwmm} {oč' erbēk'  
 arnowm yaygelov p'ox-  
 anordow[t'e]{amb mi}{meanc'  
 gowndk' gowndk' yeris eke-  
 tec'is[n] \*gowbołayic'n<sup>76</sup>  
 bažanelov ha[sarakow]-  
 t'eamb ara[nc' k]{ata}-  
 {reloy . o[wmin] {zk}{ar}{g paš}-  
 {tamann ztowanjəann} ew  
 gišerojy] { . isk zerekowmn}



**Fig. 7:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 42<sup>va</sup>  
 (spectral image in the violet range).

<sup>73</sup> The passage concerned is from Chapter 7 of Efišē's text, which is on the torture of the Holy Priests (corresponding to Efišē 1859, 117, ll. 11–17; Tēr-Minasean 1957, 150, ll. 12–16; and the English translation in Thomson 1982, 200, ll. 13–18).

<sup>74</sup> Compare the slightly abridged translation in Thomson 1967, 32.

<sup>75</sup> Efišē 1859, 238–239 (here: 238, l. 22); Pane 2018, 128, l. 40. A digital version is available at <<https://digilib.aua.am/book/1395/1694/12471/%D4%BD%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%BF%D6%84>>.

<sup>76</sup> This is an emendation, kindly proposed by Emmanuel Van Elverdinghe, of the unintelligible word *dowrałayic'n* that seems to be written in the palimpsest. As a loanword of Hebrew *gəbūl* ('limit, boundary'), Armenian *gowbołay*, also attested as *gobolay*, *gobalay* and *goblay*, denotes sections of the Psalter. The edition (Efišē 1859, 238, l. 23) has the *lectio facilior abelayic'n* ('of the monks').

### 3.2 A special type of lectionary

The co-occurrence of hagiographical, biblical, homiletic and historiographical content led to the conclusion, then, that the codex was of a mixed type, even though the handwriting seemed to be the same throughout. However, yet another solution imposed itself through the analysis of fol. 177<sup>vb</sup>, which turned out to contain the beginning of the legend of St Sukias (Hesychios) and his companions, in a form perfectly matching the published version of the text. It reads: ‘The martyrs who came from the court of the Alans after lady Sat’enic to Armenia, and (who were) educated by holy men, disciples of the apostle (Thaddeus) ...’.<sup>77</sup> Before the passage, which begins on l. 4 of the given column, the palimpsest shows two lines written in considerably smaller characters, with some letters appearing as minuscules; this could be made out as the title of the legend, reading: ‘Martyrdom of the holy “bucks” who were martyred in the province of Bagrewand and (who) are 364’.<sup>78</sup> The perplexing denomination of the 364 saints as ‘bucks’ (*k’awšic*) accords with the narrative of the legend according to which they settled as hermits on a mountain named Sowkaw and lived there as grass-eaters, with their bodies covered by lichen and with their ‘hair like that of bucks’.<sup>79</sup> More important for our question is the fact that, before the title, the palimpsest clearly shows one more line, which can in no way be related to the legend; instead, it can easily be identified as a passage from the Old Testament, namely, Isaiah 56:7–8: *<amena>yn het’anosac’, asē tēr tēr* (‘of all heathens, says the Lord, the Lord’). The content of fol. 177<sup>vb</sup> (Fig. 8) is illustrated in Table 9, with the title transcribed in red.

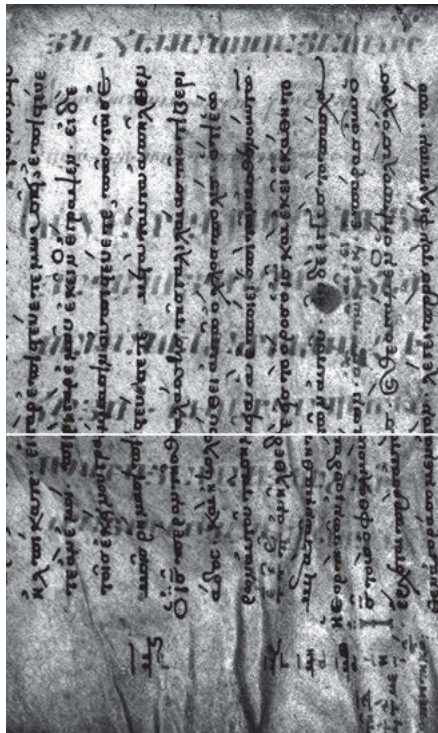
<sup>77</sup> *Vkayabanowt’iwn* 1854, 33, ll. 3–7; Abuladze 1944, 23, ll. 29–32. For a partial German translation, see Fritz and Gippert 2005, 396–397. Note that the name of the Alan princess Sat’enic appears as *Sat’aneke-* in l. 6 of the palimpsest.

<sup>78</sup> The spelling in the palimpsest is partly defective, with *vkabanowt’iwn* standing for *vkayabanowt’iwn* and *bagrend* for *bagrewand*. Except for the ‘bucks’ and the omission of the name of the mountain, the title matches that of the abridged legend found under 27 August / 17 Nawasardi in the Armenian Synaxarion of Tēr Israyēl, which runs *Vkayowt’iwn srboč’ Sowk’iasanc’n ork’ vkayec’in ‘i bagrewand gawaři ‘i sowkawēt lerinn, ew en t’owov erek’ hariwr ew vat’sown ew č’ors* (‘Martyrdom of St Sukias and his companions who were martyred in the province of Bagrewand on Mount Sowkawēt and (who) are three hundred and sixty and four by number’) (*Yaysmawowrk’* 1834, [III], 100b; for the titles that appear in other versions of the synaxary, see *Synopsis* 2010, 322–323).

<sup>79</sup> See *Vkayabanowt’iwn* 1854, 38, l. 24; Abuladze 1944, 32, ll. 8–9.

**Table 9:** Title and incipit of St Sukias's legend (fol. 177<sup>vb</sup>).

yn , het'anosac' asē t(ē)r ^t(ē)r^  
 [Vkabanow]t' [iwn srboc' k'awš[ic'n] ork'  
 vkayec'in i [ba]g[r]en{d} g[aw]a[r]i e[w] en [yk]{d}  
 Nahatakk' [ork' g]nac'i[n]  
 yaŋanac' dranē zhet  
 Sat' aneka tiknoj i  
 hays : ew vardapetea-  
 l i srboc' aranc'n ašake[r^]-  
 tac' srboy arak'eloyñ

**Fig. 8:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 42<sup>va</sup> (spectral image in the violet range).

With the immediate succession of a passage from the Old Testament and the beginning of a saint's legend, the given page reminded us of another Armenian palimpsest that had been investigated recently, namely, manuscript M 1306 of the Matenadaran (dated 1419). In contrast to the Paris codex, the palimpsested part of this manuscript is restricted to the four front flyleaves, which are the only parchment folios it contains. A thorough investigation of these flyleaves, based on multispectral images produced in the Matenadaran, has revealed that their undertext consists of pericopes from both the Old and New Testaments, combined with the legend of St Eliseus, the bishop we met earlier as an author (Elišē). The arrangement makes clear that the palimpsested folios must stem from a lectionary which was arranged in accordance with the calendar of saints, with each day being introduced by a psalm (antiphon) and the legends being placed after a pericope from the Old Testament and before a pericope from the Pauline Epis-

bles, in its turn followed by another psalm and a lection from the Gospels. The fragment preserved in the flyleaves thus covers the 22nd of the month Meheki with Psalm 14:4, Isaiah 56:4–5, the legend of St Eliseus, 2 Corinthians 1:8–11, Psalm 114:1, and Matthew 7:6–12; before this, we have pericopes from Galatians (6:15–18) and Matthew (24:30–35) with an undetermined psalm in between, and after it, the 23rd of Meheki devoted to St George, initiated by Psalm 117:1/6 and the lection of Hosea 14:9–10.<sup>80</sup> The given arrangement of biblical texts agrees perfectly well with what we find for the dates of the 20th–23rd of Meheki in the later (‘Cilician’) type of the Armenian lectionary (*čašoc*) as represented by the twelfth-century manuscript M 832 of the Matenadaran or the thirteenth-century codex Arch.Cap. S. Pietro B 77 of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.<sup>81</sup> However, in contrast to the latter two witnesses, which provide only the biblical material, the Yerevan palimpsest includes the saint’s legend at the position where it was to be read during liturgy. The comparison thus suggested that the Paris palimpsest is a second representative of this ‘very peculiar type of a lectionary, with saints’ lives accompanying the Biblical lections’.<sup>82</sup> And, indeed, both the later lectionaries indicate a lection of Isaiah 56:6–7 to be read on the day devoted to St Sukias and his companions, which is the 17th of Nawasardi; and, in both, the saints are styled ‘bucks’ in the title for that day.<sup>83</sup>

The assumption that the Paris palimpsest represents a more extensive ‘Cilician’-type lectionary, which is also arranged in accordance with the calendar of saints but includes their legends, has meanwhile been corroborated beyond doubt, thanks to a large set of new multispectral images recently taken in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.<sup>84</sup> For instance, we may now state that the leg-

<sup>80</sup> See Gippert 2022 for the *editio prima* of parts of the undertext of Yerevan, Matenadaran M 1306.

<sup>81</sup> For Yerevan, Matenadaran M 832, see Renoux 2004, 594–596, nos. 36 (20th of Meheki, Holy Cross of Varag), 37 (21st of Meheki, St Eliseus), 38 (24th [!] of Meheki, St George). For the Vatican codex, see Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 162, nos. 165 (20th of Meheki, Holy Cross), 166 (11th [!] of Meheki, St Eliseus), 167 (23rd of Meheki, St George). The psalm sung between Galatians 6:14–18 and Matthew 24:30–35 is Psalm 95 or 96 in the former and 99 in the latter.

<sup>82</sup> Gippert 2022.

<sup>83</sup> Renoux 2004, 568, no. 4; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 136, no. 105 with n. 391.

<sup>84</sup> The new images of Paris, BnF, géorgien 5 and supplément grec 1226 were produced by Ivan Shevchuk, Kyle Ann Huskin, Hasmik Sargsyan, Mariam Kamarauli, and Eka Kvirkvelia in September 2023 and further processed with the Hoku software developed by Keith T. Knox (see <<http://www.cis.rit.edu/~ktpkci/Hoku.html>>). My sincere thanks are due to all of them, as well as the staff of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, for their kind support. The new images permit, among other things, establishing the last line of fol. 17<sup>ra</sup>, which previously had to be left open (see Table 1 with Fig. 3). It obviously reads *zardarowt’eann i vera* (‘the justice upon’; see Fig. 9), con-

end of St Shushanik is introduced by a lection of Wisdom 3:10–12 on fol. 17<sup>va</sup>, preceding the title of the legend, which is found among the first lines of fol. 12<sup>ra</sup>, the lower part of the given folio;<sup>85</sup> the same lection is prescribed in the ‘Cilician’ lectionaries for the date of the saint’s veneration, the 17th of K’aloc’.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, the legend of the Second Finding of the Holy Cross, celebrated on the 10th of Mareri, follows a lection of Isaiah 33:22–34:1 (fols 24<sup>rb</sup> + 21<sup>ra</sup>).<sup>87</sup> A corresponding picture is also provided by lections from the New Testament; for instance, the pericope of 1 John 5:1–6 follows the end of the legend of St Sandukht, venerated on the 7th of K’aloc’ (fol. 113<sup>vb</sup>),<sup>88</sup> and Hebrews 13:7–9 and Matthew 5:1–12 follow an account of the death and the relics of St Sahak the Parthian (30th of Nawasardi; fols 110<sup>v</sup> + 111<sup>r</sup>).<sup>89</sup> Exceptionally, the legend of St Yiztbuzit<sup>90</sup> (2nd of K’aloc’) is preceded by a sequence of two pericopes from the Old Testament, namely, Wisdom 6:10–20 and Isaiah 56:3–7 (fols 169<sup>r</sup> + 164<sup>v</sup>); this, too, is accords with the ‘Cilician’ lectionaries.<sup>91</sup> The transition from one date to another is attested on fols 190<sup>r</sup> + 191<sup>v</sup>, with the 5th of Meheki assigned to St Christopher,<sup>92</sup> beginning with Psalm 115 and Ezekiel 18:14–17;<sup>93</sup> the preceding pericopes of Hebrews 6:9–12 and Luke 10:16–20 must in their turn pertain to the celebration of the Second Council of Ephesus (30th of Arac’).<sup>94</sup>

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trasting with *ardar datastann or i veray* (‘the just judgement which upon’) in the editions (*Vkayabanowt iwn* 1853b, 50, ll. 24–25; Abuladze 1938, 50 [123], ll. 17–18).

**85** The title begins with the words *Mah srboyn šowšnkan t’orin ...* (‘Decease of St Shushanik, grand-daughter ...’) (fol. 12<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 1–2 (16–17)). The remaining parts of the title have yet to be deciphered.

**86** See Renoux 2004, 587, no. 28; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 157, no. 152.

**87** See Renoux 2004, 600, no. 43; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 165, no. 172. The legend seems to be unpublished so far; it is also contained in the manuscript Paris, BnF, arménien 110 (fols 535<sup>rb</sup>–538<sup>va</sup>), a ‘festive homiliary’ in majuscules dated 1194.

**88** See Renoux 2004, 584, no. 25; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 156, no. 140. For the saint’s legend, see the edition in *Vkayabanowt iwn* 1853a, 77–83.

**89** See Renoux 2004, 569, no. 5; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 136, no. 106. The text concerning St Sahak is from the *History of the Armenians* by Łazar Parpetsi (Chapter 1, 18). The text passage on fol. 110<sup>va</sup> corresponds to the edition by Ter-Mkrtchean and Malkhasean 1904, 37, ll. 10–13.

**90** On the legend of St Yiztbuzit (also Yazdbuzid, Latinised Isbozetes; *BHO* 433), see Peeters in *Acta Sanctorum* 1925, 191–203. Editions of the legend are available in *Vark’* 1874, 124–130; *Acta Sanctorum* 1925, 204–216; Abuladze 1944, 114–123.

**91** See Renoux 2004, 584, no. 24; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 156, no. 148.

**92** The text of the legend corresponds to that published in *Vark’* 1874, 527–533.

**93** See Renoux 2004, 593, no. 34; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 161, no. 163. As in the ‘Cilician’ lectionary, Ezekiel 18:14 is introduced by the formula *Ayspēs asē adovnayi t(ē)r* (‘Thus speaks Adonai, the Lord’; fol. 191<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 11–12), attested as such in Ezekiel 3:27.

**94** See Renoux 2004, 593, no. 33; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 161, no. 162.



Lastly, the scheme also holds for the homiletic and historiographical text materials contained in the palimpsest, which were obviously included because they concern persons or events that are celebrated during the liturgical year. This is true of, for example, King Trdat, whose account, mostly taken from the *History of the Armenians* by Agathangelos,<sup>95</sup> is introduced in accordance with his celebration on the 21st of Trē by a pericope from Wisdom (6:2–10; fol. 138<sup>ra</sup>) and followed by lections of 1 Timothy 2:1–7 and Luke 11:14–28 (fols 52 + 57).<sup>96</sup> The treatise by Elišē on Transfiguration (see Section 3.1) is likely to have been read on the feast of Vardavař, which appears in the ‘Cilician’ lectionary of Yerevan after the 27th of Hoři (St Gayane) and in that of the Vatican after the 17th of K’aloc’ (St Shushanik);<sup>97</sup> in its case, however, the relevant pericopes have not yet been determinable, given that the text is preceded and followed by other non-biblical materials, which in their turn have not yet been identified. Of the text preceding it, only the closing doxology can be made out in the palimpsest (... *arak’esc’owk’ hawr ew ordwoy ew hogwoy srboy ayžm ew mišt* ‘... we will send to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever’); fol. 212<sup>va</sup>, ll. 3–5),<sup>98</sup> and after the end of Elišē’s treatise (fol. 36<sup>ra</sup>, l. 20), we read an explanatory text (*t’argmanowt’iwn*) on Vardavař, which, according to its title, is attributed to James, the Brother of the Lord (*Yakovbow etbawr t(eař)n*) and which begins with the words *Vardavař ays patmi. varžapet orpēs vardapet asemk’ varžowmn aypēs* (‘Vardavař is thus told: we, teacher as well as master, relate the custom as follows’; fol. 41<sup>v</sup>, ll. 1–4).<sup>99</sup> A corresponding passage is not found in any database available.

The homilies on Vardavař are not the only texts that have resisted identification so far. The same is also true of, for example, the legend concerning the Holy Cross of Varag, which is celebrated on the 20th of Meheki.<sup>100</sup> In one case, an un-

95 The beginning of the text on fol. 138<sup>ra</sup> corresponds to § 763 of the edition by Ter-Mkrtchean and Kanayeants (1909, 396, ll. 7–10). See the English translation by Thomson 1976, 303, ll. 6–9.

96 See Renoux 2004, 581, no. 21; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 155, no. 145.

97 See Renoux 2004, 573, no. 11 with n. 188; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 157, no. 153. Note that Elišē’s report is also contained, as an appendix (no. 5), in the lectionary codex Vienna, Bibliothek im Mechitaristenkloster, 269, on fols 259<sup>v</sup>–262<sup>r</sup>. See the catalogue by Dashian 1895, 688a.

98 A similar formula is found in a colophon of the Bible codex Yerevan, Matenadaran M 347, fol. 604<sup>r</sup> (see Yeganian et al. 2004, 70), which has no relation to the given context.

99 This text is by no means identical with the ‘Letter’ by Justus, the third successor of James as the bishop of Jerusalem; on this, see Van Esbroeck 1975, 337–339.

100 See Renoux 2004, 594–595, no. 36 with n. 246; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 162 no. 165. In the palimpsest, the text extends at least over fols 75 and 82 as well as 124 and 129; it is not identical with the text on the cross published in Alishan 1901, 521–525. Possibly this is the unpublished legend as contained in the *čarāntir* codex (of 1224) Venice, Biblioteca della Congregazione armena mechitarista, 17, fols 527<sup>vb</sup>–529<sup>ra</sup> (see Sarghissian 1924, 32, no. 114).

published hagiographical text was only identifiable via its Georgian counterpart, namely, the legend of Sts Cyprian and Justina, pertaining to the celebration of the two saints on the 5th of Arac'.<sup>101</sup> The clue to its identification was the mention (on fol. 159<sup>va</sup>, ll. 19–20) of 'a certain Athanasios, deputy of the duke' (*at'anasios omn at'orakic' komsin*), a phrasing that exactly matches the Georgian version as contained in the palimpsest Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, georg. 2, which reads: <at>*anasi saqdris*-<moq>*owasman mis* <kom>*sisaman*.<sup>102</sup> As a matter of fact, the agreement of the Armenian text (extending over at least fols 157–160 and 186<sup>va</sup>) with the Georgian legend is straightforward – an observation that is all the more important for our project, as St Cyprian's Georgian legend is one of the very few hagiographical texts attested in a *khanmeti* shape and thus can be attributed to the sixth to seventh centuries.<sup>103</sup> However, there is still a noteworthy difference: according to the Georgian text, the saints were martyred on the 5th of the month *Ṭirisdidi*,<sup>104</sup> which would correspond to the month of Trē (or Trekan) in the Armenian tradition;<sup>105</sup> in contrast to this, the Paris palimpsest names the 5th of Arac' (*or awr E ēr aranc' [!] amsoy*; fol. 186<sup>va</sup>, ll. 10–11). As this latter date accords with the calendar that underlies the given lectionary, this discrepancy may be due to a later adaptation – a suggestion that requires further investigation.<sup>106</sup>

**101** See Renoux 2004, 587, no. 29; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 158–159, no. 155. The text is possibly identical with one of those contained in the *čarəntir* codices Venice, Biblioteca della Congregazione armena mechtarista, 1014, fols 474<sup>vb</sup>–477<sup>vb</sup> (twelfth to thirteenth centuries; see Sarghissian 1924, 61, no. 121) and 985, fols 185<sup>vb</sup>–186<sup>vb</sup> (thirteenth century; see Sarghissian 1924, 124, no. 53).

**102** Fol. 94<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 14–16; see Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, 6–24.

**103** See Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, xxvi–xxxi.

**104** *ttowesa ṭirisdidisasa xowtsa*: fol. 103<sup>vb</sup>, ll. 11–12 (see Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, 6–33). The later version in the manuscript Athos, Iviron, georg. 8 exhibits the name variant *ṭirisḱnisasa* (fol. 318<sup>vb</sup>, l. 25), and the version in Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-95, has *ianvarsa tormęṣa* ('12 January') instead (fol. 385<sup>va</sup>, l. 31).

**105** See Gippert 1987, 67–68 as to the Armenian and Georgian month names that reflect the Iranian god Tir. The legend in Venice, Biblioteca della Congregazione armena mechtarista, 985 (see n. 101 above) gives 2 October (*hoktemberi B*) as the date (see Sarghissian 1924, 124, no. 53).

**106** The Greek tradition has the contradictory dating *πρὸ τεσσάρων καλάνδων Ὀκτωβρίῳ β'*, which seems to indicate 28 September as well as 2 October. The Syriac versions name the 15th of June / *Ḥzirān* (see the synopsis in Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, 6–33). See Gippert 1988 as to the difficulties of aligning the month names that appear in different hagiographical traditions.

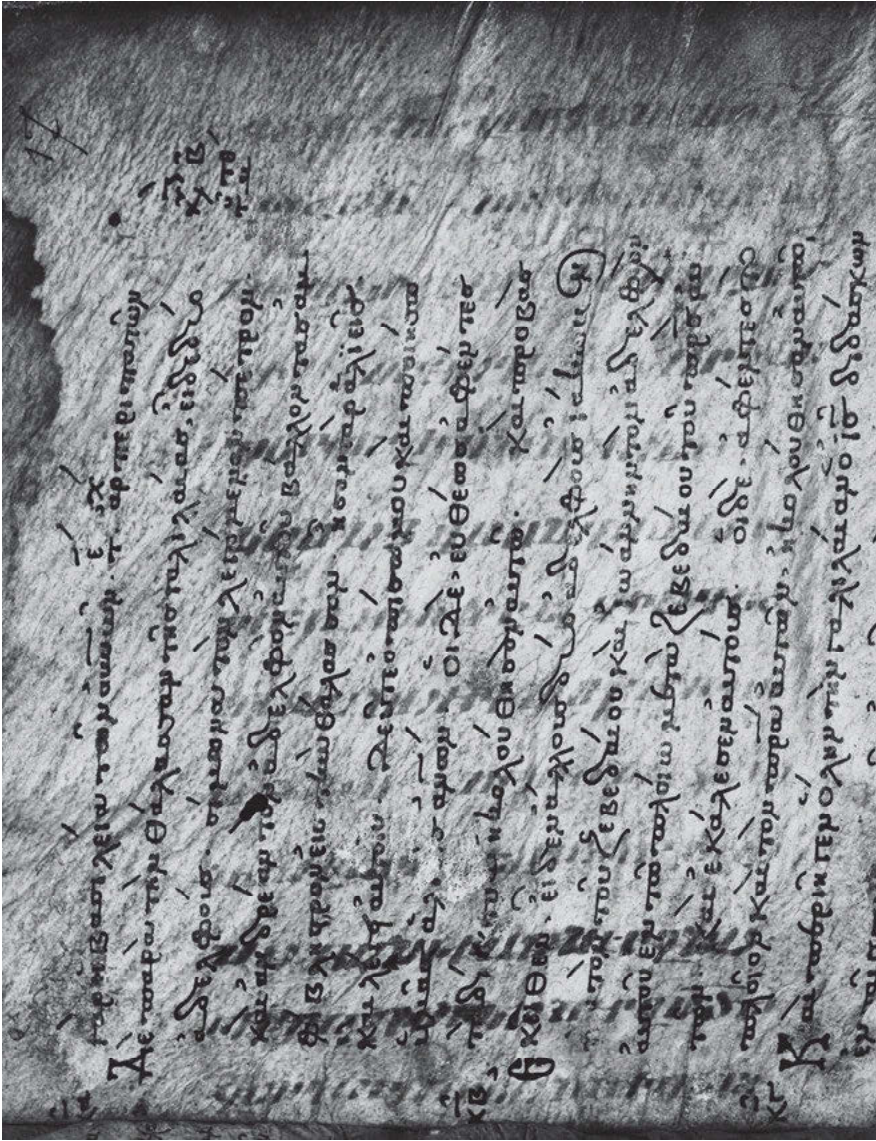


Fig. 9: Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 17<sup>a</sup> (multispectral images, 365 and 850 nm, divided).

## 4 Concluding remarks

As the two case studies show, hitherto unexplored palimpsests can throw important new light on the history of Caucasian literacy, not only concerning the development of the hagiographical genre in Armenian and Georgian but also with respect to the evolution of new liturgical traditions over time. The decipherment of the palimpsested materials available is therefore indispensable to the further progress of our project.

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## Abbreviations

*Acta Sanctorum* = *Acta Sanctorum, Novembris collecta, digesta, illustrata*, vol. 4, Brussels: Socii Bollandiani, 1925.

*BHG* = François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3rd edn (Subsidia Hagiographica, 8a), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1957; *Novum Auctarium* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 65), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1984.

*BHO* = Paul Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 10), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1910.

*CPG* = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 2: *Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974.

*PG* = Jean-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*, 1–161, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1857–1866.

*Synopsis* = [Yeznik Petrosyan (ed.)], *Համաբարբառ Յայսմաւուրք. Ը. Աւգոստոս / Synopsis Synaxarion*, vol. H: *August*, Etchmiadzin: Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, 2010.

TITUS = Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>>.

*Vark'* = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վարք եւ վկայաբանութիւնք սրբոց. Հատընտիր քաղեալք ի Ճատընտրաց*, vol. 2, Venice: San Lazzaro, 1874.

*Vkayabanowt' iwn* = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վկայաբանութիւն եւ զիւտ նշխարաց ս. Թադէի առաքելոյ եւ Մանդուխտ կուսի* (Սոփերք հայկականք, 8), Venice: San Lazzaro, 1853a.

- Vkayabanowt'wn = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վկայաբանութիւն սրբոյն Շուշանկան դատեր մեծին Վարդանայ* (Մոփերք հայկականք, 9), Venice: San Lazzaro, 1853b.
- Vkayabanowt'wn = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վկայաբանութիւն սրբոյն Բարդղղումէոսի առաքելոյ եւ ս. Ոսկենց եւ Սուքիասանց* (Մոփերք հայկականք, 19), Venice: San Lazzaro, 1854.
- Yagsmawowrk' = [Krikor Peshtimaldjian (ed.)], *Յայսմաւորք ըստ կարգի ընտրելագոյն օրինակի յայսմաւորաց Տէր Իսրայէլի*, Constantinople: Boghos Arabian, 1834.

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Mariam Kamarauli

# The Oldest Georgian Witness of the Martyrdom of St Febronia

**Abstract:** The paper examines a Georgian palimpsest containing the martyrdom of St Febronia (Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. NF 84 + 90) and its relation to other witnesses (Georgian, Greek, Latin, and Armenian), with a focus on the Georgian versions of the text. After a codicological description of the palimpsest and other relevant witnesses of the martyrdom, the differences between the text versions contained in them are categorised (e.g. lexical, grammatical, orthographic) and some of these differences, such as the representation of <*i*> as <*y*> or cases of tmesis, are elaborated further. Subsequently, the Georgian text variants are illustrated in parallel using the example of one page, followed by a parallelisation of the Georgian, Greek, Latin, and Armenian versions of the same passage.

## 1 Introduction

Within the literary and religious heritage of Georgia, hagiography has a long and distinguished history; its origins date back to the early centuries of Georgian literacy (fourth to eighth centuries). A significant differentiation must be made here between autochthonous and foreign texts: whereas the former remained restricted to a handful, the great bulk of saints' legends were translated into Georgian (from Greek, Armenian, or other languages of the Christian East) in the given period as well as in later times. One of the most prominent translators of saints' legends into Georgian was Euthymius the Athonite, who lived in the tenth to eleventh centuries.

Today, Georgian hagiography is studied not only for its religious significance but also for its role in preserving the nation's cultural and historical heritage, as well as for its importance to various fields of research such as palaeography, codicology, and linguistics. The subject thus fits exactly within the framework of the project on the Development of Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe), which aims at the first cross-language synthesis of the common conditions and

circumstances of the development of literacy in the Caucasus.<sup>1</sup> For the successful execution of this project, palimpsests play a crucial role, given that most of the written materials of the first centuries are preserved only in palimpsest form; this is also true of the oldest witnesses of hagiography in Georgian. Working with the relevant palimpsests has proven to be a difficult task, however. Several methods for their decipherment had to be developed and applied, such as processing multispectral images, calculating letters and lines, comparing extant parallels, identifying text passages, and analysing and explaining differences that appear during the comparison. The palimpsests dealt with in the present paper are Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. NF 84 and NF 90, two badly damaged manuscripts which represent one *codex rescriptus* (hereafter: Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90)<sup>2</sup> and which contain a fragment of the legend of St Febronia, a beautiful nun who suffered persecution, torture, and death under Emperor Diocletian for not renouncing her faith.

## 2 Codicological description of the palimpsest

The manuscript represented by Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90<sup>3</sup> is a double palimpsest, containing not just one lower and one upper layer but a lowest, a middle, and an uppermost layer. The uppermost layer of both Sin. georg. NF 84 and Sin. georg. NF 90 consists of apophthegms and homilies, datable to the tenth to eleventh centuries and, as the writing style suggests, probably written by the same hand in Old Georgian minuscules (*nuskhuri*), with dark-brown or black ink; initials and titles are in red. Sin. georg. NF 84 is the less voluminous part of the manuscript: it contains seven parchment folios (three loose bifolios and one single folio, all damaged),<sup>4</sup> with a size of approximately 15 × 12 cm. Sin. georg. NF 90 comprises thirty-eight leaves of the same size and material as Sin. georg. NF 84; the leaves form an unbound combination of single folios and quires. Most of the folios are fragmentary,

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1 Alongside myself, the project participants include Emilio Bonfiglio, Eka Kvrikvelia and Hasmik Sargsyan. For a description of the goals and methods of our project, see Jost Gippert's contribution to the present volume.

2 The assumption that Sin. georg. NF 84 and NF 90 represent one codex was first published in Aleksidze et al. 2005, 402 and further elaborated by Gippert and Outtier 2021, 41–42.

3 The research carried out for this paper is based on the multispectral images provided by the Sinai Palimpsests Project (<<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu>>, a publication of St Catherine's Monastery of the Sinai in cooperation with the UCLA Library and the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL)).

4 For the quire structure, see Gippert and Outtier 2021, 45–46 (Table 1).

as the manuscript is severely damaged.<sup>5</sup> The following texts were identified for the middle and lowest layers of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, all written in *asomtavruli* majuscules:<sup>6</sup>

- Fols 30–37 of Sin. georg. NF 90 contain fragments from the Gospel of Matthew in their lowest layer, written in large majuscules with *khanmeti* features,<sup>7</sup> datable to the fifth to seventh centuries. The reconstructed order of the folios is 35<sup>r</sup> + 34<sup>v</sup>, 36<sup>v</sup> + 37<sup>r</sup>, 36<sup>r</sup> + 37<sup>v</sup>, 35<sup>v</sup> + 34<sup>r</sup>, 32<sup>v</sup> + 33<sup>r</sup>, 31<sup>r</sup> + 30<sup>v</sup>, 31<sup>v</sup> + 30<sup>r</sup>, 32<sup>r</sup> + 33<sup>v</sup>.
- The lowest layer of Sin. georg. NF 90, fols 19–22, 25, 28, 29 and Sin. georg. NF 84, fols 1–5 contains parts of a homiliary (*mravaltavi*) with the linguistic characteristics of the *khanmeti* period. To be more precise, it is the homily by Athanasius of Alexandria *On Nativity* (CPG 2270/4560), written in large majuscules and datable to the fifth to seventh centuries. The reconstructed order of the folios is NF 90, fol. 25<sup>r</sup>; NF 84, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>; NF 90, fol. 25<sup>v</sup>; NF 84, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; NF 90, fols 22<sup>r</sup> + 19<sup>v</sup>, 22<sup>v</sup> + 19<sup>r</sup>, 21<sup>r</sup> + 20<sup>v</sup>, 21<sup>v</sup> + 20<sup>r</sup>; NF 84, fols 5<sup>v</sup> + 4<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>r</sup> + 4<sup>v</sup>; NF 90, fols 28<sup>v</sup> + 29<sup>r</sup>, 28<sup>r</sup> + 29<sup>v</sup>; NF 84, fols 3<sup>r</sup> + 2<sup>v</sup>, 3<sup>v</sup> + 2<sup>r</sup>.
- In the lowest layer of Sin. georg. NF 90, fols 1–18, 23, 24, 26, 27, 38 and Sin. georg. NF 84, fols 6 and 7, we find fragments of a psalter with *khanmeti* and *haemeti* characteristics,<sup>8</sup> extending from Psalm 20:10 to 140:4 and written in mid-sized majuscules datable to the seventh to eighth centuries. The reconstructed order of the folios is NF 90, fols 23<sup>r</sup> + 18<sup>v</sup>, 23<sup>v</sup> + 18<sup>r</sup>, 24<sup>r</sup> + 17<sup>v</sup>, 24<sup>v</sup> + 17<sup>r</sup>, 27<sup>r</sup>, 27<sup>v</sup>, 26<sup>r</sup>, 26<sup>v</sup>, 15<sup>r</sup> + 10<sup>v</sup>, 15<sup>v</sup> + 10<sup>r</sup>, 16<sup>r</sup> + 9<sup>v</sup>, 16<sup>v</sup> + 9<sup>r</sup>, 38<sup>v</sup>, 38<sup>r</sup>, 14<sup>r</sup> + 11<sup>v</sup>, 14<sup>v</sup> + 11<sup>r</sup>, 13<sup>r</sup> + 12<sup>v</sup>, 13<sup>v</sup> + 12<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>r</sup> + 4<sup>v</sup>, 5<sup>v</sup> + 4<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup> + 3<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup> + 3<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>r</sup> + 2<sup>v</sup>, 7<sup>v</sup> + 2<sup>r</sup>, 8<sup>r</sup> + 1<sup>v</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup> + 1<sup>r</sup>; NF 84, fols 7<sup>v</sup> + 6<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>r</sup> + 6<sup>v</sup>.
- Fols 3, 6, 26, 27, 30–37 of Sin. georg. NF 90 and fols 6 and 7 of Sin. georg. NF 84 contain fragments of the martyrdom of St Febronia in their middle layer, written in small, clumsy, and slightly slanted majuscules, transitional toward *nuskhuri* minuscules and datable to the ninth to tenth centuries. The reconstructed order of the folios is NF 90, fols 6<sup>r</sup> + 3<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup> + 3<sup>r</sup>, 27<sup>r</sup>, 27<sup>v</sup>, 26<sup>r</sup>, 26<sup>v</sup>, 31<sup>v</sup> + 32<sup>r</sup>, 31<sup>r</sup> + 32<sup>v</sup>, 34<sup>r</sup> + 37<sup>v</sup>, 34<sup>v</sup> + 37<sup>r</sup>, 35<sup>r</sup> + 36<sup>v</sup>, 35<sup>v</sup> + 36<sup>r</sup>, 30<sup>v</sup> + 33<sup>r</sup>, 30<sup>r</sup> + 33<sup>v</sup>; NF 84, fols 6<sup>v</sup> + 7<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup> + 7<sup>v</sup>.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For example, of fols 1–22, the middle part has been eaten; parts of fols 23, 24, and 29 are torn off; parts of fols 30–33 are eroded; and of fols 34–38, only fragments have survived.

<sup>6</sup> Gippert and Outtier 2021, 42–43.

<sup>7</sup> See below in Section 6 as to *khanmeti* characteristics.

<sup>8</sup> See below in Section 6 as to *haemeti* characteristics.

<sup>9</sup> In the description on the Sinai Palimpsests Project website (Gippert and Outtier *s.a.*), fols 3 and 6 are listed as part of an ‘unidentified’ text (see below as to St Xenophon). However, in reality they contain the martyrdom of St Febronia. Additionally, the reconstructed order assumes fols 31 and 32 in reverse order, which is corrected here.

- Fols 1, 2, 7, 8, 11–14 of NF 90 contain two homilies by John Chrysostom on the Dormition of the Mother of God in their middle layer, written in small, clumsy, and slightly slanted characters and datable to the ninth to tenth centuries. The reconstructed order of the fols is 8<sup>r</sup> + 1<sup>v</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup> + 1<sup>r</sup>, 11<sup>r</sup> + 14<sup>v</sup>, 11<sup>v</sup> + 14<sup>r</sup>, 12<sup>r</sup> + 13<sup>v</sup>, 12<sup>v</sup> + 13<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>r</sup> + 2<sup>v</sup>, 7<sup>v</sup> + 2<sup>r</sup>.
- Fols 4, 5, 9, 10, 15–18, 23, 24, 38 of NF 90 contain fragments of the legend of St Xenophon in their middle layer, written in the same type of small, clumsy, and slightly slanted characters of c. the ninth to tenth centuries. The text has only recently been identified.<sup>10</sup>

### 3 Greek, Latin, and Armenian witnesses of the martyrdom of St Febronia

The identification of the martyrdom of St Febronia was not easy, given that no edited Georgian version is available. It was achieved by Jost Gippert and Bernard Outtier<sup>11</sup> on the basis of personal names (especially that of Febronia herself) and a comparison with the Greek and Latin martyrdom as published in *Acta Sanctorum*.<sup>12</sup> The manuscript used for the Greek text (*BHG* 659) could be Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.gr. 1667 (Diktyon 68298; fols 238<sup>v</sup>–257<sup>r</sup>), which Paolo Chiesa lists as the oldest witness from the Vatican Library<sup>13</sup> (datable to the tenth century).<sup>14</sup> For the Latin version in *Acta Sanctorum* (*BHL* 2843), Chiesa names Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 7810 (fols 146<sup>r</sup>–154<sup>v</sup>), from the eleventh century, as the oldest witness.<sup>15</sup> Aside from the one published in *Acta Sanctorum*, another Latin version of the legend of St Febronia (*BHL* 2844) is contained in the *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum* by Bonino Mombritius, which was compiled in the late fifteenth century.<sup>16</sup> According to Chiesa, the oldest witness of this Latin version is Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, XCV (fols 259<sup>r</sup>–272<sup>v</sup>),

<sup>10</sup> See Jost Gippert's contribution to the present volume.

<sup>11</sup> Gippert and Outtier *s.a.*

<sup>12</sup> *Acta Sanctorum* 1867, 16–31.

<sup>13</sup> In the introduction to the martyrdom of St Febronia in *Acta Sanctorum*, it is only stated that the underlying manuscripts are from the Vatican Library ('Ex MSS. Bibliothecae Vaticanae', p. 16).

<sup>14</sup> Chiesa 1990, 337. For a more recent survey of the manuscripts containing the legend of St Febronia, see <<https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/saint/342/>> (accessed on 9 April 2024).

<sup>15</sup> Chiesa 1990, 213.

<sup>16</sup> Mombritius 1910.

from the ninth century, which may have originated from northern Italy.<sup>17</sup> Neither for the Greek nor for the Latin editions does Chiesa explicitly state which manuscripts were used as their underlying models.

An Armenian version of the legend (*BHO* 303) was published in 1874 in *Lives and Martyrdoms of Saints*,<sup>18</sup> a hagiographical collection compiled by the Venice Mekhitarists. Unfortunately, no information about the source manuscript is provided for this edition either. However, manuscript no. 17 (cat. 200, dated 1224) of the Mekhitarists' library, which contains the legend on fols 476<sup>vb</sup>–484<sup>rb</sup>, can be assumed to be the underlying manuscript,<sup>19</sup> given that the catalogue explicitly refers to the edition for it.<sup>20</sup>

In Georgian as well as in Greek<sup>21</sup> and Armenian,<sup>22</sup> a short version (between 4 and 8 pages) of the martyrdom of St Febronia is also contained in synaxaria. This version is almost identical across the three languages; it does not contain the passages found in Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90.

When working on the palimpsest, the question arose immediately as to which version of the text could be considered the source for the others. This topic was treated by Jean Simon, who argued that the Greek text (*BHG* 659) is an adaptation of an original in Syriac (*BHO* 302). According to him, the martyrdom of St Febronia was created by the Christians of Nisibis with the intention to distance themselves from the heresy of the monophysites and to establish a Christian past.<sup>23</sup>

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17 Chiesa 1990, 43 and 66.

18 *Vark'* 1874, 409–429.

19 The Mekhitarists' catalogue notes several manuscripts containing the martyrdom (e.g. nos 599, 602, 603, 606, 612). However, only for no. 200 does it explicitly refer to the edition contained in *Lives and Martyrdoms of Saints*.

20 Sarghissian 1924, 29, no. 102. An illustration of St Febronia is found in Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 6315 on fol. 352<sup>v</sup> (Harutyunyan 2019, 330).

21 Delehaye 1902, 769–772.

22 *Synopsis* 2011, 238–245.

23 Simon 1924, 75–76.

## 4 Georgian witnesses of the martyrdom of St Febronia

Besides the Sinai palimpsest, the Georgian version of the martyrdom of St Febronia exists in different redactions (including metaphrastic and synaxarian ones) in at least thirty manuscripts, as listed by Enriko Gabidzashvili:<sup>24</sup>

- Older redaction:<sup>25</sup>
  - Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. 6, fols 184<sup>r</sup>–200<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to 981–983;
  - Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS georg. b.1 (hereafter: Oxford georg. b.1), fols 181<sup>r</sup>–193<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to 1038–1040;
  - Tbilisi, Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts (hereafter: KKNCM), A-95, fols 305<sup>v</sup>–319<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the eleventh century;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-382, fols 15<sup>r</sup>–21<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the fifteenth century;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-433, fols 48<sup>v</sup>–66<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, S-300, fols 133<sup>v</sup>–139<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1779;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-649, fols 56<sup>r</sup>–63<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1785;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, S-134, fols 78<sup>r</sup>–95<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, datable to the eighteenth century;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, H-2386, fols 64<sup>r</sup>–80<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1812;
  - Tbilisi, National Archives of Georgia, 1446/87, fols 1<sup>r</sup>–12<sup>r</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1819;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-381, fols 179<sup>r</sup>–196<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, datable to 1837–1838;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, H-285, pp. 671–694: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1852;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, H-947, fols 43<sup>r</sup>–61<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1864;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, H-1370, fols 178<sup>r</sup>–191<sup>r</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1871–1884;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-335, fols 17<sup>r</sup>–35<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, datable to the nineteenth century;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, H-1762, fols 42<sup>r</sup>–60<sup>v</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, datable to the nineteenth century.

<sup>24</sup> Gabidzashvili 2004, 348–349, nos 1116–1120.

<sup>25</sup> Gabidzashvili 2004, 349, no. 1118: 'Keimena' redaction, authored by a certain Tomaida.

- Translation by Euthymius the Athonite:<sup>26</sup>
  - Athos, Holy Monastery of Iviron (hereafter: Ivir.), georg. 79, fols 7<sup>v</sup>, I<sup>r</sup>–II<sup>v</sup>, 1<sup>r</sup>–6<sup>v</sup> (beginning and end missing): *nuskhuri* script, datable to 1042–1055;<sup>27</sup>
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-1769, fols 2<sup>r</sup>–2<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to 1042–1055.<sup>28</sup>
- Metaphrastic redactions:<sup>29</sup>
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, S-417, fols 177<sup>v</sup>–200<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the twelfth century;
  - Kutaisi, State Historical Museum, 3, fols 256<sup>v</sup>–282<sup>v</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the sixteenth century;
  - Akhaltsikhe, Samtskhe–Javakheti History Museum, 3483, pp. 54–66: *mkhedruli* script, dated 1838;<sup>30</sup>
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, S-2766, fols 48<sup>r</sup>–58<sup>r</sup>: *mkhedruli* script, datable to the twentieth century;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, H-2678, fols 1<sup>r</sup>–13<sup>r</sup> (parts at the end missing): *mkhedruli* script, datable to the twentieth century.
- Short redaction in the *Great Synaxarion* by George the Hagiorite:<sup>31</sup>
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-97, fols 230<sup>v</sup>–232<sup>r</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the eleventh century;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-193, fols 247–248: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the eleventh century;
  - Tbilisi, KKNCM, H-2211, fols 290–292: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the eleventh century;
  - Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 25, fols 249<sup>r</sup>–251<sup>r</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the eleventh century;
  - Athos, Ivir., georg. 30, fols 280<sup>r</sup>–282<sup>r</sup>: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the eleventh century;
  - Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery, georg. 4: *nuskhuri* script, datable to the eleventh century.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Gabidzashvili 2004, 349, no. 1120.

<sup>27</sup> See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 637.

<sup>28</sup> Not mentioned in Gabidzashvili 2004. The fragment (two leaves) was once part of Ivir. georg. 79 (see Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 637); it is unclear how it came to Tbilisi (Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, liii).

<sup>29</sup> Gabidzashvili 2004, 348–349, no. 1116.

<sup>30</sup> According to Gabidzashvili 2004, 349, this and the following two witnesses represent later translations from Armenian.

<sup>31</sup> Gabidzashvili does not provide the page numbers for these manuscripts; the information given here relies upon Dolakidze and Chitunashvili (2017, 274–275).

One more witness containing the martyrdom is Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 152, fols 88<sup>v</sup>–135<sup>v</sup>, written in *nuskhuri* script and datable to the eleventh to twelfth centuries. Gabidzashvili mistakenly lists this manuscript as representing a category of its own, with the remark: ‘the beginning differs from the short and metaphrastic redactions (it may be a hymnal)’.<sup>33</sup> In reality, only the first ten folios in question (fols 88<sup>v</sup>–98<sup>v</sup>) contain the canon for St Febronia; they are followed by the martyrdom in the older redaction (fols 98<sup>v</sup>–135<sup>v</sup>).<sup>34</sup>

For the comparative analysis of the palimpsested text of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, the following manuscripts were selected: Sin. georg. 6, KKNCM A-95 and Oxford georg. b.1, which are the oldest known witnesses in Georgian; and KKNCM A-1769 + Ivir. georg. 79, which contain a new translation from Greek by Euthymius the Athonite. The latter is very different from the other Georgian witnesses (including the palimpsest) and cannot be considered for the larger comparative analysis provided in Section 7; the excerpt in Table 1 provides evidence of how divergent it is from the older Georgian redaction.

**Table 1:** Excerpt of the legend of St Febronia in Greek and five Georgian versions.

<i>Acta Sanctorum</i>	Ταῦτα εἰπούσης τῆς Βρυένης, <b>περιπτυσσάμενη τὴν Φεβρονίαν</b> , καὶ <b>ἀσπασσάμενη μετὰ</b> πολλῶν <b>δακρῶσαν</b> , ἀπέλυσεν αὐτήν (‘Saying this, Bryene, <b>embracing Febronia</b> and <b>bidding her farewell with many tears</b> , dismissed her’) (22 [19], ll. 18–20)
KKNCM A-1769 + Ivir. georg. 79	<i>Ese tk(u)a da šeiṭkbo pebronia da ambors-uqo cremlit da cargzavna</i> (‘[she] said this and <b>embraced Febronia</b> and <b>kissed her with tears</b> and sent [her] away’) (Ivir. georg. 79, fol. 2 <sup>r</sup> , ll.15–17)
Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90	<i>Ese ray tk(ow)a brweni moiḳitxa da ganuṭeva igi</i> (‘Bryene said this, greeted her and let her out’) (fol. 26 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 4–5)
Sin. georg. 6	<i>Ese ray tk(u)a breni moiḳitxa da g(a)nuṭeva igi</i> (‘idem’) (fol. 193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1)
KKNCM A-95	<i>Ese ray tk(u)a breni moiḳitxa da ganuṭeva igi</i> (‘idem’) (fol. 313 <sup>ra</sup> , ll. 17–19)
Oxford georg. b.1	<i>Eseray tk(u)a breni moiḳitxa da ganuṭeva igi</i> (‘idem’) (fol. 187 <sup>vb</sup> , ll. 11–13)

<sup>32</sup> This manuscript is erroneously listed in Gabidzashvili 2004, 349 as one containing the martyrdom; however, it lacks exactly the feast days between 24 June and 5 July (between fols 193<sup>v</sup> and 194<sup>r</sup>) where the martyrdom of St Febronia would be expected.

<sup>33</sup> Gabidzashvili 2004, 349, no. 1117: ‘ტექსტის დასაწყისი განსხვავებულია კიმენური და მეტაფრასული რედაქციებისგან (შეიძლება საგალობელი იყოს)’.

<sup>34</sup> See <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00271073434-jo/?sp=101>> (accessed on 19 November 2023).



As we see, the texts of the older redaction are almost identical (except for a few orthographic differences). Ivir. georg. 79, on the other hand, is the only witness containing the phrase *šeiṭḳbo pebronia* ('[she] embraced Febronia'), corresponding to Greek περιπτυσσάμενη τὴν Φεβρονίαν. Furthermore, only these two versions mention tears (δακρύων, *cremlit*) but in combination with 'bidding farewell' in Greek (ἀσπασαμένη μετὰ πολλῶν δακρύων) and with 'kissing' in Georgian (*ambors-uqo cremlit*). For the most part, it was not even possible to parallelise Euthymius's version with the other four Georgian witnesses line by line but only by paragraphs; in addition, not much could be compared, as half the text passages in question are missing in KKNCM A-1769 + Ivir. georg. 79.<sup>35</sup>

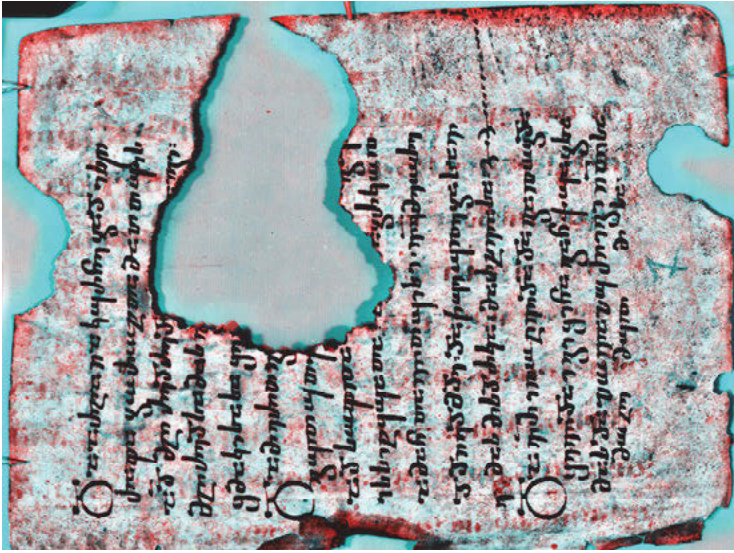
## 5 Palaeographical examination of the martyrdom of St Febronia in Georgian

Even though I could base my work on a provisional transcript from 2014, which Jost Gippert provided when working on the online catalogue of the Sinai palimpsests,<sup>36</sup> the decipherment of the martyrdom of St Febronia as contained in Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 turned out to be comparatively difficult. The difficulty mostly stemmed from the fact that the palimpsest has two lower layers with many letters, and even words, covering each other. This is particularly true for Sin. georg. NF 84, which exhibits extreme overlapping, as, for example, in the right lower corner of fol. 7<sup>r</sup> (see Fig. 1).

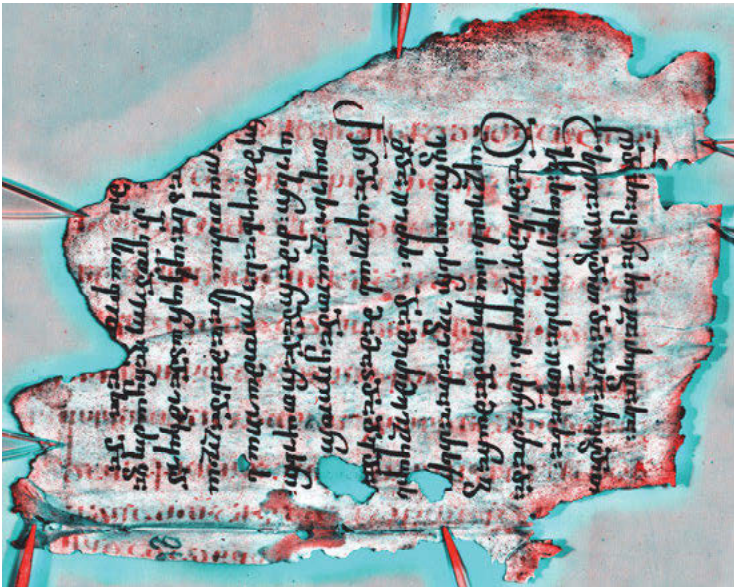
The undertext containing the martyrdom of St Febronia on fols 6<sup>r</sup> and 7<sup>v</sup> of Sin. georg. NF 84 appears turned by 270° as against the present orientation of the page (determined by the uppermost layer); accordingly, the undertext of fols 6<sup>r</sup> and 7<sup>v</sup> appears turned by 90°. As for the lowest layer of the two folios, the *khanmeti-haemeti* psalter, it is turned by 90° as against the uppermost layer on fols 7<sup>v</sup> and 6<sup>r</sup> and by 270° on fols 7<sup>r</sup> and 6<sup>v</sup>. On these pages, it was extremely difficult to decipher more than fragments of letters and words, given that both the middle and the lowest layers not only overlap but also are equally erased. In contrast to this, the middle layer of Sin. georg. NF 90 is fairly easy to read, as is visible in Fig. 2.

<sup>35</sup> See Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 647 as to the fragmentary preservation of Euthymius's version.

<sup>36</sup> This work was carried out within the framework of the Sinai Palimpsests Project, which was funded by Arcadia and ran 2012–2017. For more information, see <<http://sinaipalimpsests.org/>> (accessed on 9 April 2024).



**Fig. 1:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. NF 84, fol. 7; multispectral image processed by Keith T. Knox, © Sinai Palimpsests Project.



**Fig. 2:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. NF 90, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>; multispectral image processed by Keith T. Knox, © Sinai Palimpsests Project.

The undertext containing the martyrdom of St Febronia on fols 3<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup>, 26<sup>r</sup>–31<sup>r</sup>, 32<sup>v</sup>, 33<sup>v</sup>, 34<sup>r</sup>, 35<sup>r</sup>, 36<sup>v</sup>, 37<sup>v</sup> of Sin. georg. NF 90 appears turned by 270° as against the present orientation of the page; accordingly, the undertext of fols 3<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup>, 26<sup>v</sup>–31<sup>v</sup>, 32<sup>r</sup>, 33<sup>r</sup>, 34<sup>v</sup>, 35<sup>v</sup>, 36<sup>r</sup>, 37<sup>r</sup> appears turned by 90°. The orientations of the three different texts in the lowest layer of Sin. georg. NF 90 are:

- the undertext containing psalter fragments appears turned by 90° as against the present orientation of the page on fols 1<sup>r</sup>, 3<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>v</sup>–8<sup>v</sup>, 9<sup>r</sup>–12<sup>r</sup>, 13<sup>v</sup>–16<sup>v</sup>, 17<sup>r</sup>, 18<sup>r</sup>, 23<sup>v</sup>–27<sup>v</sup>, 38<sup>r</sup>, and turned by 270° on fols 1<sup>v</sup>, 2<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, 4<sup>v</sup>, 5<sup>r</sup>–8<sup>r</sup>, 9<sup>v</sup>–12<sup>v</sup>, 13<sup>r</sup>–16<sup>r</sup>, 17<sup>v</sup>, 18<sup>v</sup>, 23<sup>r</sup>–27<sup>r</sup>, 38<sup>v</sup>;
- the undertext containing the Gospel of Matthew appears turned by 180° as against the present orientation of the page on fols 30<sup>v</sup>, 33<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, 35<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, 36<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, and unturned on fols 31<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, 32<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, 34<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, 37<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>, which means that, here, the writing direction of the uppermost layer and the undertext overlap; and
- the undertext containing Athanasius of Alexandria's *On Nativity* appears turned by 90° as against the present orientation of the page on fols 19<sup>r</sup>, 20<sup>r</sup>, 21<sup>v</sup>, 22<sup>v</sup>, 25<sup>v</sup>, 28<sup>v</sup>, 29<sup>r</sup>, and turned by 270° on fols 19<sup>v</sup>, 20<sup>v</sup>, 21<sup>r</sup>, 22<sup>r</sup>, 25<sup>r</sup>, 28<sup>r</sup>, 29<sup>v</sup>.

As stated above, the palimpsested text of the legend of St Febronia in Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 is written in small, clumsy, and slightly slanted *asomtavruli* characters (majuscules), all in one column. There is no evidence of enlarged initials; if there were any, they may have been cut off. The text in Sin. georg. 6 is also written in one column, mostly in a slightly slanted and ligatured *nuskhuri* script; in some passages, not only do initials appear in *asomtavruli* majuscules but so does the following word or fragment of the word or even the whole line, e.g. **Մ** **ՓՂԳԺՈՒՐԻՇ** (*x(olo) pebronia* ['but Febronia']; fol. 185<sup>v</sup>, l. 22); **ԾՈՂԱԷ** (*dǵesa* ['on the day'], first part in *asomtavruli*, second in *nuskhuri*; fol. 186<sup>r</sup>, l. 23); **Մ** **ՎԱԻՊԻՐ** (*x(olo) breni* ['but Bryene'], conjunction and first letter of the name in *asomtavruli*; fol. 188<sup>r</sup>, l. 11; fol. 200<sup>r</sup>, l. 2); **ՍԻՆԵՂԻՍԱՍ** (*selinos* ['Selinus']; fol. 194<sup>v</sup>, ll. 16 and 27; fol. 196<sup>v</sup>, l. 11); **Մ** **ԴՄԵԿԵՍՏՈՍԵՅՆ ԺԵՆԻՏԻՆԵՆ ԵՎԵՆԻՆԵՆ ԵՎԵՆԻՆԵՆ** (*x(olo) episkoposman kalakisaman aǵašēna* ['and the bishop of the city built'], the whole line written in *asomtavruli*, *nuskhuri* script from the following line onwards; fol. 199<sup>r</sup>, ll. 15–16); **Մ** **ԴՄԵԿԵՍՏՈՍԵՅՆ** (*x(olo) episkoposman* ['but the bishop']; fol. 199<sup>v</sup>, l. 5); **ԾԵ ԾԵԾԻՆՍ ԲԵՔԻՆԵՆ ԴԼԴ ԴԵԿԵՆԵՆԵՆ ԿՐԻՇ ԳՎՊԼԵ ԴԻԲԵՆԵՆ ԵՎԵՆԻՆԵՆ** (*da dadves nacili igi eklesiassa šina tuesa ivnissa ocdaxutsa* ['they deposited the relics in the church on the twenty-fifth of the month of June']; fol. 199<sup>r</sup>, ll. 15–16). The method of applying majuscules is normally used for highlighting or emphasising a given word or line; this may be true for initials (as in the name of Febronia) or complete words (as in the month name June) that are written in

*asomtavruli*, but in some cases, the reason is not immediately clear (especially for words written partially in *asomtavruli* and partially in *nuskhuri*).

The remaining two witnesses, KKNCM A-95 and Oxford georg. b.1, are both written in two columns in *nuskhuri* script (with titles and initials in majuscules); the initials of the right columns take up nearly the complete space between the columns. The script in KKNCM A-95 is straight without ligatures, the title of the legend is written in red ink with a mixture of majuscules and minuscules, and initials are in majuscules. Lastly, the script of Oxford georg. b.1 is slanted without ligatures, the title is written in red ink in majuscules as well as minuscules, and the initials are in majuscules.

Another palaeographic characteristic that has to be taken into account is the punctuation system, as it differs depending on the given manuscript. In the oldest Georgian palimpsests, a minor break (between clauses or phrases) was marked by a single dot, the end of sentences or paragraphs by two dots, and the end of a section or longer passage by an arrow flying to the right.<sup>37</sup> Later codices (of the ninth to tenth centuries) are characterised by less systematic rules, using a single dot or a group of three dots to express a minor break, double dots for a major break, and groups of three or four dots for the end of a paragraph.<sup>38</sup> In Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, only double dots are attested, as is also the case in Sin. georg. 6 and KKNCM A-95; in the former, four dots appear at the end of the martyrdom, and the latter exhibits two passages in which a single dot is used. As for Oxford georg. b.1, an alternating use of one, two, and three dots is attested, with the single dot being the most frequently used (345 times).

All four text versions contain abbreviations, typically affecting the following word types: *nomina sacra* (e.g. *k(rist)ēsni* [‘(those) of Christ’], Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, ll. 3–4 [13–14]); conjunctions (e.g. *x(olo)* [‘but’], Oxford georg. b.1, fol. 181<sup>vb</sup>, l. 8); relative pronouns (e.g. *r(omel)i* [‘which’], Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>, l. 5); quantifiers (e.g. *q(ovel)i* [‘all’], KKNCM A-95, fol. 308<sup>vb</sup>, l. 5); preverbs (e.g. *g(a)nuṭeva igi* [‘[she] let her go’], Sin. georg. 6, fol. 193<sup>r</sup>, 1); postpositions (e.g. *z(ed)a* [‘on’], Oxford georg. b.1, fol. 181<sup>vb</sup>, l. 16); personal and possessive pronouns (e.g. *š(en)* [‘you’], *š(en)i* [‘your’], KKNCM A-95, fol. 306<sup>ra</sup>, l. 12, l. 26); and others (e.g. *k(ue)q(a)nay* [‘land’], Sin. georg. 6, fol. 186<sup>v</sup>, l. 19). Sin. georg. 6 reveals some interesting cases concerning the abbreviation of *nomina sacra*: the Christian god is abbreviated (*ġ(mert)i*, fol. 187<sup>v</sup>, l. 9) while other gods are not (*ġmertni misni* [‘his (Diocletian’s) gods’], fol. 198<sup>v</sup>, l. 4). In contrast to this, KKNCM A-95 and Oxford georg. b.1 abbreviate both the Christian god (*ġ(mert)i*, KKNCM A-95, fol. 308<sup>vb</sup>, l. 24; Oxford georg. b.1, fol. 183<sup>vb</sup>, l. 26) and

<sup>37</sup> Danelia and Sarjveladze 1997, 322.

<sup>38</sup> Danelia and Sarjveladze 1997, 322–323.

the pagan ones (*ġ(mer)tni misni* [‘his (Diocletian’s) gods’], KKNCM A-95, fol. 317<sup>va</sup>, l. 16; Oxford georg. b.1, fol. 190<sup>va</sup>, l. 34). The same holds for the text fragment preserved in Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90: only one text passage mentions Diocletian’s gods (*ġ(mer)tni misni* [‘his (Diocletian’s) gods’]; Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 30<sup>v</sup>, l. 2), with the ‘gods’ abbreviated, and there is also one mention of the Christian god on fol. 26<sup>r</sup>, l. 9, where Bryene pleads for Febronia’s safety (*evedreboda ġ(merts)a pebroniaystws* [‘she] pleaded to God for Febronia’], fol. 26<sup>r</sup>, ll. 9–10).

## 6 Linguistic features

Based on morphological differences, Old Georgian written texts are usually classified according to three diachronic layers, namely, *khanmeti*, *haemeti*, and *sannarevi*. In *khanmeti* texts (usually assigned to the fifth to seventh centuries), second-person subjects and third-person objects are marked by a verbal prefix *x-*. In *haemeti* texts (assigned to the seventh to eighth centuries), we find a prefix *h-* instead of the *x-*. Lastly, in *sannarevi* texts (from the ninth century onwards), a second-person subject and a third-person object is partly marked by the allomorphs *x-*, *h-*, *s-* and *š-*, and partly unmarked. All four Georgian witnesses of the older redaction of the legend of St Febronia, including the palimpsest, belong to this last type.

As mentioned above, no edited text of the martyrdom of St Febronia in Georgian is available, so a transcript of the whole text of the three sister witnesses (Sin. georg. 6, KKNCM A-95, Oxford georg. b.1) was indispensable in order to provide a parallelisation with the available text passages from the palimpsest. This process revealed several lexical, grammatical, typological, and orthographic differences, as shown in Table 2.

The most frequent type of difference between the four Georgian witnesses is additions, such as when a figure is reintroduced in the form of a personal pronoun (as shown in Table 2 under Additions) or when larger phrases are added (see Table 4, l. 5). The second most frequent types are lexical and grammatical variations; the former are attested in the form of synonyms or paraphrases (differentiating between nominal and verbal forms), and the latter can be subcategorised within the nominal domain as concerning case and/or number variation, the use of focus particles, or the use of postpositions. Of course, there are also mere errors, such as one or two letters missing in certain words. Among the orthographic differences, an interesting case is the frequent representation of <*i*> by <*y*> in the palimpsest, as illustrated in Table 3.

In sixteen of the twenty-eight examples listed in Table 3, the representation of <i> as <y> concerns the initial vowel of a word. In six examples, <y> appears in a verb in the position after a preverb. The remaining six examples concern personal names: for example, *tomays* (Θωμαΐς, Thomais, ll. 9 and 22), which is the name of a female figure (a nun) in the martyrdom. Such discrepancies are to be expected, as the representation of names in translated texts is always likely to provide some variation, especially when these names are not typical or even unknown in the given language. This also holds true for *yeria* (Ιερία, Ieria, ll. 11, 15, 23, 27), which is represented as *ieria* in the other versions.<sup>39</sup> In describing this phenomenon, which does not imply any lexical difference, Korneli Danelia and Zurab Sarjveladze state that the use of *y* instead of *i* can be regarded as ‘improper’<sup>40</sup> and that it is ‘comparatively rare’ after the preverbs *še-* (see e.g. Table 3, ll. 4, 10, 21) and *mo-* (Table 3, ll. 1, 7), where *y* follows a vowel.<sup>41</sup> In rare cases, *y* is realised in ‘impermissible’ positions, namely before or after a consonant;<sup>42</sup> this is attested in most of the examples in Table 3 (ll. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 16–20, 24–26, 28). Nonetheless, the representation of <i> as <y> is

39 See Kamarauli 2024 for a comparison of the names in the Georgian text versions with those of the Greek, Latin, and Armenian texts.

40 Danelia and Sarjveladze 1997, 245: ‘*ი არადანიშნულებისამებრ არის ნახმარი. ასეთ შემთხვევაში ი სხვადასხვა ბგერად წაიკითხება და მცდარად მის ხმარებას სხვადასხვა გარემოება განაპირობებს*’ (‘*y* is used improperly. In such a case, *y* is used instead of other letters [lit. *y* is read instead of other sounds], and its incorrect use is caused by different circumstances’.)

41 Danelia and Sarjveladze 1997, 245: ‘*აქ ი დამავალ დიფთონგთა დაწერილობის ანალოგიითა ნახმარი ი-ს ადგილზე, რასაც ადგილი აქვს სახელებთან თავკიდურა სა მწარმოებლის და ზმნებთან ა, და, შე, მო, წა ზმნისწინთა მომდევნო პოზიციაში. ასეთი შემთხვევები ხშირი არ არის: საადუმლოდ (3v, Sin-26), აძმულეს (ლ., 24, 29C), აძლეთ (მ., 11, 29C), დაძვე (საპაკ. წარწ.), შედარებით ხშირია შე- ზმნისწინთან ი-ის ხმარების შემთხვევები Sin-20 ხელნაწერში: შეიმოსენ 32r, შეიარაცხე 26v, შეიწყნარეს 33v, შეიძვე 82r*’ (‘Here, *y* is used instead of *i* analogously to a falling diphthong in nouns with the prefix *sa-* and in verbs after the preverbs *a-*, *da-*, *še-*, *ca-*. Such cases are not frequent: *saydumloy* (secret), *ayzules* ([they] forced [him/her]), *ayǰet* ([you] took [it]), *daycve* ([you] would keep/maintain); comparatively frequent is the usage of *y* in combination with the preverb *še-* in the manuscript Sin. 20: *šeymosen* ([they] got dressed), *šeyracxe* ([you] considered/deemed), *šeycqnares* ([they] had mercy), *šeycva* (([s]he/it) compassed [him/her/it])’.)

42 Danelia and Sarjveladze 1997, 245: ‘*იშვიათად წარმოუდგენელ, დაუშვებელ პოზიციაშია ი რეალიზებული თანხმოვნის გვერდით, მის წინ, ან მომდევნოდ. ასეთი იშვიათი ფორმები წარწერებსა და ხელნაწერებში შენიშნული აქვს ზ. სარჯველაძეს: იციით, იხარებდ, იყო, იჯქლი, სოფლასა, ისწავ, ჩემი და სხვ*’ (‘Rarely, *y* is in an unimaginable, impermissible position next to, before or after a consonant. Such rare forms have been noted from inscriptions and manuscripts by Sarjveladze: *yicit* (most probably a spelling mistake for *ycit* ([you] know)), *yx-arebd* ([you] rejoice), *yqo* ((s)he/it was), *ypkli* (wheat), *soplysa* (of the village), *yscav* ((s)he/it learns), *čemy* (my) and others’.)

not systematically executed in the palimpsest, as there are also cases of, for example, *iqo* ('was') (fol. 6<sup>r</sup>, l. 8) and *igi* ('the, that') (fol. 30<sup>v</sup>, l. 9) instead of *yqo* and *ygi*. Since the examples in Danelia and Sarjveladze come mainly from Sinai manuscripts (Sin. georg. 20, Sin. georg. 26) and the examples in Table 3 also are attested in a Sinai manuscript (Sin. georg. NF 90), we can carefully assume that this phenomenon may have something to do with or indicate the origin of a manuscript.

**Table 2:** Categorical linguistic differences between the four Georgian witnesses.

Type of differences	Example
Word order	<i>owplisa čemisa</i> ('of <b>my</b> lord') (Sin. georg. 6, 191 <sup>v</sup> , l. 7–8 and Oxford georg. b.1, 186 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 13) vs <i>čemisa owplisa</i> ('of <b>my</b> lord') (KKNCM A-95, 312 <sup>ra</sup> , ll. 10–11) vs <i>owplisa</i> ('of the lord') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 27 <sup>r</sup> , l. 8)
Additions	<i>pasowxi miowgo / pasuxi miugo mas</i> ('[he] gave the answer <b>to her</b> ') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 31 <sup>v</sup> , l. 5; Sin. georg. 6, 195 <sup>v</sup> , l. 16; Oxford georg. b.1, 189 <sup>vb</sup> , ll. 15–16) vs <i>pasuxi miugo</i> ('[he] gave the answer') (KKNCM A-95, 315 <sup>tb</sup> , ll. 7–8)
Lexical variation	
Nominal	<i>pačivita</i> ('with <b>respect</b> ') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 30 <sup>v</sup> , l. 7; Sin. georg. 6, 198 <sup>v</sup> , l. 8; KKNCM A-95, 317 <sup>va</sup> , l. 23) vs <i>locvita</i> ('with <b>prayer</b> ') (georg. b.1, 191 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 8)
Verbal	<i>moykcet / moikcet</i> ('you would <b>return</b> ') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 6 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1; Oxford georg. b.1, 181 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 13; KKNCM A-95, 306 <sup>va</sup> , l. 2) vs <i>moxwdet</i> ('you would <b>come</b> ') (Sin. georg. 6, 184 <sup>v</sup> , l. 13)
Grammatical variation	
Focus particle	<i>brzanebayca</i> ('command, <b>too</b> ') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 6 <sup>v</sup> , l. 10; Sin. georg. 6, 185 <sup>v</sup> , l. 12) and <i>mcnebayca</i> ('precept, <b>too</b> ') (KKNCM A-95, 306 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 21) vs <i>brzanebay</i> ('command') (Oxford georg. b.1, 182 <sup>ra</sup> , ll. 25–26)
Case and/or number	<i>ağmosavalad</i> ('eastward [ <b>adv.sg</b> ]') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 6 <sup>r</sup> , l. 10; KKNCM A-95, 306 <sup>va</sup> , l. 11) vs <i>ağmosavalit</i> ('eastward [ <b>instr.sg</b> ]') (Sin. georg. 6, 184 <sup>v</sup> , l. 22; Oxford georg. b.1, 181 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 21)
Postpositions	<i>monaštrisanagan</i> ('from the monastery [gen.sg+ <b>from</b> ]') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 27 <sup>r</sup> , l. 2) vs <i>monaštrisa</i> ('of the monastery [gen.sg]') (Sin. georg. 6, 191 <sup>r</sup> , l. 17) vs <i>monaštrit</i> ('from the monastery [ <b>instr.sg</b> ]') (KKNCM A-95, 311 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 8; Oxford georg. b.1, 186 <sup>va</sup> , ll. 14–15)
Verbal forms	<i>ixilos</i> ('[she] <b>would have seen</b> ') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 31 <sup>v</sup> , l. 2; Sin. georg. 6, 195 <sup>v</sup> , l. 14) vs <i>ixila</i> ('[she] <b>saw</b> ') (Oxford georg. b.1, 189 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 12; KKNCM A-95, 315 <sup>tb</sup> , l. 4)
Orthography	<i>simravley</i> ('multitude') (Sin. georg. NF 90, 6 <sup>r</sup> , l. 4) vs <i>simravle</i> ('multitude') (Sin. georg. 6, 184 <sup>v</sup> , l. 16; KKNCM A-95, 306 <sup>va</sup> , l. 9; Oxford georg. b.1, 181 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 19)
Errors	<i>urzana</i> ('[he] commanded') (Sin. georg. 6, 193 <sup>v</sup> , l. 14, with <i>b</i> missing after <i>u</i> ) vs <i>ubrganes</i> ('[they] commanded') (KKNCM A-95, 313 <sup>va</sup> , l. 23; Oxford georg. b.1, 188 <sup>tb</sup> , ll. 10–11)

**Table 3:** <y> in Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 vs <i> in the other witnesses.

Sin. georg. NF 90	Sin. georg. 6	Oxford georg. b. 1	KKNCM A-95
1 <i>moykctet</i> (6 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1)	<i>moxwdet</i> (184 <sup>v</sup> , l. 13)	<i>moikcet</i> (181 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 13)	<i>moikcet</i> (306 <sup>va</sup> , l. 2)
2 <i>ygi</i> (6 <sup>v</sup> , l. 5)	—	—	<i>igi</i> (306 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 12)
3 <i>yscrapda</i> (6 <sup>v</sup> , l. 7)	<i>icrapda</i> (185 <sup>r</sup> , l. 9)	<i>iscrapda</i> (182 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 20)	<i>iscrapda</i> (306 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 16)
4 <i>šeyṗqrobden</i> (3 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 6–7 (16–17))	<i>šeyṗqrobden</i> (185 <sup>r</sup> , l. 18)	<i>šeiṗqrobden</i> (182 <sup>rb</sup> , ll. 2–3)	<i>šeiṗqrobden</i> (306 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 31)
5 <i>ygi</i> (27 <sup>r</sup> , l. 2)	—	—	<i>igi</i> (311 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 7)
6 <i>yqo</i> (27 <sup>v</sup> , l. 7)	—	<i>iqo</i> (186 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 13)	<i>iqo</i> (312 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 10)
7 <i>moyḳitxa</i> (26 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 4–5)	<i>moiḳitxa</i> (193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1)	<i>moiḳitxa</i> (187 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 12)	<i>moiḳitxa</i> (313 <sup>ra</sup> , ll. 17–18)
8 <i>ygi</i> (26 <sup>r</sup> , l. 5)	<i>igi</i> (193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1)	<i>igi</i> (187 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 13)	<i>igi</i> (313 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 19)
9 <i>tomays</i> (26 <sup>r</sup> , l. 10)	<i>tomais</i> (193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 5)	<i>tomaia</i> (187 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 20)	<i>tomaia</i> (313 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 25)
10 <i>šeymosa</i> (26 <sup>r</sup> , l. 10)	<i>šeimosā</i> (193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 5)	<i>šeimosā</i> (187 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 20)	<i>šeimosā</i> (313 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 25)
11 <i>yeriasca</i> (26 <sup>v</sup> , l. 1)	<i>ieria</i> (193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 14)	<i>ieriasca</i> (187 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 34)	<i>ieriasca</i> (313 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 7)
12 <i>ykrxialna</i> (26 <sup>v</sup> , l. 3)	<i>ikrxialna</i> (193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 15–16)	<i>ikrčxialna</i> (188 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 2)	<i>ikrxialna</i> (313 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 10)
13 <i>ygi</i> (26 <sup>v</sup> , l. 9)	<i>igi</i> (193 <sup>r</sup> , l. 22)	<i>igi</i> (188 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 13)	<i>igi</i> (313 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 20)
14 <i>daycqo</i> (26 <sup>v</sup> , l. 10)	—	—	—
15 <i>yeria</i> (31 <sup>v</sup> , l. 3)	<i>ieria</i> (195 <sup>r</sup> , l. 14)	<i>ieria</i> (189 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 12)	<i>ieria</i> (315 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 4)
16 <i>yxile</i> (31 <sup>v</sup> , l. 6)	<i>ixile</i> (195 <sup>r</sup> , l. 18)	<i>ixile</i> (189 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 18)	<i>ixile</i> (315 <sup>rb</sup> , ll. 9–10)
17 <i>ycqo</i> (34 <sup>v</sup> , l. 7)	<i>icqo</i> (196 <sup>v</sup> , l. 19)	<i>icqo</i> (190 <sup>va</sup> , l. 20)	<i>icqo</i> (316 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 17)
18 <i>yxile</i> (37 <sup>r</sup> , l. 3 (10))	<i>ixile</i> (196 <sup>v</sup> , l. 21)	<i>ixile</i> (190 <sup>va</sup> , l. 25)	<i>ixile</i> (316 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 22)
19 <i>yxiles</i> (35 <sup>r</sup> , l. 3)	<i>ixiles</i> (197 <sup>v</sup> , l. 13–14)	<i>ixiles</i> (191 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 22)	<i>ixiles</i> (316 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 22)
20 <i>ygi</i> (35 <sup>r</sup> , l. 3)	<i>igi</i> (197 <sup>v</sup> , l. 14)	<i>igi</i> (191 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 22)	<i>igi</i> (316 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 23)
21 <i>šeykriba</i> (35 <sup>v</sup> , l. 5)	<i>šEEKriba</i> (197 <sup>v</sup> , l. 27–198 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1)	<i>šEEKriba</i> (191 <sup>va</sup> , l. 13)	<i>čAKriba</i> (317 <sup>ra</sup> , ll. 18–19)
22 <i>tomays</i> (36 <sup>r</sup> , l. 2 (10))	<i>tomais</i> (198 <sup>r</sup> , l. 4)	<i>tomaia</i> (191 <sup>va</sup> , l. 20)	<i>tomaia</i> (317 <sup>ra</sup> , ll. 25–26)
23 <i>yeria</i> (36 <sup>r</sup> , l. 3 (11))	<i>ieria</i> (198 <sup>r</sup> , l. 4)	<i>ieria</i> (191 <sup>va</sup> , l. 20)	<i>ieria</i> (317 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 26)
24 <i>ygi</i> (30 <sup>v</sup> , l. 7)	<i>igi</i> (198 <sup>r</sup> , l. 7)	<i>igi</i> (192 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 7)	<i>igi</i> (317 <sup>va</sup> , l. 22)
25 <i>ygi</i> (33 <sup>r</sup> , l. 1 (10))	—	—	<i>igi</i> (317 <sup>va</sup> , l. 28)
26 <i>natel yġes</i> (30 <sup>r</sup> , l. 7)	<i>natel iġes</i> (198 <sup>v</sup> , l. 20)	<i>natel iġes</i> (192 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 31)	<i>natel iġes</i> (317 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 18)
27 <i>yeria</i> (33 <sup>v</sup> , l. 6 (14))	<i>ieria</i> (198 <sup>v</sup> , l. 24)	<i>ieria</i> (192 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 5)	<i>ieria</i> (317 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 27)
28 <i>natel yġes</i> (33 <sup>v</sup> , l. 7 (15))	<i>natel iġes</i> (198 <sup>v</sup> , l. 25)	<i>natel iġes</i> (192 <sup>rb</sup> , ll. 6–7)	<i>natel iġes</i> (317 <sup>vb</sup> , ll. 28–29)

The last type of interesting differences that must be addressed here relates to tmesis, the linguistic phenomenon of a word or phrase being separated by an intervening word or words for emphasis or as a stylistic effect. In Old Georgian,



this typically affected the position between a preverb and the main part of the verbal form.<sup>43</sup> In all versions except for the palimpsest, examples of tmesis such as the following can be found:

- (1) [...] *da*                    *da-xolo-hkrzala*                    *luskuma-y*                    *igi*  
 [...] and                    pv-alone-                    coffin-nom.sg                    the.nom.sg  
    bury.s3sg.aor

‘[...] and **just when** [she] buried the coffin’ (Oxford georg. b.1, fol. 193<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 33–34)

- (2) [...] *tumca*                    *minda*                    *da-mca-malul*                    *viqav*  
 [...] however                    want.s1sg.pres                    pv-irr-                    be.s1sg.aor  
    hidden.nom.sg  
    *sxua-ta*                    *da-ta*                    *tana*  
    other-dat.pl                    sister-dat.pl                    with

‘[...] however, I wish I **would** have hidden myself with the other sisters’  
 (KKNCM A-95, fol. 311<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 9–12)

In example (1), *xolo* (‘only, just [when]’) is inserted after the preverb *da-*, thus separating it from the verbal stem *-krzal-*, which in its turn is combined with the object marker *h-*. In example (2), the modal particle *-mca*<sup>44</sup> does the same with the participle *damalul* (‘hidden’), separating the preverb *da-* from the verbal stem *-mal-*. This very example can also be found in Sin. georg. 6, but with a small difference:

- (3) [...] *tumca*                    *minda*                    *da-mca-malul*                    *viqav*  
 [...] however                    want.s1sg.pres                    pv-irr-hidden.nom.sg                    be.s1sg.aor  
    *sxua-ta*                    ***mat***                    *da-ta*                    *tana*  
    other-dat.pl                    the.dat.pl                    sister-dat.pl                    with

‘[...] however, I wish I would have hidden myself with **the** other sisters’  
 (Sin. georg. 6, fol. 190<sup>r</sup>, ll. 21–23)

In this text version, the phrase *sxuata data tana* (‘with the other sisters’) is supplemented with the definite article *mat* (dat.pl.); as here, articles in Old Georgian typically occupy the second position within the nominal phrase.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Shanidze 1980, 323.

<sup>44</sup> According to Shanidze 1976, 149, this particle expresses a wish, whereas Papidze 1981, 38 specifies it further as a particle expressing an irreal wish.

<sup>45</sup> See Kamarauli 2022, 184 as to the ‘Wackernagel’ position within nominal phrases in Georgian.

## 7 Parallel structures

The parallel structure that results from the comparison of the different witnesses of the martyrdom of St Febronia yields interesting results. In Table 4,<sup>46</sup> the four versions are arranged according to their similarity: the closest to Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 is Sin. georg. 6; the next closest is Oxford georg. b.1; and KKNCM A-95 is the most divergent. This assessment of the closeness of the other Georgian witnesses to Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 is based on the prior calculation of Levenshtein distances.<sup>47</sup>

In some passages, the text is completely identical, as in Table 4, ll. 1, 11, 14, 15. In other passages, only minor differences appear, as in l. 2, where only in the palimpsest and KKNCM A-95, *spasalarsa* ('commander-in-chief') is added to the name of Primus; in l. 4, in which the conjunction *da* ('and') is added in Sin. georg. 6, KKNCM A-95 and Oxford georg. b.1; or in l. 16, where *šeyḡqrobden* ('they would capture') is attested in the palimpsest and Sin. georg. 6 versus *šeiḡqrobden* in KKNCM A-95 and Oxford georg. b.1, without any difference in meaning. In contrast, some other passages are more colourful because they contain more significant differences: l. 9, for example, offers all the possible types of differences, as it features a variation in word order (*qopad ese* ['to do so'] in NF 84 + 90 vs *ese qopad* ['idem'] in Sin. georg. 6, KKNCM A-95 and Oxford georg. b.1); an addition (*aramed* ['but'] plus *me* ['I'] in Oxford georg. b.1 vs simple *aramed* ['but'] in NF 84 + 90 and Sin. georg. 6 and *da* ['and'] in KKNCM A-95), and orthographic variation (*makws* ('I have') in KKNCM A-95 vs *makows* in NF 84 + 90 and *makus* in Sin. georg. 6 and Oxford georg. b.1).<sup>48</sup> Beyond these variances, some passages are also different, as in l. 5: according to the palimpsest and KKNCM A-95, the father of Lysimachus passed away while serving false gods and devils, whereas in Sin. georg. 6 and Oxford georg. b.1, he is only described as serving false gods.

<sup>46</sup> In Table 4, [ ] indicates 'less readable', { } 'unreadable', and <> 'cut out' text passages (the latter are only reconstructed in accordance with the available space). Round brackets ( ) are used for abbreviations, a vertical bar | indicates a line break, a double underscore \_\_ is used when there is either a larger space between two graphemes than usual or space between two graphemes where there is usually none. The last type of symbols used in Table 4 are carets ^ ^, which mark text elements added over the line; this is typically found where there was no sufficient space in a line, or where the scribe missed something, such as a letter, or a combination of these factors. Additionally, colours are used to highlight the differences between the text versions: additions are marked in green; red is used for grammatical, lexical, and orthographic variations; and blue indicates word order variations.

<sup>47</sup> See Kamarauli 2024.

<sup>48</sup> See Sarjeladze 1984, 129: 'ვ გრაფემა საკმაოდ ხშირად გამოხატავს /უი/ დიფთონგს, მაგრამ დარღვევები აქაც შეინიშნება: ვ ზოგჯერ შეცვლილია უ-თი: წჳმა | წუმა; ცჳლი | ცული. არის შემთხვევები ჳ-ს დაწერილობისა იქ, სადაც უ უნდა იწერებოდეს: გჳლი (გული) და მისთ' ('The grapheme ჳ (*w*) quite often expresses the /ui/ diphthong, but irregularities are also observed here: ჳ is sometimes replaced by უ (*w*): *cwma* | | *cuma*; *cwli* | | *culi*. There are also cases of ჳ where უ should be written: *gwli* (for *guli*) etc.').

**Table 4:** Parallel structure of the four Georgian text versions.

	<b>Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, fols 6<sup>v</sup> + 3<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–19</b>	<b>Sin. georg. 6, fol. 185<sup>r</sup>, ll. 5–20</b>	<b>Oxford georg. b.1, fol. 182<sup>ra</sup>, l. 13 to fol. 183<sup>rb</sup>, l. 6</b>	<b>KKNCM A-95, fol. 306<sup>vb</sup>, l. 6 to fol. 307<sup>ra</sup>, l. 3</b>
1	<i>[...] ertsā ḡame   sa</i> One night	<i>[...] ertsā ḡamesa</i> One night	<i>[...] ertsā ḡamesa</i> One night	<i>[...] ertsā ḡamesa</i> One night
2	<i>moowcoda [low]:simaxo&gt;{s p}rimens s̄pa   salarsa</i> Lysimachus called for Primus, <b>the commander- in-chief</b>	<i>moucoda lusimaxos p̄rimens</i> Lysimachus called for Primus	<i>moucoda lusimaxos p̄rimens</i> Lysimachus called for Primus	<i>moucoda lusimaxos p̄rimens s̄pasalarsa</i> Lysimachus called for Primus, <b>the commander- in-chief</b>
3	<i>da rkowa &lt;mas : o(wpa)lo&gt; šen [twɔ] owc   qi</i> and <b>said</b> to <b>him</b> : Lord, you yourself know,	<i>da h(r)k(u)a šen twt ucqi</i> and <b>said</b> : You yourself know,	<i>da h(r)k(u)a : š(e)n twt ucqi</i> and <b>said</b> : You yourself know,	<i>da h(r)k(u)a : o(wpa)lo p̄rimen š(e)n twt ucqi</i> and <b>said</b> : Lord Primus, you yourself know,
4	<i>daḡacatow mamay č[e]mi carmar_t̄i [i]qo&gt;</i> even though my father was a heathen	<i>daḡacatu mamay čemi carmarti iqo da</i> even though my father was a heathen <b>and</b>	<i>daḡatu mamay čemi carmarti iqo da</i> even though my father was a heathen <b>and</b>	<i>daḡacatu mamay čemi carmarti iqo da</i> even though my father was a heathen <b>and</b>
5	<i>r(omel)i ygi {a}ḡesrowla k̄er̄p̄ta da ešmaḡ   ta</i> <b>who</b> passed away <b>serv- ing false gods and devils,</b>	<i>k̄er̄p̄t msaxuri</i> <b>was</b> a servant of false gods,	<i>k̄er̄p̄tmsaxuri ·</i> <b>a</b> servant of false gods,	<i>r(omel)i igi aḡesrula k̄er̄p̄ta da ešmaḡta</i> <b>who</b> passed away <b>serv- ing false gods and devils,</b>
6	<i>[msaxow]rebasa : a(rame)d &lt;deday čem&gt;[i] k[r]i'sp̄   ia(ne)y</i> my mother yet was <b>Christian</b>	<i>iqo : a(rame)d deday čemi k(r)isteane</i> my mother yet was <b>Christian</b>	<i>a(rame)d deday čemi k(r)isteane</i> my mother yet was <b>Christian</b>	<i>msaxurebasa a(rame)d deday čemi k(r)isteane</i> my mother yet was <b>Christian</b>
7	<i>{iqo} da {y}scrap{d}&gt;a r(ayt)amca {m}qo&gt;   me</i> and <b>strove</b> to make me	<i>iqo da icrapda r(ayt)amca mqo me</i> and <b>strove</b> to make me	<i>iqo · da iscrapda r(ayt)amca mqo me</i> and <b>strove</b> to make me	<i>iqo da iscrapda r(ayt)amca mqo me</i> and <b>strove</b> to make me
8	<i>{k(r)ist}ia)n{e} a(rame)d šiši)sagan {me}p[isa d]&gt;a mamisa&gt;</i> a Christian, but <b>from</b> fear of the king and my father	<i>k(r)isteane : a(rame)d šišisa mepisa da mamisa</i> a Christian, but <b>from</b> fear of the king and my father	<i>k(r)isteane : a(rame)d šišisag(a)n mepisa · da mamisa</i> a Christian, but <b>from</b> fear of the king and my father	<i>k(r)isteane a(rame)d šišisagan mepisa da mamisa</i> a Christian, but <b>from</b> fear of the king and my father
9	<i>{č}[emis]{a ver šeowz}o [q]opad [es]·e : a(rame)d m̄a&gt;   kows</i> she could not <b>do this</b> . But I <b>have</b>	<i>čemisa ver šeuzlo ese qopad : a(rame)d makus</i> she could not <b>do this</b> . But I <b>have</b>	<i>čemisa ver šeuzlo ese qopad : a(rame)d makus me</i> she could not <b>do this</b> . But I <b>have</b>	<i>čemisa ver šeuzlo ese qopad da makus</i> she could not <b>do this</b> . And I <b>have</b>

	<b>Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90,</b> <b>fols 6<sup>v</sup> + 3<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–19</b>	<b>Sin. georg. 6,</b> <b>fol. 185<sup>r</sup>, ll. 5–20</b>	<b>Oxford georg. b.1,</b> <b>fol. 182<sup>ra</sup>, l. 13 to</b> <b>fol. 183<sup>rb</sup>, l. 6</b>	<b>KKNCM A-95,</b> <b>fol. 306<sup>rb</sup>, l. 6 to</b> <b>fol. 307<sup>ra</sup>, l. 3</b>
10	<i>{br3}aneb[ay]{ca} «misgɑ{n</i> <i>r(ayt)a ara}vin</i> <i>kristi}   anetagan</i>  even the order from her that no one from the Christians	<i>br3anebayca misgan</i> <i>r(ayt)a aravin</i> <i>k(rist)eanetagani</i>  even the order from her that no one from the Christians	<i>br3anebay misg(a)n</i> <i>r(ayt)a aravin</i> <i>k(rist)eanetag(a)ni</i>  the order from her that no one from the Christians	<i>mcnebayca misgan r(ayt)a</i> <i>aravin k(rist)eanetag(a)ni</i>  even the command from her that no one from the Christians
11	<i>{m}ovkla a(rame)d r(ayt)a</i> <i>viqo me mo}   {qoware}</i>  I shall kill but that I shall be a friend	<i>movkla : a(rame)d</i> <i>r(ayt)a viqo me</i> <i>moquare</i>  I shall kill but that I shall be a friend	<i>movkla · a(rame)d</i> <i>r(ayt)a viqome moquare</i>  I shall kill but that I shall be a friend	<i>movkla a(rame)d r(ayt)a</i> <i>viqo me moquare</i>  I shall kill but that I shall be a friend
12	<i>{kris}tia[ne]ta : da vx-</i> <i>davde}</i>  of the Christians. And I will see	<i>k(rist)eaneta : da</i> <i>vxedavde</i>  of the Christians. And I will see	<i>k(rist)eaneta : · da</i> <i>vxedav me</i>  of the Christians. And I see	<i>k(rist)eanetay da vxedav</i> <i>me</i>  of the Christians. And I see
13	<i>{ac} m{oc}qo{wedasa</i> <i>kristia}netasa owš3ow-</i> <i>loysa}</i>  now the annihilation of Christians by the faithless	<i>ac mocquedasa</i> <i>k(rist)eanetasa</i> <i>ušžuloysa</i>  now the annihilation of Christians by the faithless	<i>ac mocquedasa</i> <i>k(rist)eanetasa</i> <i>ušžuloysa</i>  now the annihilation of Christians by the faithless	<i>ac mocquedasa</i> <i>k(rist)eanetasa určuloysa</i>  now the annihilation of Christians by the faith- less
14	<i>[m]{amis 3m}i{sa</i> <i>čem}[isagan] {da s}t{kivis}</i>  brother of my father, and it hurts	<i>mamis 3misa</i> <i>čemisagan da stkivis</i>  brother of my father, and it hurts	<i>m(a)mis 3misa</i> <i>čemisag(a)n · da stkivis</i>  brother of my father, and it hurts	<i>mamis 3misa čemisagan :</i> <i>da stkivis</i>  brother of my father, and it hurts
15	<i>{sowlsa če}m[sa] mat}tws :}</i>  my soul for them.	<i>sulsa čemsa mattws :</i>  my soul for them.	<i>s(u)lsa čemsa mat tws :</i>  my soul for them.	<i>s(u)lsa čemsa mattws :</i>  my soul for them.
16	<i>d[a] {ac megowleb}is</i> <i>r(ayt)[a] «(ome)lsa</i> <i>{š}ey[šqqr]   o{b}d[en]</i>  And now I wish that whichever Christian they will capture	<i>da ac megulebis r(ayt)a</i> <i>r(ome)lsa šeyšqrobden</i>  And now I wish that whichever they will capture,	<i>da ac megulebis r(ayt)a</i> <i>r(ome)lsa šeyšqrobden</i>  and now I wish that whichever Christian they will capture	<i>da ac megulebis r(ayt)a</i> <i>r(ome)lsa šeyšqrobden</i>  and now I wish that whichever Christian they will capture
17	<i>[k]{kris}tianasa «idow}[m]{a}l</i> <i>gan{o}{w}   tev^eb^den</i>  they will secretly set free	<i>k(rist)eaneta idumal</i> <i>ganuṭevbden</i>  they will secretly set free the Christians	<i>k(rist)eanesa idumal</i> <i>ganuṭevbde ·</i>  you will secretly set free	<i>k(rist)eanesa idumal</i> <i>ganuṭevbde</i>  you will secretly set free

	Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, fols 6 <sup>v</sup> + 3 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 1–19	Sin. georg. 6, fol. 185 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 5–20	Oxford georg. b.1, fol. 182 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 13 to fol. 183 <sup>rb</sup> , l. 6	KKNCM A-95, fol. 306 <sup>vb</sup> , l. 6 to fol. 307 <sup>ra</sup> , l. 3
18	{mat} ševrdom:admde	v(idr)e ševrdomadmde	v(idr)e ševrdomamde	v(idr)e ševrdomamde qelta
–	q-el_ta m[is] ta	qelta mista	qelta mista ·	mista
19				
	before <b>they</b> fall into his hands.	before <b>they</b> fall into his hands.	before <b>they</b> fall into his hands.	before <b>they</b> fall into his hands.

This difference in information is also represented in the other languages, as illustrated in Table 5, where the same text passage from the palimpsest is compared with the Greek (from *Acta Sanctorum*), Latin (from the *Sanctuarium*), and Armenian versions (from *Vark*).<sup>49</sup> Here the following picture emerges: the Georgian palimpsest and the Latin text exhibit the same ‘active’ description of the father (l. 2: ‘my father was a heathen who passed away **serving false gods and devils**’ ~ *pater meus gentilis fuit **idolis et daemioniis seruiens***), while the Armenian text styles him only a heathen (*hayrn im **het’anos** vaxčanec’aw* [‘my father died a **heathen**’]). In the Greek version, the father is again not called a servant of false gods or devils but simply a pagan (‘Hellene’: ὁ πατήρ μου ἔλληνα ὢν ἐτελεύτησεν [‘my father died a **pagan**’]).

Another interesting parallel structure is found in l. 4 of Table 5, where, in the Georgian text, Lysimachus is ordered not to kill any Christians but rather to be a friend of them. In all three of the other versions, Greek, Latin, and Armenian, a different reference is made: instead of being ordered to be a friend of Christians, Lysimachus is requested to be a friend of Christ in Greek and Armenian, and to be a friend of God in Latin. Aside from that, parts and phrases are also missing in the different versions: in l. 5, Lysimachus expresses his emotional state in Georgian, Greek, and Latin by stating that his ‘soul [is] suffering for them [i.e. the Christians]’; this utterance is missing in Armenian.

<sup>49</sup> In Table 5, a simplified rendering is used for the palimpsested text.

**Table 5:** Comparison of the same passage in Georgian, Greek, Latin, and Armenian.

<b>Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, fols 6<sup>v</sup> + 3<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–19</b>	<b>Acta Sanctorum, Junii, VII, p. 16, l. 49 to p. 17, l. 2</b>	<b>Sanctuarium, p. 536, ll. 5–13</b>	<b>Vark', 2, p. 410, ll. 15–26</b>
1 ... ertsa gimesa moowcoda lowsimaxos primens spasalarsa da rkowa «mas :	Ἐν μιᾷ οὖν νυκτὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ὁ Λυσίμαχος τὸν Κόμητα Πρίμον, εἶπεν αὐτῷ·	[...] nocte autem quada uocauit oculte comitem Primum et dixit ei :	isk 'i gišeri miowm koč'eac' Liwsimak'os zkomsn Primen ew asē c'na.
One night, Lysimachus called for Primen the commander-in-chief and said to him:	One night, Lysimachus summoned Count Primus, he said to him.	One night, he called secretly for Count Primus and said to him:	Now, one night, Lysimachus called for Count Primen and said to him:
2 a(wpa)lo šen twt owcqi dağacatow mamay čemi carm>arti i qo> r(ome)ji ygi ağesrowla ke rpta da ešmaḳta msaxowrebasa :	Κυρίε μου Πρίμε, σὺ γινώσκεις, ὅτι, εἰ καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου Ἕλληνα ὦν ἔτελεύτησεν,	Tu cognouisti quia pater meus gentilis fuit idolis et daemoniis seruiens	Dow gites zi hayrn im het' anos vaxčaneč' aw.
Lord, you yourself know, even though my father was a heathen who passed away <b>serving false gods and devils,</b>	My lord Primus, you know that even though my father died a pagan,	You knew that my father was a pagan, serving false gods and demons	You know my father died a pagan.
3 a(rame)d «deday čemi krist'ianey i qo da yscrap>ka r(ayt)amca> m>aqo> me krist'iane a(rame)d šišisagan mepisa d>a mamisa> čemisa ver šeowzlo qopad esre :	ἀλλ' ἡ μήτηρ μου χριστιανὴ ἔκοιμήθη, καὶ πολλὴ αὐτῇ σπουδῇ ὑπῆρχε γενέσθαι με Χριστιανόν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασιλέως, καὶ τοῦ πατρός μου, τοῦτο ποιῆσαι οὐκ ἴσχυσεν·	et mater mea christiana defuncta est : et multa ei festinatio fuit : ut me christianum faceret : sed propter timorem patris mei uel Imperatoris hoc facere non potuit :	sakayn mayrn im k'ristoneay ēr, ew p'oyt' yanjin kaleal zi arasc'ē zis k'ristoneay, ayl vasn ahi t' agaworin ew imoy hōrn, zays arnel oč' išxeac' :
my mother nevertheless was Christian and she strove to make me a Christian, but from fear of the king and my father she could not do this.	but my mother passed away as a Christian, and she was in great haste to make me a Christian myself; but because of the fear of the emperor and of my father, she could not do this,	and my mother died a Christian, and she was in great haste to make me a Christian, but for fear of my father and of the emperor she could not do this,	However, my mother was Christian and she took it upon herself to make me a Christian, but because of the fear of the king and my father she was not able to do this.
4 a(rame)d ma>kows brzanebayca «misgan r(ayt) a ara>vin kristi>anetagan	καὶ ἔχω αὐτῆς ἐντολὰς μηδένα τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀνελεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ φίλον	et habeo praeceptum de ea neminem christianum interficere. Ergo	Ew ard ownim znora patowēr, mī zok' 'i k'ristonēic' caxel, ayl

Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, fols 6 <sup>v</sup> + 3 <sup>r</sup> , ll. 1–19	Acta Sanctorum, Junii, VII, p. 16, l. 49 to p. 17, l. 2	Sanctuarium, p. 536, ll. 5–13	Vark', 2, p. 410, ll. 15–26
<p><i>m·ovḡla a(rame)d r(ayt)a viqo me mo·qoware kris·tia·ne·ta :</i></p>	<p>τοῦ Χριστοῦ γενέσθαι με ἡνάγκασεν.</p>	<p><i>magis amicum dei me cogebat fieri :</i></p>	<p><i>barekam ews K'ristosi harkaworēr zis linel.</i></p>
<p>But I have even the order from her that I shall not kill anyone of the Christians but that I shall become a friend <b>of the Christians</b>.</p>	<p>but I have her command not to kill anyone of the Christians, and (lit. but) she has compelled me to become even a friend <b>of Christ</b>.</p>	<p>but I have the order from her not to kill anyone of the Christians. Therefore, she compelled me rather to become a friend <b>of God</b>.</p>	<p>And I now have her order not to dispose of anyone of the Christians, instead (lit. but) she compelled me rather to become a friend <b>of Christ</b>.</p>
<p>5 <i>da vxedavde ac moqowedasa kristia·netasa owšžowloysa mamis žmisa čemisagan da s·čkivis sowlsa čemsa mat·tws :</i></p>	<p>Καὶ νῦν ὄρω τοὺς ἐμπίπτοντας Χριστιανοὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ λυμεῶνος Σελήνου τοῦ ἐμοῦ θείου τιμωρουμένους, καὶ πάσχει μου ἡ ψυχὴ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς.</p>	<p><i>Et nunc uideo christianos qui incedunt sic sine misericordia finiendos sub amarissimo Svleno auunculo meo : et patitur anima mea pro eis .</i></p>	<p><i>ew tesanem zi or 'i bowrn ankanin k'ristoneayk' anolorm caxin 'i žantē Siłowianosē.</i></p>
<p>And now I will see the annihilation of Christians by the faithless brother of (my) father, and it hurts my soul for them.</p>	<p>And now I see the Christians approaching, punished by the destroyer Selinus, my uncle, and my soul aches for them.</p>	<p>And now I see the Christians who approach, (bound) to be put to an end without mercy by the cruel Sulenus, my uncle, and my soul suffers for them.</p>	<p>And I see that the Christians who have fallen into (his) hand will be disposed of unmercifully by the wicked Silvanus.</p>
<p>6 <i>da ac megowlebis r(ayt)a r(ome)l·sa šeyqrobden kristianesa idowmal ganowtevbeden mat ševrdom·admde q·elta mista</i></p>	<p>Τοίνυν βούλομαι τοὺς ἐμπίπτοντας χριστιανοὺς λάθρα ἀπολύεσθαι, πρὶν ἢ παραπεσόντας ἀναρεῖσθαι κακῶς.</p>	<p><i>Volo autem christianos quos inueneris ut absconse dimittas eos : priusquam incedant ad interficiendum.</i></p>	<p><i>Ew ard kamim zi or 'i bowrn ankanin k'ristoneayk' lreleayn arjakeic:</i></p>
<p>And now I wish that they secretly set free whichever Christian they capture before they fall into his hands.</p>	<p>Therefore, I want the approaching Christians to be secretly set free before they are killed badly while trying to escape.</p>	<p>But I want that you dismiss the Christians whom you find secretly before they are going to be killed.</p>	<p>And now I want that you silently release the Christians who fall into (his) hand.</p>

## 8 Conclusions

This paper's objective was to discuss the palimpsest Sin. georg. 84 + 90 with regard to palaeographic characteristics and peculiarities as well as textual characteristics. This discussion included its comparison with other relevant Georgian manuscripts containing the martyrdom, namely, Sin. georg. 6, KKNCM A-95, and Oxford georg. b.1. The most similar to the palimpsest turned out to be Sin. georg. 6, followed by Oxford georg. b.1, with these two also being most similar to each other. This conclusion is supported by a calculation of Levenshtein distances between the four text versions; the analysis was executed not only for the passage in Table 4 but the complete available text according to Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 and the other parallelised Georgian versions, which revealed KKNCM A-95 as the most divergent text version among the contrasted Georgian witnesses.<sup>50</sup>

A comparison with the Greek, Latin, and Armenian versions yielded several important differences for the text passage chosen from the Georgian palimpsest. The Greek text is more closely rendered in the later Georgian translation by Euthymius the Athonite (contained in KKNCM A-1769 + Ivir. georg. 79) than in the Sinai palimpsest; in contrast to this, Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 is more similar to the Latin version, at least for the chosen passage, whereas the Armenian translation stands farther apart, and even lacks the last part of the passage. Nonetheless, some similarities between the Armenian version and Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 can be observed, such as in l. 3 in Table 5, where the Georgian and Armenian content is almost identical. Another interesting coincidence emerges in the representation of the name of Primus as Primen in l. 1, also in Table 5, which deserves further attention.<sup>51</sup>

For a complete evaluation of the Georgian palimpsest, a parallelisation of the whole text with the Greek, Latin, and Armenian versions will be necessary. Only then can a text-critical analysis shed more light on the interdependence of the given manuscripts and the question of which of the text versions can be regarded as the source text for the legend in Georgian.

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<sup>50</sup> See Kamarauli 2024 for details.

<sup>51</sup> For an analysis of name variations in the legend, see Kamarauli 2024.



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## Abbreviations

### Grammatical terms

adv = adverbial case

aor = aorist tense

dat = dative case

gen = genitive case

instr = instrumental case

irr = irreal particle

nom = nominative case

pl = plural

pres = present tense

pv = preverb

s = subject

sg = singular number

1/2/3 = 1st/2nd/3rd person

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*BHG* = François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3rd edn (Subsidia Hagiographica, 8a), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1957; *Novum Auctarium* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 65), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1984.

*BHL* = *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*, 2 vols, Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1898–1901, with a supplement by Henricus Fros, 1986.

*BHO* = Paul Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 10), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1910.

*CPG* = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 2: *Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974.

*Synopsis* = [Yeznik Petrosyan (ed.)], *Համաբարբառ Յայտնաւորք. Զ. Յունիս (նախածերէնցյան 6 խմբագրութիւններէ)* / *Synopsis Synaxarion*, vol. 6: *June (6 pre Tserents versions)*, Etchmiadzin: Publishing House of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, 2011.

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Eka Kvirkvelia

# New Witnesses of the Jerusalem-Rite Lectionary: Georgian Palimpsests Ivir. georg. 47 and Ivir. georg. 59

**Abstract:** This article illustrates the results of the research on the lower layers of Georgian manuscripts Ivir. georg. 47 and 59 conducted within the framework of the ongoing project on the Development of Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe). The lower layers of these manuscripts contain fragments of the Jerusalem-rite lectionary. The folios of Ivir. georg. 47 preserve an almost complete original manuscript of the lectionary, while Ivir. georg. 59 contains fragments from two different origins written in two distinct Georgian scripts.

## 1 Introduction

It is well known that in the Old Georgian tradition the ancient Christian worshiping practice of Jerusalem was represented by different types of liturgical books: the euchologion (Georgian *ḱurtxevani*, ‘blessings’); the lectionary; the tropologion (*iadgari*); the horologion (*žamni*); and the homiliary (*mravaltavi*).<sup>1</sup> All these collections were translated into Georgian at an early stage and witness to the diachronic development of the Jerusalem rite.<sup>2</sup>

The Jerusalem-rite lectionary was a collection of pericopes from the Old and New Testaments used in liturgical services, arranged according to the ecclesiastical year. As a complete Greek version of the Jerusalem-rite lectionary no longer exists, its Georgian version, next to the Armenian, Caucasian Albanian, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic witnesses, is a representative of an early state of its development and thus plays a major role in the reconstruction of the liturgical practice of Jerusalem in the first millennium.<sup>3</sup> The Georgian sources furthermore make it possible to trace the complicated diachronic development of the lectionary between the fifth and tenth centuries by observing the changes in different

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1 For the latter term, see Gippert 2016.

2 Otkhmezuri 2022, 61.

3 The Jerusalem-rite lectionary was completely replaced by Constantinopolitan liturgical collections in the eleventh century in the Georgian liturgical tradition.

sources.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, every single new manuscript containing the lectionary of the Jerusalem rite is an important witness, bringing more clarity regarding, on the one hand, the composition of this type of liturgical book and, on the other hand, the biblical texts preserved in them, which are valuable materials for further philological research into the history of the Georgian translation of the Bible.

The earliest edition of the Old Georgian lectionary was published by Korneli Kekelidze in 1912, based on two tenth-century manuscripts: the lectionaries of Kala (Tbilisi, Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts [hereafter: KKNCM], Q-1653) and Latal (Mestia, Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography [hereafter: SMHE], 621 (k-67)).<sup>5</sup> In 1959–1960, Michael Tarchnischvili published a new edition of the Jerusalem-rite lectionaries, based on three almost complete codices (that of Latal; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, géorgien 3, datable to the tenth to eleventh centuries; and Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery, georg. 37 of 982 CE) and three fragmentary manuscripts (that of Kala; Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 2058/1; and KKNCM, H-1329).<sup>6</sup> The latter two exhibit so-called *khanmeti* and *haemeti* features,<sup>7</sup> which allow them to be dated to the seventh to eighth centuries. Tarchnischvili’s edition provides only the titles of the lections (with their incipits and desinits) and a list of additional liturgical elements – prokeimena, psalms, antiphons, hypakoes, alleluias, and so on – all with a Latin translation; each individual entry has its own number. The electronic version based on Tarchnischvili’s edition in the TITUS database<sup>8</sup> is arranged by the same numbers, which are also used as references in the present article; in addition, the database comprises the texts of the lections as published in the edition by Korneli Danelia, Stepane Chkhenkeli, and Bedisa Shavishvili, which is based on the manuscripts of Paris, Kala, Latal, and Sinai.<sup>9</sup> The main problem of this edition is that it does not arrange the lections by the ecclesiastical year but according to the sequence of biblical books. Accordingly, the structure and composition of the lectionaries is obscured.

4 Otkhmezuri 2022, 61.

5 Kekelidze 1912; Chkhenkeli 1959; Gloveli 2015, 279; Silogava 1986, 55–56.

6 Tarchnischvili 1959–1960; Takaishvili 1933, 24–30; Metreveli et al. 1987, 47–52; Shanidze 1944; Kekelidze et al. 1948, 269–270.

7 *Khanmeti* and *haemeti* forms are characterised by special markers (prefixes *x-* [*kh-*] and *h-*) for second-person subjects and third-person objects, as well as the comparative grade of adjectives. *Khanmeti* texts are considered to be from the fifth to seventh centuries, and *haemeti* texts from the seventh to eighth centuries.

8 The TITUS electronic version is available at <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/cauc/ageo/lekt/lektpar/lektp.htm>>.

9 Danelia, Chkhenkeli and Shavishvili 1987 and 1992.

The *khanmeti* and *haemeti* lectionaries of Graz<sup>10</sup> and Tbilisi were edited by Akaki Shanidze at different times.<sup>11</sup> The noteworthy point concerning these lectionaries is that they have a peculiar composition, containing only pericopes from the New Testament. Since the *haemeti* lectionary is a palimpsest, it would need further research with up-to-date multispectral-imaging technology to more precisely clarify its structure. At the present stage of study, it seems to be an enriched version of the *khanmeti* lectionary. The general research question that arises regarding the two *khanmeti* and *haemeti* lectionaries is whether they reflect the earliest stage of the development of the Jerusalem-rite lectionaries or whether their composition indicates that they had an independent origin as lectionaries that were restricted to Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. This issue needs further research.

Forty-nine palimpsests containing fragments of the Jerusalem-rite lectionary are described in the catalogue *Georgian Palimpsests at the National Centre of Manuscripts*.<sup>12</sup> In addition, some lectionary fragments and palimpsests were published by Bernard Outtier.<sup>13</sup> Further lectionary palimpsests that exist at the KKNCM and the SMHE have not been described or published yet. Reviewing the publications summarised above, I cannot but emphasise that, despite a research history of more than a century, the Jerusalem-rite lectionaries still require a more detailed study and a more comprehensive approach that takes all the existing sources into account.

The two newly revealed palimpsest codices georg. 47 and 59 are kept in the Holy Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos (hereafter: Ivir.)<sup>14</sup> and were described by Nikolai Marr, Robert P. Blake, and Nestan Chkhikvadze,<sup>15</sup> before the new *Catalogue of the Georgian Manuscripts, Holy Monastery of Iviron* (henceforth: the *Catalogue*) was published in 2022 by Jost Gippert, Bernard Outtier, and Sergey Kim. In this *Catalogue* both codices are described with the lower layer being identified as containing fragments from lectionaries of the Jerusalem rite.<sup>16</sup> Alongside a few

<sup>10</sup> The *khanmeti* lectionary (Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 2058/1) of c. the seventh century is the earliest extant Georgian codex that is not a palimpsest.

<sup>11</sup> Shanidze 1923 and 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Kajaia et al. 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Outtier 1990 and 2016.

<sup>14</sup> The monastery of 'Iberians' (Georgians) was established in the last quarter of the tenth century by Iovane (John) the Iberian and Iovane-Tornik (John Tornike). The monastery has preserved one of the largest collections of Georgian manuscripts, with ninety-three codices, one scroll, and fourteen fragments.

<sup>15</sup> Marr 1901, 86, g and h; Blake 1933, 239 and 249; Chkhikvadze 2018, 206 and 210.

<sup>16</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 455–456, 538–539.

identified pericopes, the *Catalogue* also provides the quire structures and other codicological details of the palimpsests. Thanks to multispectral images of these codices, taken by Gippert with a MuSIS camera in 2016–2019 on Mount Athos, I was able to more thoroughly identify and transcribe the texts of the lower layers. The results of this research are illustrated below in more detail.

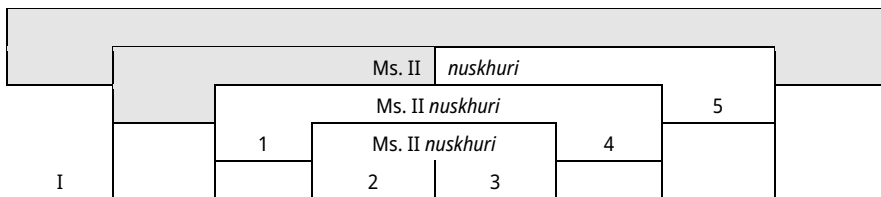
## 2 Ivir. georg. 47

According to the *Catalogue*, the upper text of Ivir. georg. 47 can be dated to c. the fourteenth century. Besides two modern paper flyleaves, it comprises 168 parchment folios, contained in twenty-two quires. Two further folios used to be kept in the monastery of Simonopetra as manuscripts *olim* Sim.Geo-4 and -7. These two folios belong to quires XXI and XXII.<sup>17</sup>

The upper layer contains three types of texts: (1) a collection of hymnary materials from a pentecostarion (fols 1<sup>r</sup>–153<sup>v</sup>); (2) the eleven Gospel lections for the Resurrection (fols 154<sup>r</sup>–160<sup>v</sup>), and (3) hymns for the Theotokos (fols 161<sup>r</sup>–167<sup>v</sup>). The whole manuscript is a palimpsest, except for quire XXI (fols 154<sup>r</sup>–160<sup>v</sup>), which seems to have been added later, as its handwriting (in *nuskhuri* minuscules) differs from the other parts of the manuscript.

The palimpsest folios come from two distinct original manuscripts written in different scripts, namely, one written in *asomtavruli* majuscules (hereafter: Ms. I) and the other in *nuskhuri* minuscules (hereafter: Ms. II). The quire structure of the palimpsest folios and their contents is presented in Table 1. Each quire contains eight folios; folios marked with a grey background are lost.

**Table 1:** The structure of the palimpsest folios of Ivir. georg. 47 and their contents by quires.

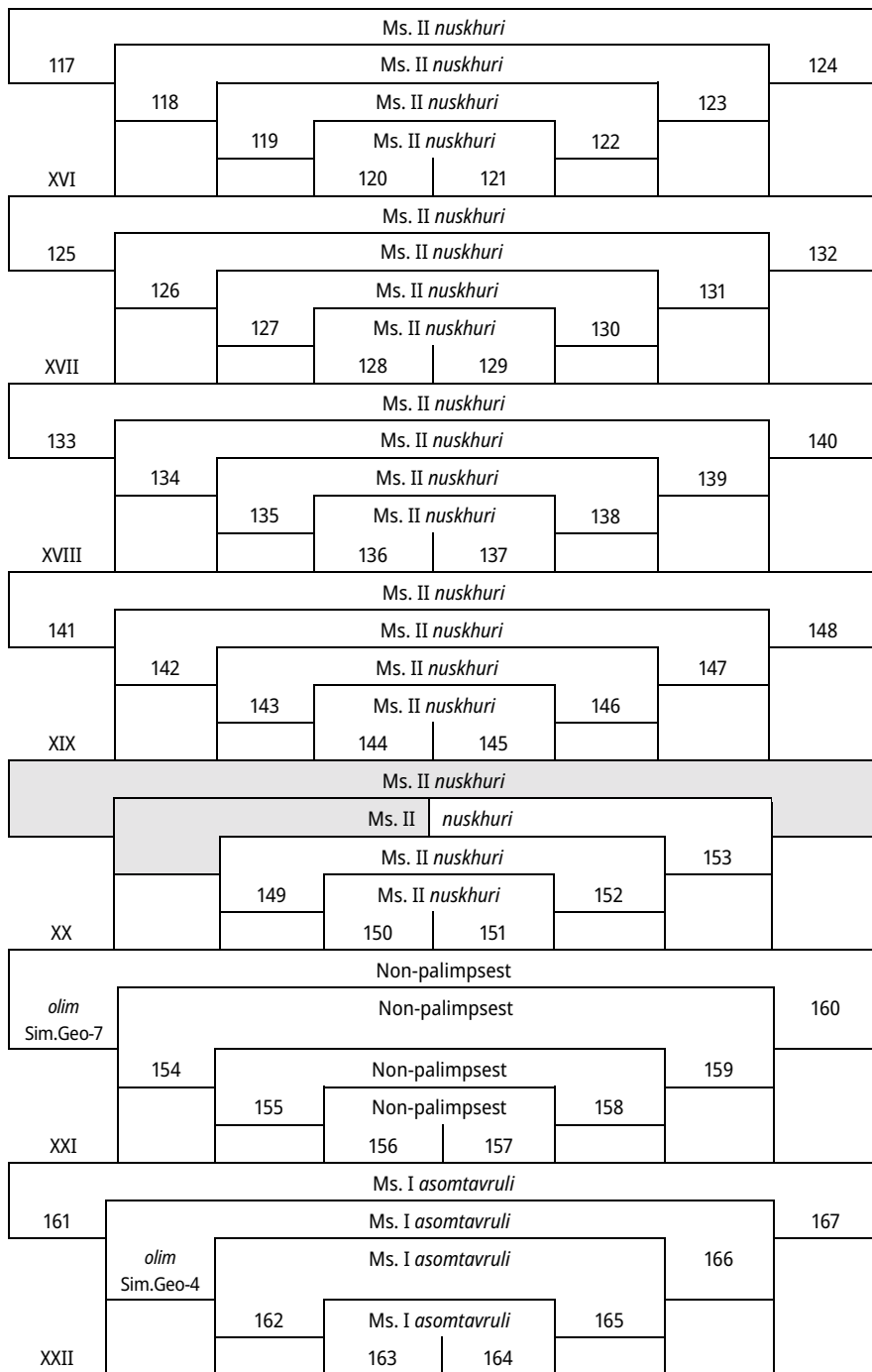


<sup>17</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 450. Together with other fragments of Georgian manuscripts, the two folios have meanwhile been returned to the Holy Monastery of Iviron; see Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, lv.

	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
6						13
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
	7					12
		<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>				
II		8	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		11	
			9	10		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
14						21
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
	15					20
		<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>				
III		16	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		19	
			17	18		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
22						29
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
	23					28
		<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>				
IV		24	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		27	
			25	26		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
30						37
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
	31					36
		<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>				
V		32	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		35	
			33	34		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
38						45
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
	39					44
		<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>				
VI		40	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		43	
			41	42		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
46						53
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
	47					52
		<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>				
VII		48	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		51	
			49	50		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
54						61
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
	55					60
		<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>				
VIII		57	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		59	
			56	58		

	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
62	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					69
	63	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>			68	
		64	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		67	
IX			65	66		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
70	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					77
	71	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>			76	
		72	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		75	
X			73	74		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
78	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					85
	79	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>			84	
		80	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		83	
XI			81	82		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
86	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					92
	87	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>			91	
		87a	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		90	
XII			88	89		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
93	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					100
	94	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>			99	
		95	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		98	
XIII			96	97		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
101	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					108
	102	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>			107	
		103	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		106	
XIV			104	105		
	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					
109	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>					116
	110	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>			115	
		111	<i>Ms. II nuskhuri</i>		114	
XV			112	113		





Ms. I, representing the lower layer of the last quire of the manuscript (fols 161<sup>r</sup>–167<sup>v</sup> + *olim* Sim.Geo-4, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>), contains remnants of a homiliary (*mravaltavi*), written in *asomtavruli* majuscules in two columns. According to the *Catalogue*, it can be dated back to the ninth to tenth centuries. In addition, the *Catalogue* states that the identified texts concern Palm Sunday (fols 167<sup>r</sup>, 161<sup>v</sup>) and the following Monday (*olim* Sim.Geo-4, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>) and can be attributed to John Chrysostom (CPG 4602, 5180.7, and 5175.16); they correspond to the versions we find in another Georgian manuscript of the Holy Monastery of Ivron, Ivir. georg. 11, as nos 21 (fol. 57<sup>v</sup>), 23 (fol. 64<sup>rv</sup>), and 25 (fols 70<sup>v</sup>–71<sup>r</sup>).<sup>18</sup> I have identified one more homily (on fol. 164<sup>r</sup>) in this part of the palimpsest, namely, the sermon by John Chrysostom on Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus (CPG 4639), which corresponds to Ivir. georg. 11, no. 18 (fol. 48<sup>rv</sup>).

Ms. II comprises fragments of the Jerusalem-rite lectionary and likewise can be dated back to the ninth to tenth centuries. The original manuscript was arranged in two columns, with 28–31 lines per column. The layer is overwritten vertically, turned by 90° or 270°, with one folio of the original manuscript covering one bifolio of the present codex.<sup>19</sup> Ms. II is written in slightly slanted, bold *nuskhuri* minuscules (Fig. 1). According to the *Catalogue*, the character height is approximately 3 mm. At least two different hands are distinguishable. Large initials cover nearly the complete space between the columns. Red titles are discernible on fols 11<sup>r</sup>, 50<sup>v</sup>, 51<sup>r</sup>, 112<sup>r</sup>, 132<sup>r</sup>, and 135<sup>rv</sup>.<sup>20</sup>

This part of the palimpsest is distributed over 308 pages across the first 20 quires (fols 1<sup>r</sup>–153<sup>v</sup>, including fol. 87a). As the quire structure shows (see Table 1), 12 pages are missing. Most of the pages (157 out of 308) were fully scratched out and are completely illegible; 111 pages are readable to a certain extent, and only 40 pages can be read relatively easily.

From the content of the lectionary I have identified 33 lections (see Table 2).<sup>21</sup> The first lection is for 25 March, and the last one is a Gospel lection for the litany. This means that the lectionary was complete and intended for the whole ecclesiastical year, including the so-called general commemorations or common lections at the end of the manuscript as an appendix. These commemorations (comprising psalms and other liturgical elements) were prescribed in general for services concerning the Theotokos and the Holy Cross as well as the apostles, prophets, martyrs, hierarchies, just, blessed, confessors, and so on who did not have a specific date.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 455.

<sup>19</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 455.

<sup>20</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 455–456.

<sup>21</sup> Lection numbers are indicated according to Tarchnischvili's (1959–1960) edition and the TITUS database.

<sup>22</sup> See Galadza 2018, 342–347.

Ms. II comprises some lections that do not exist in other Georgian lectionaries, namely, Matthew 14:22–25 (fols 133<sup>v</sup>, 140<sup>r</sup>);<sup>23</sup> Matthew 17:14–18 (fols 134<sup>r</sup>, 139<sup>v</sup>);<sup>24</sup> Matthew 22:1–13 (fols 65<sup>r</sup>, 66<sup>v</sup>); Galatians 1:1–10 (fols 77<sup>r</sup>, 70<sup>v</sup>); and Proverbs 19:20–29 + 20:1<sup>25</sup> (fols 115<sup>v</sup>, 110<sup>r</sup>). It is worth mentioning that the lections of Matthew 14:22–34, 17:14–23, and 22:1–14 also appear in the Gospel lectionaries of the Constantinopolitan rite, for the Saturdays and Sundays after Pentecost. I tried to figure out whether they pertain to the same days in the Jerusalem-rite lectionaries, too, but in two cases it is obvious that they belong to other feasts: Matthew 17:14–18 comes after Galatians 2:16–21 (no. 1293), which is prescribed for the service of 12 October, and Matthew 14:22–25 follows after the lection of Colossians 1:9–20 (no. 1426Ag) for the service of 23 December. As for Matthew 22:1–13, the lection preceding and following it is unidentified. Besides biblical pericopes, Ms. II also includes several types of additional liturgical elements, namely, troparia (*oxitay*), psalms, antiphons (*dasdebeli*; fols 138<sup>r</sup>, 135<sup>v</sup>), and alleluias (*aleluiay*; fols 75<sup>r</sup>, 108<sup>r</sup>, 143<sup>v</sup>).

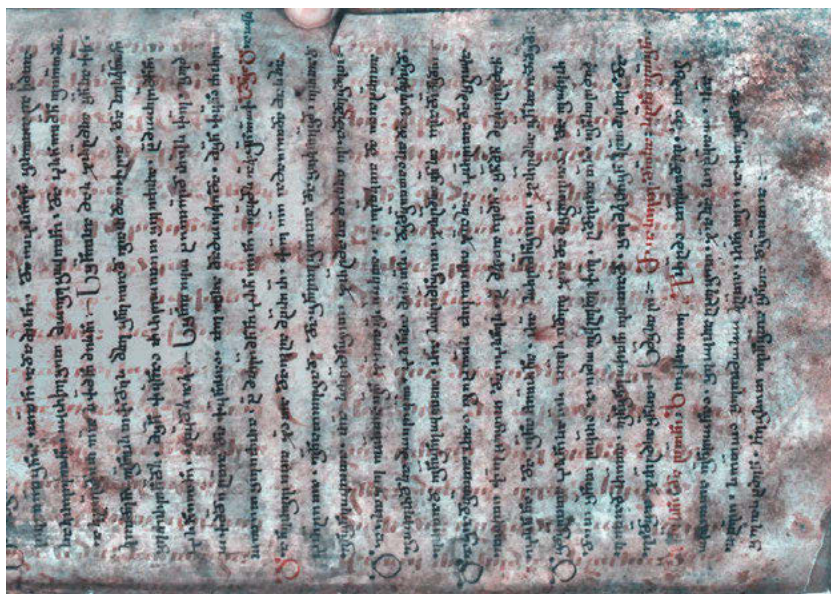


Fig. 1: Ivir. georg. 47, fol. 134<sup>r</sup>, turned by 270°, showing Ms. II; © Ιερά Μονή Ἰβήρων Ἀγίου Ὁρους.

23 It should be noted that Matthew 14:22–25 could pertain to no. 1426Ag as it follows it in the palimpsest, instead of Mark 4:35–41.

24 Matthew 17:14–18 could represent no. 1294 instead of Luke 23:32–49, as it follows no. 1293.

25 Proverbs 19:20–29 + 20:1 could represent no. 483 instead of Job 30:11–31:3, as it follows no. 482.

**Table 2:** List of identified lections in Ivir. georg. 47, Ms. II.

No.	Lections	Date	Folios
1	Malachi 3:1–6 (no. 271)	25 March	146 <sup>r</sup>
2	Isaiah 52:7–10 (no. 272)	25 March	146 <sup>r</sup> , 143 <sup>v</sup>
3	Philippians 4:4–9 (no. 273)	25 March	146 <sup>r</sup> , 143 <sup>v</sup>
4	Luke 1:26–38 (no. 274)	25 March	143 <sup>v</sup>
5	Exodus 10:1–11:10 (no. 308)	Saturday of the Meatfare Week (Soul Saturday)	97 <sup>r</sup> , 96 <sup>v</sup>
6	1 Corinthians 15:12–34 (no. 310)	Saturday of the Meatfare Week (Soul Saturday)	108 <sup>r</sup>
7	1 Corinthians 15:35–58 (no. 311)	Saturday of the Meatfare Week (Soul Saturday)	101 <sup>v</sup>
8	John 5:24–30 (no. 316)	Saturday of the Meatfare Week (Soul Saturday)	108 <sup>r</sup> , 101 <sup>v</sup>
9	Proverbs 2:1–16 (no. 432 or instead of 548)	4th Sunday of Lent	96 <sup>v</sup> , 97 <sup>r</sup>
10	Genesis 38:12–39:23 (no. 482)	Monday of the 5th week of Lent	110 <sup>r</sup> , 115 <sup>v</sup>
11	Ezekiel 37:1–14 (no. 558)	Friday of the 6th week of Lent	101 <sup>v</sup>
12	Jonah 1:1–4:11 (no. 725)	Holy Saturday	48 <sup>v</sup> , 51 <sup>r</sup>
13	Genesis 41:1–52 (no. 1212)	4 September	137 <sup>v</sup> , 136 <sup>v</sup>
14	Zechariah 1:16–2:9 (no. 1238)	13 September	135 <sup>v</sup> , 138 <sup>r</sup>
15	Galatians 2:16–21 (no. 1293)	12 October	134 <sup>r</sup> , 139 <sup>v</sup>
16	Colossians 1:9–20 (no. 1426Ag)	Lections for Sundays	133 <sup>v</sup> , 140 <sup>r</sup>
17	Ephesians 4:7–16 (no. 1497)	Lections for hierarchies	74 <sup>v</sup>
18	Colossians 1:23–2:2 (no. 1498)	Lections for hierarchies	73 <sup>r</sup> , 74 <sup>v</sup>
19	1 Thessalonians 5:12–28 (no. 1499)	Lections for hierarchies	74 <sup>v</sup>
20	Hebrews 13:7–16 (no. 1500)	Lections for hierarchies	74 <sup>v</sup>
21	Hebrews 13:17–21 (no. 1501)	Lections for hierarchies	74 <sup>v</sup>
22	2 Corinthians 8:1–9 (no. 1511)	Lections for the just, blessed, and confessors	72 <sup>v</sup> , 75 <sup>r</sup>
23	2 Corinthians 10:1–6 (no. 1512)	Lections for the just, blessed, and confessors	75 <sup>r</sup>
24	Matthew 5:1–12 (no. 1516)	Lections for the just, blessed, and confessors	75 <sup>r</sup>
25	Isaiah 63:7–14 (no. 1583)	Lections from Isaiah for the litany	85 <sup>r</sup> , 78 <sup>v</sup>
26	Matthew 13:1–9 (no. 1656)	Lections from the Gospels for the litany	23 <sup>r</sup> , 28 <sup>v</sup>
27	Matthew 13:10–17 (no. 1657)	Lections from the Gospels for the litany	28 <sup>v</sup> , 23 <sup>r</sup>
28	Mark 4:24–34 (no. 1663)	Lections from the Gospels for the litany	29 <sup>r</sup>

The text in Ms. II is very inconsistent. In some cases, it agrees with the text of the other Jerusalem-rite lectionaries, such as Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,

géorgien 3 and Latal. In some cases, however, it is closer to the ancient Georgian Bible witnesses, such as the Oshki Bible of 978 (Ivir. georg. 1; hereafter: O)<sup>26</sup> and Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 7/11 of the eleventh century (hereafter: J).<sup>27</sup> In at least two cases, the text from the Prophecy of Isaiah (52:7–10, no. 272) in Ms. II concurs with the text of the lectionaries of Paris (P) and Latal (L),<sup>28</sup> standing against J.<sup>29</sup> As in P and L, the beginning of Isaiah 52:7 reads: *vitār šuenier arian perqni maxarebelta mat mšwdobisatani, romelni axareben ketilsa da romelni axareben sicocxlesa* ('How beautiful are the feet of the announcers of peace, who announce the good and who announce salvation'). The phrase *maxarebelta mat mšwdobisatani* ('announcers of peace') is translated in Ms. II, P and L as a participle plus noun (conforming with Greek εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοήν εἰρήνης), while in J (fol. 86<sup>v</sup>) it is rendered by a relative clause with an active verb: *romelni axareben mšwdobasa* ('who announce peace'). The phrase *da romelni axareben sicocxlesa* ('and who announce salvation'), which appears in Ms. II, P and L, is omitted in J.

In the second example from the same biblical text, Isaiah 63:7–14 (no. 1583), Ms. II conforms with both O and J, opposing itself to P.<sup>30</sup> Isaiah 63:9 is represented in Ms. II, O (fol. 216<sup>r</sup>) and J (fol. 94<sup>v</sup>)<sup>31</sup> in the following way: *aramed tavadman upalman iqsna igini, rametu uquardes igini, da daicvna igini, da tavadman iqsna igini, da aghmartna igini, da agamağlna igini (da aghmartna igini, da agamağlna igini > O) qovelta dğeta sauğuneta* ('but the Lord Himself released them, because He loved them, and He saved them and He released them Himself and raised them and exalted them all the days of the ages'; cf. ἀλλ' αὐτὸς κύριος ἔσωσεν αὐτοὺς διὰ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτοὺς καὶ φεῖδεσθαι αὐτῶν· αὐτὸς ἐλυτρώσατο αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνέλαβεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ὕψωσεν αὐτοὺς πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ αἰῶνος). The phrases *rametu uquardes igini* ('because He loved them') and *da tavadman iqsna igini* ('and He released them Himself') exist in Ivir. georg. 47 as in O and J but are omitted in P. The phrase *da agamağlna igini* ('and exalted them') is preserved in Ivir. georg. 47 and J but is omitted in O and P.

26 The Oshki Bible is the earliest extant codex of the Georgian Old Testament.

27 Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 7/11 is one of the earliest codices of the Georgian Old Testament; it stems from the former Georgian manuscript collection of the Monastery of the Holy Cross.

28 The lection of Isaiah 52:7–10 (no. 272) does not exist in the Kala lectionary.

29 See *Biblia* 2017, 552. The Oshki Bible does not contain Isaiah 52:7 because of a lacuna; see Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 3.

30 The lection of Isaiah 63:7–14 (no. 1583) is completely missing in the Kala and Latal lectionaries.

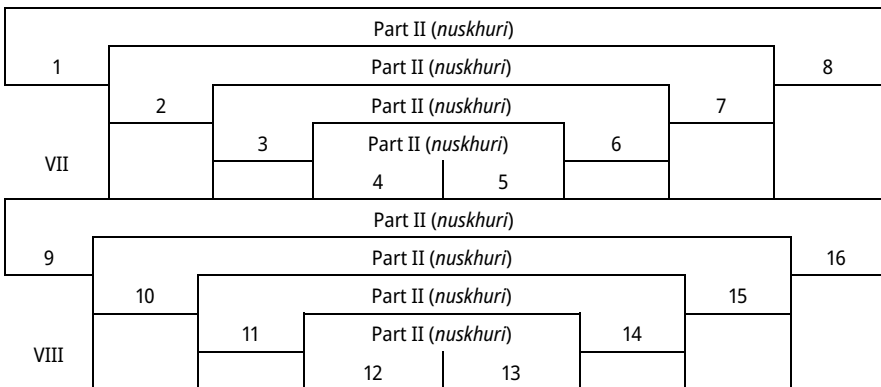
31 See *Biblia* 2017, 567.

### 3 Ivir. georg. 59

The second manuscript at issue here, Ivir. georg. 59, can be dated to the thirteenth century.<sup>32</sup> The codex comprises 223 parchment folios, plus one fragment that was formerly kept in the monastery as no. 19. Ivir. georg. 59 thus consists of twenty-eight quires altogether. The manuscript today starts with quire VII, which means that the first six quires must have been lost. The upper layer preserves the short version of the Lenten Triodion, which reflects an intermediate stage of George the Athonite's work on this collection.<sup>33</sup> Due to the loss of the first six quires, it is incomplete, beginning within the second triodion of the Monday of Cheesefare Week.

According to the *Catalogue*, the codex comprises three parts, two of which are palimpsests, namely, fols 1–16 (quires VII–VIII) and fols 136–142 (quire XXIV). The most voluminous middle part (fols 17–135 + 143–221 + fragment 19) is no palimpsest.<sup>34</sup> The three palimpsested quires of the codex stem from two different original manuscripts. Both preserve fragments of a Jerusalem-rite lectionary, but they are written in different scripts: Part I (fols 136–142) is in *asomtavruli* majuscules, and Part II (fols 1–16) in *nuskhuri* minuscules. The quire structure of the palimpsested parts of Ivir. georg. 59 is presented in Table 3. Each quire comprises eight folios; the folio marked with a grey background is missing.

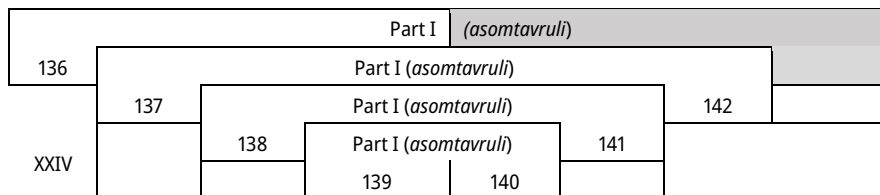
**Table 3:** The structure of the palimpsested quires of Ivir. georg. 59.



<sup>32</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 534.

<sup>33</sup> Khachidze 2022, xxi–xxii.

<sup>34</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 534.



Part I appearing on quire XVIII (XXIV) can be dated to the ninth to tenth centuries.<sup>35</sup> One folio from this quire is lost. Of the remaining fourteen pages, four are completely illegible (fols 138<sup>r</sup>, 141<sup>v</sup>, 136<sup>v</sup>, 137<sup>r</sup>), seven are less readable (fols 139<sup>rv</sup>, 140<sup>v</sup>, 136<sup>r</sup>, 137<sup>v</sup>, 142<sup>rv</sup>), and three are more or less easily readable (fols 138<sup>v</sup>, 141<sup>r</sup>, 140<sup>r</sup>). Two folios are partly covered by transparent paper that was applied for protection (fols 137<sup>rv</sup>, 138<sup>rv</sup>).

According to the *Catalogue*, the original manuscript of this part was written in two columns with thirty lines on each page. The layer is overwritten partly vertically, turned by 90° or 270° (fols 136 and 138–142), with one folio of the original manuscript covering one bifolio of the present codex; only folios 137 and 142 are overwritten horizontally.<sup>36</sup> In this case, only one column of the original manuscript is visible in the present codex.

Part I is written in small *asomtavruli* majuscules, which are typical for the ninth to tenth centuries. Some characters have long descenders, namely, **Φ**, **⚭**, **β**, **Ϙ**, and **ψ** (*p*, *k*, *c*, *q*, *q*). Initials are not ornamented (Fig. 2). Titles seem to have been written with red ink, due to which they are completely invisible. Punctuation marks are invisible as well. Concerning the abbreviations used in the palimpsest, they display a state that is datable to after the eighth century.

From the linguistic point of view, the text of Part I also reflects a state after the eighth century, since it does not contain any *khanmeti* or *haemeti* forms. Therefore, taking both palaeographic and linguistic criteria into account, the palimpsest must belong to the ninth to tenth centuries.

The *Catalogue* describes Part I as comprising pericopes from the Old Testament (Judges, Micah, Daniel) for the Monday and Tuesday of the Holy Week.<sup>37</sup> I have identified two more lections, namely from Genesis and Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, both for the Tuesday of the sixth week of Lent. In total, five lections have now been identified (see Table 4).

<sup>35</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 538.

<sup>36</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 538.

<sup>37</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 538.

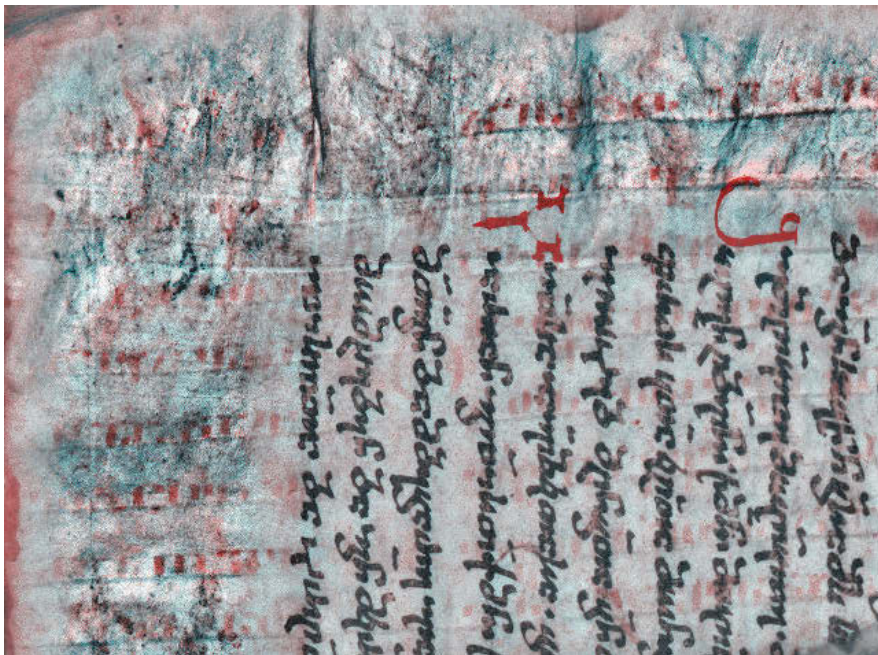


Fig. 2: Ivir. georg. 59, fol. 138<sup>v</sup> (Ms. I); © Ιερά Μονή Ιβήρων Αγίου Όρους.

Table 4: List of identified lections in Part I of Ivir. georg. 59.

No.	Lections	Calendar	Folios
1	Judges 6:34–7:2 (no. 533)	Monday of the 6th week of Lent	138 <sup>v</sup> , 141 <sup>r</sup> 139 <sup>v</sup> , 140 <sup>r</sup>
2	Micah 7:7–20 (no. 535)	Monday of the 6th week of Lent	140 <sup>v</sup> , 139 <sup>r</sup>
3	Daniel 7:2–28 (no. 537)	Tuesday of the 6th week of Lent	136 <sup>r</sup> , 137 <sup>v</sup>
4	Ephesians 3:14–21 (no. 538)	Tuesday of the 6th week of Lent	142 <sup>r</sup>
5	Genesis 45:1–46:4 (no. 540)	Tuesday of the 6th week of Lent	142 <sup>v</sup>

Beyond the pericopes, Part I includes one more liturgical element, namely, the abbreviated indication of a psalm (*p(salmu)ni*) on fol. 140<sup>v</sup>, which is written in black ink. Other liturgical elements have not been determined so far. They might have been written with red ink, so that they were completely washed out.



The *Catalogue* states that the text version of the current palimpsest stands between the Jerusalem-rite lectionaries and the ancient Bible witnesses.<sup>38</sup> This is also true for the newly revealed text of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (3:14–21, no. 538). Most of the lection (Ephesians 3:14–18) corresponds to the other Jerusalem-rite lectionaries, namely, P and L,<sup>39</sup> as well as the Old Georgian redactions of Paul's Epistles (AB and CD).<sup>40</sup> However, in some variant readings, Part I aligns with AB and CD against P and L. For instance, Ephesians 3:15 is represented in Part I, AB and CD as follows: *romlisagan qovelni natesavni cata šina da kueqanasa zeda saxel-debul arian* ('from whom all humankind in heaven and on earth is named'). In P and L, instead of *natesavni* ('descendants, humankind'), the word *ṭomni* ('tribes') is attested. A similar case occurs in the next verse (Ephesians 3:16), where, again, Part I stands together with AB and CD against P and L. In Part I, AB and CD, the verse reads: *rayta mogces tkuen simdidrisaebr didebisa misisa, zalita ganmṭḱicebad sulita (sulisa + mier CD) misita (misisa CD) šinagansa ḱacsa* ('that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man'; cf. ἵνα δόξη ὑμῖν, κατὰ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον). Here, *zalita* ('with power', ~ δυνάμει) is omitted in P and L.

The second palimpsest, Part II, is found on quires I and II (VII and VIII) and can be dated to the ninth to tenth centuries.<sup>41</sup> From the remnants of thirty-two pages of the original manuscript, eight pages are completely illegible (fols 1<sup>rv</sup>, 3<sup>r</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>v</sup>, 11<sup>v</sup>, 14<sup>r</sup>), while twenty pages are still possible to read (fols 2<sup>rv</sup>, 4<sup>v</sup>, 5<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup>, 7<sup>rv</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup>, 9<sup>v</sup>, 10<sup>rv</sup>, 11<sup>r</sup>, 12<sup>rv</sup>, 13<sup>rv</sup>, 14<sup>v</sup>, 15<sup>rv</sup>, 16<sup>r</sup>). Only two pages are easily readable (fols 16<sup>v</sup>, 9<sup>r</sup>). It should be noted that some pages of quires I and II are completely covered by transparent paper for protection (fols 1<sup>rv</sup>, 3<sup>r</sup>), and some of them partly (fols 2<sup>rv</sup>, 3<sup>v</sup>, 4<sup>rv</sup>, 5<sup>rv</sup>, 6<sup>rv</sup>, 7<sup>rv</sup>, 8<sup>rv</sup>, 11<sup>rv</sup>, 12<sup>rv</sup>, 13<sup>rv</sup>, 14<sup>rv</sup>). This circumstance makes those pages even more difficult to read. Additionally, fol. 6<sup>v</sup> shimmers through into fol. 6<sup>r</sup>, rendering it completely illegible.

38 Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 538.

39 The lection Ephesians 3:14–21 (no. 538) is missing in the Kala lectionary.

40 Dzotsenidze and Danelia 1974, 258. The edition of the Old Georgian versions of Paul's Epistles is based on twelve manuscripts assigned to four redactions: redaction A is represented by two tenth-century manuscripts of the KKNCM (S-407, S-1398 (+ A-369)); redaction B includes three tenth-century manuscripts (KKNCM, S-1138; Sin. georg. 60; Ivir. georg. 42) and one manuscript of the eleventh century (Kutaisi, State Historical Museum, 176); redaction C comprises two eleventh-century manuscripts (KKNCM A-584; Ivir. georg. 78) and one of the thirteenth century (KKNCM A-34). The last redaction (D) is represented by KKNCM A-137 (fourteenth century), KKNCM A-677 (eleventh–twelfth centuries), and St Petersburg, Russian Academy of Sciences, Or. georg. K-4 (thirteenth century).

41 Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 538.

The original manuscript was written in two columns with thirty lines per page. The layer is overwritten vertically, turned by 90° or 270°. One folio of the original has yielded one bifolio of the present codex.<sup>42</sup>

Part II is written in bold *nuskhuri* letters, in a non-calligraphic, uneven handwriting (Fig. 3). Initials are not ornamented; they cover nearly the complete space between the columns. The titles may have been written with red ink; for this reason, they are completely washed out, except for two remnants on fols 9<sup>r</sup> and 11<sup>r</sup>. As for the punctuation marks, two dots (:) are determinable as a mark for major breaks (fols 4<sup>v</sup>, 7<sup>v</sup>).

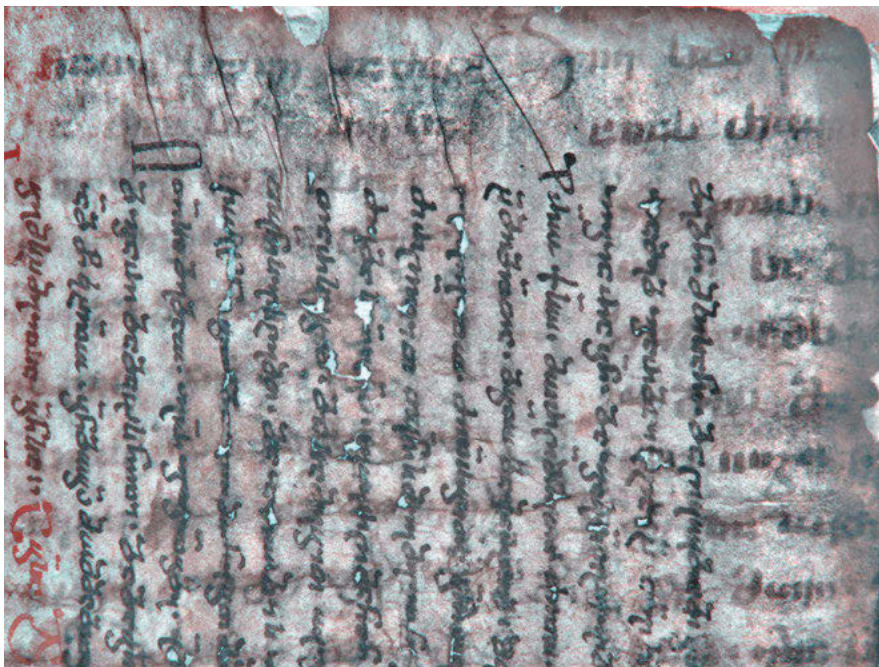


Fig. 3: Ivir. georg. 59, fol. 4<sup>v</sup> (Part II); © Ιερά Μονή Ιβήρων Αγίου Όρους.

The compilers of the *Catalogue* have already identified most of the pericopes from both the Old and New Testaments (Proverbs, Jesus Sirach, Hosea, Zechariah; Matthew, Luke, Acts, Colossians, 2 Timothy), a sequence extending over the period from 27 December to the beginning of Lent.<sup>43</sup> I was able to identify two more lec-

<sup>42</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 539.

<sup>43</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 539.

tions, namely, John 3:22–4:3 (no. 139) and Hebrews 7:11–19 (no. 155). All identified lections are listed in Table 5.

**Table 5:** List of identified lections in Part II of Ivir. georg. 59.

No.	Lections	Date	Folios
1	Acts 6:8–8:2 (no. 43)	27 December	6 <sup>v</sup>
2	Colossians 2:8–15 (no. 131)	11 January	15 <sup>r</sup>
3	2 Timothy 1:1–12 (no. 138)	13 January	15 <sup>rv</sup> , 10 <sup>rv</sup>
4	John 3:22–4:3 (no. 139)	13 January	16 <sup>r</sup> , 9 <sup>v</sup>
5	Proverbs 11:7–13 (no. 146)	17 January	16 <sup>v</sup> , 9 <sup>r</sup>
6	Sirach 2:1–13 (no. 147)	17 January	9 <sup>r</sup> , 16 <sup>v</sup>
7	Hebrews 7:11–19 (no. 155)	18 January	4 <sup>v</sup> , 5 <sup>r</sup>
8	Luke 2:42–46 (no. 156)	18 January	4 <sup>v</sup> , 5 <sup>r</sup>
9	Luke 2:22–40 (no. 204)	2 February	7 <sup>r</sup> , 2 <sup>v</sup>
10	2 Corinthians 4:7–15 (no. 211)	6 February	7 <sup>rv</sup> , 2 <sup>rv</sup>
11	Matthew 10:16–22 (no. 212)	6 February	2 <sup>r</sup> , 7 <sup>v</sup>
12	Proverbs 11:30–12:4 (no. 269)	25 March	8 <sup>v</sup>
13	Zechariah 2:14–17 (no. 270)	25 March	8 <sup>v</sup>
14	Matthew 6:1–33 (no. 326)	Cheesefare Sunday	13 <sup>rv</sup> , 12 <sup>rv</sup>
15	Hosea 14:2–10 (no. 335)	1st Sunday of Lent	14 <sup>v</sup> , 11 <sup>r</sup>

The *Catalogue* further states that the palimpsest seems to not include psalms and antiphons.<sup>44</sup> However, one additional liturgical element is determinable on fol. 11<sup>r</sup>, namely, a troparion (*oxitay*) indicated together with its mode (*qmay*). Both these terms are abbreviated.

As in the other palimpsested lectionaries discussed here, the text of Part II is rather inconsistent. For instance, the passage from Proverbs (11:7–13, no. 146) follows the Jerusalem-rite lectionaries and stands completely opposite to the ancient Bible witnesses such as the Oshki Bible. In contrast to this, the lection from Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (1:1–12, no. 138) is mostly the same as in P<sup>45</sup> and in the ancient Georgian redactions of Paul's Epistles, AB and CD,<sup>46</sup> but variant readings bring it closer to the latter versions. In Part II as in AB and CD, 2 Timothy 1:3

<sup>44</sup> Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 539.

<sup>45</sup> The Latal and Kala lectionaries do not contain this lection.

<sup>46</sup> Dzotsenidze and Danelia 1974, 431.

appears as follows: *vhammadlob ġmertsā, romelsā vhm̄saxureb me* (> CD) *dasabamitgan cmidita gonebita vitar-igi mouk̄lebelad makus šentw̄s qsenebay locvata šina čemta ġame da dġe* ('I thank God, whom I have served from the beginning with a clear mind, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day'; cf. Χάριν ἔχω τῷ θεῷ, ᾧ λατρεύω ἀπὸ προγόνων ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει, ὡς ἀδιάλειπτον ἔχω τὴν περὶ σοῦ μνησίαν ἐν ταῖς δεήσεσίν μου νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας). Here, the word *dasabamitgan* ('from the beginning', for ἀπὸ προγόνων) is omitted in P. In Part II as in AB and CD,<sup>47</sup> the sixth verse from the same Epistle reads: *romlisatws mogaqseneb šen gancxovelebad mqurvaled madlsa mas ġmrtisasa, romel ars šen tana dasxmita mit qelita čemtayta* ('because of which I remind you to revive fervently the mercy of God, which is with you through the laying on of my hands'; cf. δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἀναμνησκῶ σε ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν σοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν μου). Instead of *gancxovelebad* ('to revive'), P has *aġduġebad* ('to boil') for ἀναζωπυρεῖν.

## 4 Conclusion and future perspectives

With the palimpsests discussed above, we have significant new material for reassembling the structure of Georgian Jerusalem-rite lectionaries and studying the history of their development by comparing the different sources. The lower text of the Jerusalem-rite lectionary preserved in Ivir. georg. 47 is a most significant witness next to those of Paris, Kala, and Latal, because it contains lections for the whole ecclesiastical year, including general commemorations. Furthermore, this witness is important as it comprises lections that do not exist in other Georgian lectionaries or, more accurately, that are not revealed at the current stage of research. At the same time, the newly detected lectionaries contain valuable material for studying the history of the Georgian translation of biblical books.

The next step of our research within the DeLiCaTe project is to investigate the composition of the Jerusalem-rite lectionary, including the additional liturgical elements as preserved in the different Georgian sources by comparing the prescriptions for each day of the ecclesiastical year and the sequence of the lections with the textual boundaries of each of them. The final goal is to compare the Georgian lectionaries with the Armenian, Caucasian Albanian, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic ones, with a view to reconstructing the ancient liturgical practice of Jerusalem and investigating its peculiarities in the different Christian traditions.

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<sup>47</sup> Dzotsenidze and Danelia 1974, 430.

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## Abbreviations

CPG = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 2: *Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974.

TITUS = Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>>.

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Hasmik Sargsyan

# Linguistic Divergence in Armenian Bible and Lectionary Palimpsests

**Abstract:** This paper's subject is variant readings of linguistic relevance in Old Armenian Bible and lectionary fragments preserved as lower layers of palimpsests. The aim is to contribute to the linguistic research on these rarely or never studied witnesses of the Old Armenian language. Such research will enhance understanding of the linguistic diversity of Old Armenian and, as may be the case, give us linguistic tools to determine the time and place at which the textual witnesses were produced. To these ends, the paper presents the first results of research into variant readings of linguistic importance in several Bible and lectionary fragments.

## 1 Research on palimpsest fragments

### 1.1 The relevance of palimpsest fragments for linguistic variation in Old Armenian

The study of palimpsests containing fragments of Armenian texts as their lower layers is essential for several reasons. Only a small number of studies have dealt with the linguistic divergence and variety of Old Armenian, and this is true for both the diachronic and synchronic perspectives. The diachronic perspective relates to the changes observed in the Old Armenian language over time, as evidenced by the written documents preserved from the inception of Armenian literacy to the present day. The synchronic perspective concerns the linguistic variety of Old Armenian as reflected in written texts that date from the time of the emergence of Armenian literacy in the fifth century. Up to the present day, our understanding of the linguistic characteristics of Old Armenian, notably during the period from the fifth to the tenth century, remains limited from both these perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The existing studies on the language and orthography of the first centuries of Armenian literacy include Meillet 1903; Acharyan 1928; Gyulbudaghyan 1973; Weitenberg 1994; Weitenberg 1997; Weitenberg 2006; and Künzle 1984. The language of Old Armenian texts from the earliest stages of its literacy appears quite uniform; however, researchers have pointed out linguistic features that

The scarcity of studies on the linguistic divergence of Old Armenian is in part due to the limited number of textual witnesses (manuscripts and inscriptions) dating back to the first centuries of Armenian literacy. The oldest dated manuscripts of Armenian go back to the ninth century, and fewer than twenty manuscripts are dated before the year 1000.<sup>2</sup> Palimpsest fragments are of special importance in the study of the earliest stages of the Armenian language since usually they can be assigned to an older period than the oldest dated non-palimpsest manuscripts preserving the same texts. The groundwork for studying palimpsests containing Armenian undertexts was established through the edition of the Armenian layer of two palimpsests with Georgian overt texts – namely, Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery, georg. NF 13 and 55 (hereafter: Sin. georg. NF 13 and NF 55) – which also contain the only known manuscript witnesses of the Caucasian Albanian language in their lower layer.<sup>3</sup> The study of palimpsest fragments is relevant for understanding the history of text transmission, the development of written tradition, and the linguistic variation of Armenian during the early centuries of its literacy.<sup>4</sup> And, as noted by Antoine Meillet, the precise study of the Old Armenian language must be conducted based on the oldest preserved witnesses of Armenian literature.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it is likely that the few existing textual witnesses of the first centuries of Armenian literacy represent not the natural state of spoken Old Armenian of the time but only a written standard of it, and all we can hope for are mere indications of change and variety within Old Armenian. For this reason, every significant case of divergence in the textual tradition must be considered.

To date, scholarly literature predominantly focuses on the Classical, Modern Eastern, and Modern Western Armenian standards (and occasionally Middle Ar-

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suggest the potential existence of other varieties alongside the written standard (see, for example, Weitenberg 1996 and 2014).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Kouymjyan 2015, 38. Beda Künzle (1984) has used two of the oldest manuscripts for his edition of the Gospels: Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 6200, of 887 CE (formerly ms 1111 of the library of the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages, Moscow) and M 2374, of 989 CE (formerly Ejniatsin, Armenian Patriarchate, 229).

<sup>3</sup> See Gippert 2010 for the edition of the Armenian undertexts, Gippert et al. 2008 on the Albanian palimpsests, and Gippert 2022 for the perspectives of working on Armenian palimpsests in general.

<sup>4</sup> See Stone 1993 for the assessment of linguistic variants and Weitenberg 2014 on the methodology of determining dialectal variation in Armenian manuscripts.

<sup>5</sup> Meillet 1903, 489: ‘C’est sur l’observation de la graphie attestée par l’accord des vieux manuscrits demeurés fidèles à l’original que doit reposer une étude précise de l’ancienne langue arménienne’ (‘A precise study of the Old Armenian language must rely on the examination of the spelling attested by common accord of the ancient manuscripts that have remained faithful to the original’).

menian), with limited descriptions of dialectal variation in Armenian, as the main concentration is on modern dialects. Critical editions of texts and dictionaries attributed to one of the mentioned strata are adapted to the known grammatical and orthographic rules of the corresponding standard. The editions of biblical texts, too, often tend to emend linguistic and orthographic deviations from the Classical Armenian standard, regarding them as ‘erroneous’, especially when the edition is based on a large number of manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> However, as Michael Stone has pointed out, it is not the task of critical editions to reflect all the variations occurring in every manuscript,<sup>7</sup> as that would be simply impossible.

Even considering that there are probably more studies on the Bible than on other texts written in Old Armenian, many linguistic aspects of the study of the Armenian biblical texts remain open. Hence, the study of manuscript- and text-specific linguistic divergences is crucial for the study of the Armenian language in general and for the earlier stages of Old Armenian in particular.

## 1.2 Palimpsest fragments within DeLiCaTe

Within the framework of the Development of Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe) project,<sup>8</sup> research on the linguistic divergence documented in Armenian palimpsests is a work in progress. The following are the palimpsest fragments that the project has dealt with so far. Apart from Sin. georg. NF 13 and NF 55, which contain fragments of the Pauline Epistles with the Euthalian apparatus and of the Old Testament books attributed to King Solomon,<sup>9</sup> another palimpsest with an Armenian underlayer is preserved at St Catherine’s Monastery: syr. 7, with fragments from the Epistle to the Hebrews in the undertext of its fols 47 and 48.<sup>10</sup>

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6 This is true of, e.g., Zōhrapean 1805; Amalyan 1996; and Alexanian 2012. Yovhannēs Zōhrapean does provide variant readings of the manuscripts he has used, but he does not note which variant readings are contained in which manuscripts. Hayk Amalyan’s (1996, 27–28) objective is to reconstruct the original form of the translation of the Bible into Armenian by comparing existing manuscripts and correcting any perceived ‘errors’ within them. He also points to the fact that Zōhrapean has kept all the ‘errors’ of his manuscripts, in an endeavour to render them as faithfully as possible. Joseph M. Alexanian (2012, xi) states that the focus of his edition is ‘on a text and apparatus that may reflect differences in Syriac and Greek *Vorlage*, rather than on a presentation of all manuscript variants to illustrate the development of the Armenian language’.

7 Stone 1993, 24.

8 For details, see Jost Gippert’s contribution to the present volume and the project website at <<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/research/current-projects/delicate.html>> (accessed on 9 April 2024).

9 Gippert 2010.

10 Hebrews 10:20–35, 11:25–39; see also Gippert 2023, 214.

Palimpsests from other collections include Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Mingana Collection, Christ. Arab. Add. 124, which also contains fragments from Hebrews.<sup>11</sup> Palimpsests of the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran) in Yerevan include

- Fragment no. 35 (John 7:44–52)
- M 196 (Proverbs 2:11–18, 2:4–11)
- Fragment no. 461 (Luke 4:8–11)
- M 470 (Acts 25:8–14, 26:14–20)
- M 963 (Luke 24:51–53)
- M 3850 (Acts 15:38–41, 16:1–4).

Lectionary fragments are preserved in M 1306, M 2166, and M 4435 (see Section 3.2 below).

### 1.3 Palimpsested Bible fragments vs lectionary fragments

There are two important issues that one must keep in mind while dealing with palimpsested Bible and lectionary fragments. The first is their dating: in most cases, the only reliable basis is the dating of the upper layer (if there is any), yielding a *terminus ante quem*. A more precise dating is usually not possible, at least not until well-defined and sound palaeographical, linguistic, and historical indications, among others, have been taken into consideration. Determining the most significant indicator(s) for dating the lower layer of a palimpsest heavily relies on factors such as the history of the relevant language(s) and script(s), the history of the given texts and manuscripts, and various other related considerations. The second challenge lies in distinguishing between palimpsested Bible fragments proper and lectionary fragments. Lectionaries primarily feature readings from the Bible arranged according to the liturgical calendar. This similar content makes it difficult to consistently and clearly differentiate between these two types of texts within palimpsest fragments. In contrast to Bible manuscripts proper, identifiable structural elements of lectionaries are, firstly, the titles of liturgical units, along with the non-sequential rendering of biblical passages from the Old and New Testaments. In this paper, fragments that could not be further identified as part of a lectionary due to the absence of structural clues have been provisionally treated as Bible fragments.

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<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 11:14–33; see also Gippert 2023, 214.

## 2 Orthographic variation in Old Armenian and its assessment

### 2.1 Orthographic variation in Old Armenian

The textual transmission of the Armenian Bible is comparatively consistent. However, the Armenian manuscripts, and especially palimpsest fragments, do show some variation. Till today, we have few descriptions of the orthographic and language variation in the Old Armenian manuscripts. They include Antoine Meillet's short account on the writing style (French *graphie*) of the Armenian Bible, Beda Künzle's description of the variation in orthography and linguistic expression in the Gospel manuscripts E and M (see Section 2.3 below), as well as several accounts by Jos J. S. Weitenberg.<sup>12</sup>

Orthographic peculiarities of a given written specimen are in the first place connected with the phonetic characteristics behind them. Hrachya Acharyan, Sirak Gyulbudaghyan,<sup>13</sup> and most other linguists dealing with the topic agree that Armenian orthography from the first centuries after the creation of the alphabet was phonetically based. This means that differences in orthography reflected differences in phonetics, that is, pronunciation. Discussing the phonetic values of the Armenian letters and their combinations, Heinrich Hübschmann<sup>14</sup> and, following him, Acharyan point to a few tools for determining the possible pronunciation of the written evidence. These tools include the arrangement of the letters in the Armenian alphabet (in its comparison with the Greek alphabet); the Armenian version of the *Grammar* by Dionysius Thrax; foreign words transliterated into Armenian; and Armenian words transliterated into other languages.<sup>15</sup> Gyulbudaghyan, who offers an account on the orthography

12 Meillet 1903; Künzle 1984, 58\*–85\*; Weitenberg 1994; Weitenberg 1997; Weitenberg 2006.

13 Acharyan 1928, 286–346; Gyulbudaghyan 1973, 63.

14 Hübschmann 1876, 60.

15 Hübschmann 1876, 60: 'Diese [the pronunciation of Old Armenian] zu bestimmen haben wir drei Hilfsmittel, 1) die armenische Bearbeitung des Dionysius Thrax, die jedenfalls alt ist, wenn sie auch nicht, wie angenommen wird, in das 5. Jahrhundert hinaufreichen sollte, 2) das armenische Alphabet, 3) die Transcriptionen aus und in das Armenische'. Acharyan 1928, 289: 'Հայերէն այբուբենի Ե դարու կամ ընդհանրապէս խօսելով՝ հին հնչումը որոշելու համար չորս միջոց կար ստանք են՝ 1. Հայերէն այբուբենի դասաւորութիւնը: 2. Դիոնեսիոս Թրակացոյն քերականութիւնը: 3. Օտար լեզուներէ տառադարձուած բառերը՝ հայերէնի մէջ: 4. Հայերէնէ տառադարձուած բառերը՝ օտար լեզուներու մէջ' ('There are four means for determining the pronunciation of the Armenian alphabet in the fifth century or, roughly speaking, the old pronunciation of Armenian. These are: 1. the order of the letters in the Armenian alphabet; 2. the *Grammar* by Dionysius Thrax; 3. the spelling of words transliterated from other languages into Armenian; 4. the spelling of words transliterated from Armenian into other languages').

of the fifth- to ninth-century texts,<sup>16</sup> emphasises the problem of determining the orthography of Armenian from the fifth to sixth centuries solely based on ninth-century manuscripts. Therefore, he uses epigraphic material and evidence from loanwords. He also indicates ‘certain orthographic deviations’ as a possible indicator.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2 ‘Linguistic variants’

When searching for linguistic features that can or might indicate an older stage than the oldest dated manuscript witnesses of the Old Armenian language, the first step is to look for non-coincidental patterns of divergence in orthography and language. For this paper, only critical editions of the Bible and lectionaries were taken into consideration. It is clear to me that a more comprehensive analysis must additionally include a comparison with the manuscripts themselves, since the critical editions often harmonise orthographic and other deviations.

We must certainly bear in mind that not all variant readings indicate a change or variation in a linguistic sense, no matter whether the scribe inserted them unknowingly or deliberately.<sup>18</sup> As some researchers have suggested,<sup>19</sup> the assessment of ‘linguistic’ variants, as coined by Michael Stone,<sup>20</sup> requires a systematic collection and description of variant readings in Armenian manuscripts of the fifth to eleventh centuries outside the critical apparatus, as no critical edition can satisfy every researcher’s needs. The next step involves situating these systematic descriptions within a broader dialectal and chronological context.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned by Stone, cooperation between textual critics and linguists is crucial in this respect.<sup>22</sup> Such cooperation is one of the goals of the DeLiCaTe project.

<sup>16</sup> Gyulbudaghyan 1973, 12–65.

<sup>17</sup> Gyulbudaghyan 1973, 12: ‘Դժվար է Թ դարի ձեռագրերով որոշել 5–6-րդ դարերի ուղղագրությունը, բայց մեզ օգնում են վիմական արձանագրությունները, որոնք թեև ծավալով փոքր են, բայց հնագույն շրջանից են մնացել. օգնում են նաև հայերենից օտար լեզուներին և օտար լեզուներից հայերենին անցած բառերի, փոխառությունների տառադարձությունը, ինչպես և ուղղագրական առանձին շեղումները’ (‘Deciding on the orthography of the fifth to sixth centuries based on ninth-century manuscripts is challenging. However, inscriptions come to our aid, despite their brevity, as they originate from ancient times. The spelling of Armenian words transliterated into other languages and vice versa, along with certain orthographic deviations, also proves to be useful’).

<sup>18</sup> Stone 1993, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Weitenberg 2014, 223; Stone 1993, 20.

<sup>20</sup> Stone 1993, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Weitenberg 2014, 223.

<sup>22</sup> Stone 1993, 21.

## 2.3 First case studies based on palimpsest fragments

In the following sections, I discuss some orthographic and linguistic variations that can be found in the palimpsested Armenian Bible and lectionary fragments listed above. The following issues are dealt with: some instances of the orthographical differentiation between **ե** <e> and **է** <ē>,<sup>23</sup> and the simplification of the consonant cluster **րհ** <rh> → **հ** <h>.

Two critical editions were consulted for the comparison with the Bible and lectionary fragments preserved as the lower layers of the palimpsests: the complete edition of the Old and New Testaments of 1805 by Yovhannēs Zōhrapēan (also called the Zohrab Bible), based on several manuscripts of the Mechitarist collection in Venice, the oldest of which dates from the fourteenth century, and Künzle's edition of 1984, which renders two of the oldest and most complete manuscripts preserving the Armenian Gospels, namely, M = Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 6200 (formerly kept in the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow), dated 887, and E = Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 2374 (formerly housed in the Armenian Patriarchate in Ejmiatsin), dated 989.

## 3 Orthographic variation between **ե** <e> and **է** <ē> in palimpsest fragments

### 3.1 The distribution of **ե** <e> and **է** <ē> in Classical Armenian

Due to the presence of two distinct graphemes in the Armenian alphabet created by Mesrop Mashtots for what today is an /e/-sound in both Modern Armenian standard languages (East and West Armenian), we may assume that **ե** <e> and **է** <ē> initially represented two different sounds.<sup>24</sup> Etymologically, **է** <ē> goes back to the diphthong [ey]. Manuk Abeghyan assumes that **ե** <e> was pronounced as an open vowel and **է**

<sup>23</sup> See Künzle 1984, 61\* and 63\* for a short account as well as Weitenberg 2006 'on the use of Armenian *e* and *ē* to render Greek *ε* and *η* in onomastic material in the Gospels and in the book of Deuteronomy' (Weitenberg 2006, 215).

<sup>24</sup> See Schmitt (1972) for the transliteration of Armenian, and specifically page 300 for the representation of **է** as <ē>. It is worth noting that the transliteration convention, using what appears to be a long vowel, <ē>, to denote **է** and implying a distinct pronunciation from **ե** <e>, is a practice going back to the works of Heinrich Hübschmann, Antoine Meillet, and Émile Benveniste. Additional details can be found in Schmitt 1972, 297; see also Hübschmann 1882, 31–39, and Hübschmann 1895–1897, 1–2.

<ē> as a closed one.<sup>25</sup> The same author points to the appearance of է <e> in the conjunction էթէ <et'e>, թէ <t'e> ('if, that', etc.), in the past tense of the copula (էի <ei> first-person singular, էիր <eir> second-person singular, էաք <eak'> first-person plural, etc.), and in the imperfect (գրէիք <greik'> second-person plural of the verb 'write', etc.), which 'later became' էի <ēi>, էիր <ēir>, էաք <ēak'>, and so on.<sup>26</sup>

Gyulbudaghyan adduces instances in which է <e> is found in documents of the fifth to ninth centuries instead of the standard writing with է <ē>.<sup>27</sup> For this purpose, he considers epigraphic material.<sup>28</sup> He outlines two positions in the interpretation of this variation, as represented by Antoine Meillet and Eduard Aghayan.<sup>29</sup> Gyulbudaghyan disagrees with Meillet's approach, which suggests that the orthography of the imperfect with է <e> is older than that with է <ē>. Rather, he aligns with Aghayan's viewpoint, according to which the spellings with է <e> and է <ē> are merely confused in the textual witnesses.<sup>30</sup> The question remains whether the deviations from the known (or, in Gyulbusaghyan's wording, 'accepted') rules concerning the distribution of է <e> and է <ē> in Old Armenian themselves follow a rule-based pattern or are entirely at random. The answer to this question might be different depending on the time and place at which the written materials were produced (and perhaps also on the background of a given scribe). In other words, the question is whether a chronological or geographical pattern can be established.

Discussing the divergence in several Gospel manuscripts from Ejmiatsin and the Moscow Gospels (M), Meillet points to the fact that some of these manuscripts (five in total, 'les manuscrits corrects') show consistency in many points, including the orthography of the imperfect and of թէ <t'e>, էթէ <et'e> ('if, that') with է <e>. However, three of those manuscripts have undergone more influence of 'the Armenian of the Middle Ages' ('l'arménien au moyen âge') and show a less consistent orthography.<sup>31</sup> Meillet's statement can be understood in the following way: if certain manuscripts

25 Abeghyan 1936, 9.

26 Abeghyan 1936, 13: 'բայերի անցյալ անկատարը, վոր հնագույն գրութեանը յեղել է՝ էի, էիր, էաք, էիք, էին գրեի, գրեիր, գրեաք, գրեիք, գրեին, հետագայում դարձել է՝ էի, էիր, էաք և այլն' ('the past imperfect of the verbs that was written with է <e> according to the old writing, էի <ei> '(I) was', էիր <eir> '(you, singular) were', էաք <eak'> '(we) were', էիք <eik'> '(you, plural) were', էին <ein> '(they) were', գրեի <grei> '(I) wrote', գրեիր <greir> '(you, singular) wrote', գրեաք <greak'> '(we) wrote', գրեիք <greik'> '(you, plural) wrote', գրեին <grein> '(they) wrote', later became էի <ēi>, էիր <ēir>, էաք <ēak'>, and so on').

27 Gyulbudaghyan 1973, 40–45.

28 Gyulbudaghyan 1973, 40–41.

29 Gyulbudaghyan 1973, 42.

30 Meillet 1903, 491; Aghayan 1964, 358–359.

31 Meillet 1903, 490–491.



consistently use a particular spelling, there must be a reason for that consistency. Specifically, one must infer that the manuscripts demonstrating consistency are more closely associated with a time when the pronunciation of Է <e> differed from that of Է <ē>, therefore possibly indicating an older form. After the differences in the pronunciation of the two letters were neutralised, the orthography also changed and conceivably became less consistent over time.

In the palimpsest fragments dealt with in the DeLiCaTe project (see Section 1.2), the conjunctions ԹԷ <‘e> and ԷԹԷ <et‘e> (‘if, that’ etc.) are always written with Է <e>; the same consistency can be observed in the spelling of the imperfect with Է <e>. This likely suggests that the orthography with Է <e> is older than that with Է <ē>. In Sections 3.2 and 3.3, I introduce a few specific instances of the orthographic variation between Է <e> and Է <ē>.

### 3.2 M 4435

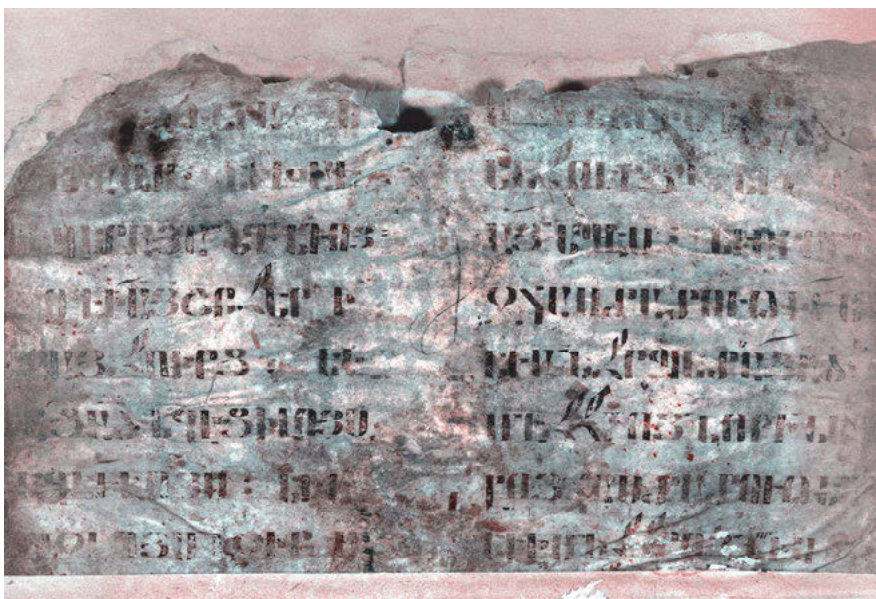
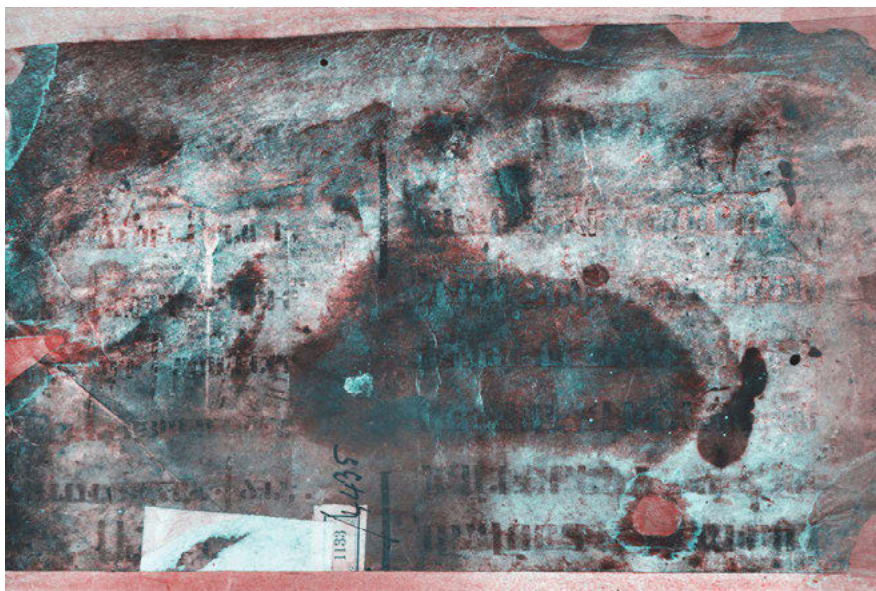
The manuscript Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 4435 is a Gospel codex dated to the year 1424, to which flyleaves with erased text were bound. According to the Matenadaran catalogue, the flyleaves’ undertext is also from the Gospels, written in round *erkat’agir* majuscules, and they even comprise a miniature.<sup>32</sup>

The four pages of the flyleaves represent one original folio that was cut in two, with the resulting page order 3 + 6 (Fig. 1a) and 4 + 5 (Fig. 1b).<sup>33</sup> The text is arranged in two columns, with 9 + 9 lines and 17–21 characters per line in each column. One or two characters are missing in the left column of pages 3–6. The flyleaves were erased but are not overwritten. In contrast to the catalogue description, the undertext of M 4435 contains a lectionary fragment with readings from the Old Testament (and not from the Gospels), intended to be recited during the ninth hour of Palm Sunday and on Easter Monday and featuring a reading from Genesis (1:1–7) and Psalm 117:26–27.<sup>34</sup> On page 5 (Fig. 1b), one can observe the miniature which is also mentioned in the catalogue.

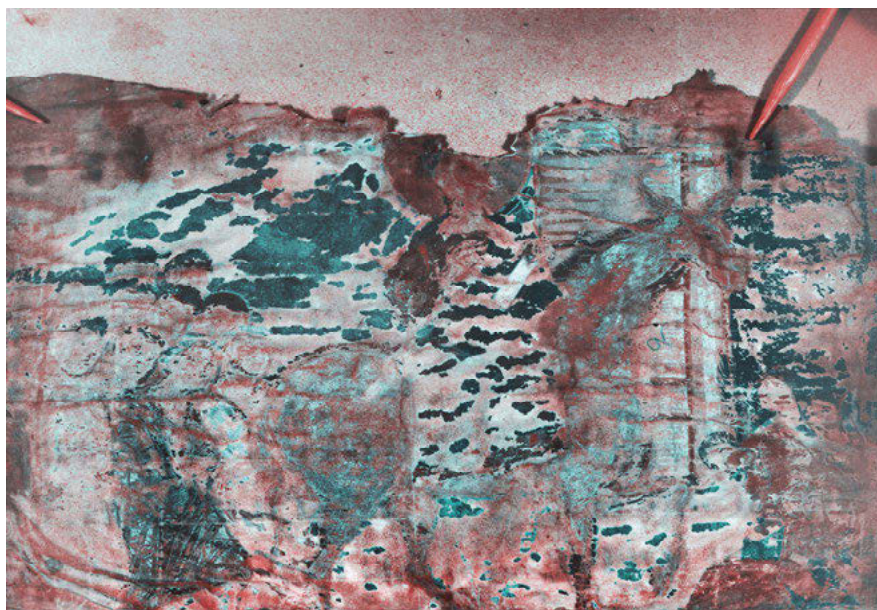
<sup>32</sup> Yeganyan, Zeytunyan and Antabyan 1965, 213; see the Introduction by Jost Gippert to this volume for more information on the miniature.

<sup>33</sup> In the case of flyleaves, pages are numbered instead of folios in the catalogues of the Matenadaran.

<sup>34</sup> See Renoux 1971, 258–261 [120–123] for the corresponding passage in the Jerusalem-rite lectionaries.



**Fig. 1a:** Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 4435: p. 3 (top) + p. 6 (bottom); red-cyan pseudocolour image, © Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan / DeLiCaTe project.



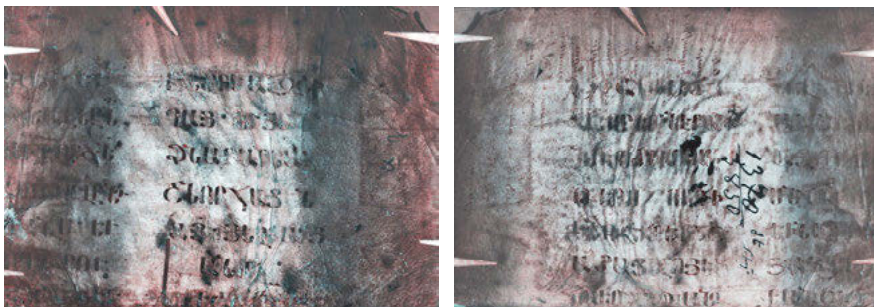
**Fig. 1b:** Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 4435: p. 4 (top) + p. 5 with miniature (bottom); red-cyan pseudocolour image, © Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan / DeLiCaTe project.

Page 6 of M 4435 contains an instance of the imperfect form **ՇՐՋԵՐ** <šrjēr> instead of the expected **ՇՐՋԷՐ** <šrjēr> ((‘it) was hovering’), see example (1) from Genesis 1:2:

- (1) M 4435, p. 6, col. a, ll. 12–13  
 <Ե>{Ի} [Մ]ՈԳ-Ի ԱՅ **ՇՐՋԵՐ** Ի <Ա>{Ե}ՐԱՅ ԶՈՒՐՅ  
 <e>{w} [h]ogi ay<sup>35</sup> šrjēr i <v>{e}ray jowrc’  
 ‘And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters’

### 3.3 M 3850

Another attestation of an Է <e> for an expected Է <ē> is provided by **ՄՐԵԻ** <hrēi> (vs **ՄՐԷԻ** <hrēi>) (‘of a Jew(ess)’) in Acts 16:1. This verse is preserved on a palimpsested flyleaf (page 6, Fig. 2) of Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 3850, a fifteenth-century Gospel codex.<sup>36</sup> The flyleaf belongs together with page 5; the original folio was cut in two and additionally clipped at one edge (the left side of page 5 and the right side of page 6), with only the upper half of the folio being preserved.



**Fig. 2:** Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 3850: p. 5 (left) + p. 6 (right); red-cyan pseudocolour image, © Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan / DeLiCaTe project.

The erased text, written in round *erkat'agir* majuscules in two columns, contains Acts 15:38–41 and 16:1–4, with seven (of originally fourteen) lines preserved in each

<sup>35</sup> We cannot be certain if the genitive of **ԱՍՏՈՒԱԾ** <astowac> (‘God’) cited here is an abbreviated form of **ԱՍՏՈՒՑ-ՈՅ** <astowcoy> or **ԱՍՏՈՒԱՑ-ՈՅ** <astowacoys>, until a written attestation of its full form is found in the oldest Armenian manuscripts.

<sup>36</sup> Yeganyan, Zeytunyan and Antabyan 1965, 1096–1097.

column; there are 8–10 characters in each line. ՏՐԵԻ <hrei> appears in Acts 16:1 on page 6:

- (2) M 3850, p. 6, col. a, ll. 1–6

ԱՇԱԿԵՐԺ [Ո]ՄՆ ԷՐ ԱՆ[ՈՒ]Ն յԻՄՈՎԹԵՈ[Ս] ՈՐԴԻ [Կ]ՆՈՋ  
ՏՐԵ[Ի] ՏԱՎՋՍՅԵԼՈՅ

*ašakert omn ēr anown timovt' eos ordi knoj hrei hawatac'eloy*

‘a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a believing woman, a Jewess’

### 3.4 Further considerations

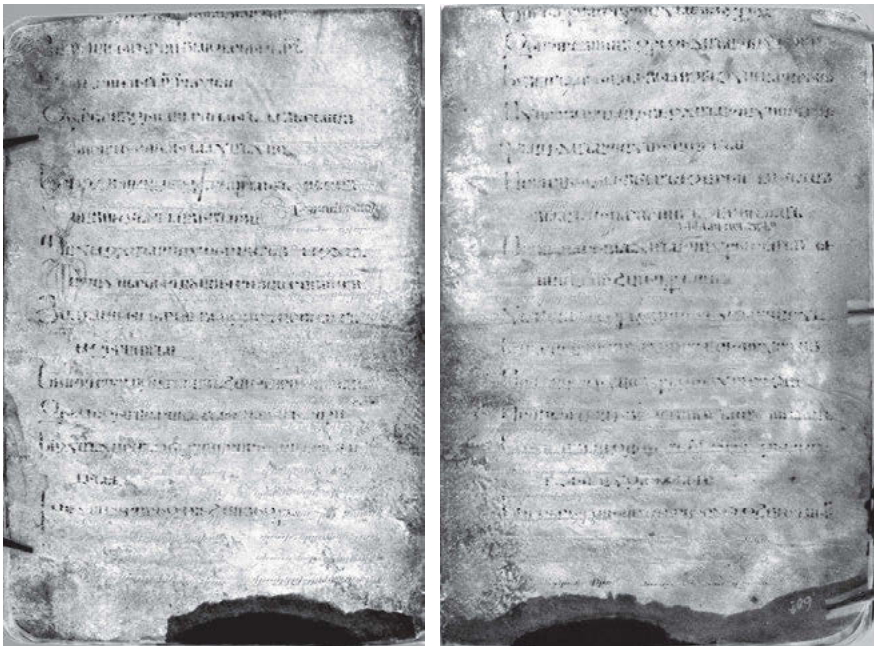
If the usage of է <e> predates that of է <ē> in examples (1) and (2), one must also consider why and how է <ē> came to replace է <e> in specific contexts. It is worth noting that է <ē> seems to occur less frequently in Armenian orthography as compared to է <e>. Aghayan reinforces his argument that the use of է <ē> in the imperfect is the ‘correct’ Mesropian orthography by pointing out that, in imperfect forms, է <ē> (or է <e>, depending on which one was in the Mesropian orthography) consistently precedes a vowel.<sup>37</sup> In Aghayan’s perspective, this suggests that between the է <ē> (or է <e>) and the subsequent vowel, a -y must have been pronounced but not written, given that էււ <ēa> (or էււ <ea>) was not a diphthong in the imperfect. Whether էււ <ea> or էււ <ēa> were pronounced as diphthongs in the imperfect by the time the alphabet was created is hard to determine. However, the fact that է <e> or է <ē> precede vowels in the imperfect might be a plausible reason for the confusion and the shift in orthography from է <e> to է <ē> in the contexts given above. Etymologically, the imperfect of Armenian goes back to a formation of the type Arm. *bere-* < Proto-Indo-European \**b<sup>h</sup>ere-* and the Armenian innovation for the first-person singular suffix of the past, -*i*.<sup>38</sup> The proximity of է <e> to ի <i> could imply that the pronunciation of the է <e> was affected by the following vowel. Beyond a chronological differentiation, a geographical distribution of the pronunciation of է <e> vs է <ē> in the early centuries of literacy cannot be ruled out.

<sup>37</sup> Aghayan 1964, 359.

<sup>38</sup> Klingenschmitt 1982, 14–15.

## 4 Consonant cluster simplification Կ <h> vs ՐԿ <rh>

Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 196 is a codex of the thirteenth century containing books from the New Testament (Acts and Catholic Epistles). The two palimpsested pages 60d and 65a (sic)<sup>39</sup> of M 196 are written in round *erkat'agir* majuscules, according to the catalogue. In their reconstructed order 65a + 60d (see Fig. 3a), the two pages were presumably originally two columns of the same page, turned by 180°. Their undertext contains Proverbs 2:4–18.



**Fig. 3a:** Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 196, p. 65a (left) + p. 60d (right); multispectral image, divided, © Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan / DeLiCaTe project.

Page 60d contains noteworthy instances of the word ճանապարհ <*čanaparh*> ('road, path') from Proverbs 2:13 spelled as ճԱՆԱՊԱՐԿ <*čanaparh*>.

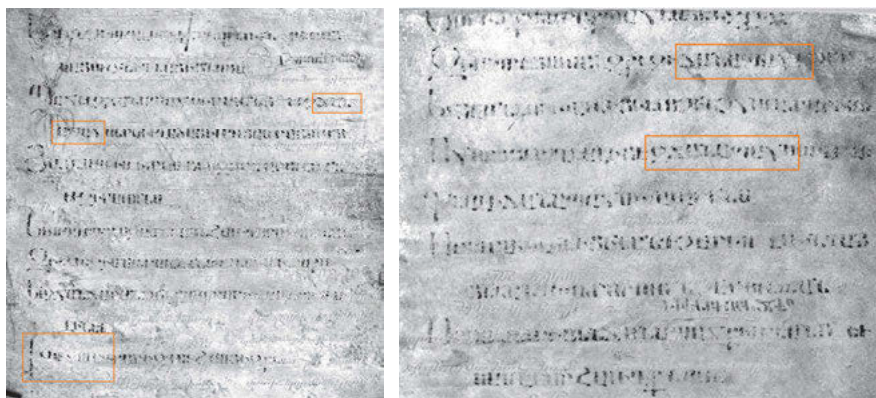
<sup>39</sup> Per the Matenadaran assignment, '65a' and '60d' denote additional pages appended to fols 65 and 60; however, the catalogues do not mention them explicitly. See Yeganyan, Zeytunyan and Antabyan 1965, 270 and Yeganyan, Zeytunyan and Antabyan 1984, 841.

(3) M 196, p. 60d, ll. 4–5:

ՈՆ {ՈՐՈՑ} [Ռ-]{Ո}Ղ[Ե]ԱԼԻՑԷ ԶՃԱՆԱՊԱԿ[Ս ՈՒՂԻՂՆՍ ԳՆԱ] Ի  
ՃԱՆԱՊԱԿՍ [Ի-ԱԻ-Ա]ՐԻՆՍ

*Oh {oroc} [t]{o}[e]l ic'ē zčanapah[s] owlis gnal i čanapahs [xawa]rins*

‘Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness.’



**Fig. 3b:** Yerevan, Matenadaran, M 196, p. 65a (left) + p. 60d (right), with special spellings marked,  
© Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), Yerevan / DeLiCaTe project.

Three additional occurrences of the variation between ՃԱՆԱՊԱԿ <čanaparh> and ՃԱՆԱՊԱԿ <čanapah> appear on the same page and one more on page 65a, as well as two instances (one on each of the pages) of ԻՌՍՈՒՐԻ <xohowrd> instead of the expected ԻՌՏՈՒՐԻ <xorhowrd> (‘advice, idea, meaning’), which strongly suggests that the consonant cluster simplification in these cases is not due to scribal errors (see Fig. 3b).

To ascertain whether the alternation between ph <rh> and h <h> is diachronic or synchronic, recourse to the etymology of the words containing the same consonant cluster could be helpful. An Iranian origin of Armenian ճանապարհ <čanaparh> was proposed by Henrik Nyberg, followed by Acharyan, who derived it from Iranian \**čarana-parθ*, a compound whose first element is regarded as a cognate of Old Iranian (more precisely, Avestan: Arm. ‘zenderēn’) *kar-*, *čara-*, *čaraya-* (‘go’); however, the exact form of the initial compound member, \**čarana-*, is not being discussed.<sup>40</sup> Acharyan associates the second element with Avestan

<sup>40</sup> Nyberg 1928–1931, vol. 2, 187; Acharyan 1926–1935, vol. 3, 183.

*pəratu-* ('hole') but does not cite any attestations of the compound in Iranian. Additionally, it remains unclear how the reconstructed *\*parθ-* with the meaning of 'hole' might evolve into the meaning of 'road' or 'way'. Birgit Olsen proposes an alternative Iranian form for the second element (*-parh*), relying on Harold W. Bailey; the first element, *čana-*, remains doubtful for her.<sup>41</sup> Ralf-Peter Ritter suggests Armenian *čem-* as in *čemim* 'I strut, I walk' (< Parthian *c'm* 'come', *cm* 'run, move') as the basis for the first element of the compound, with a dissimilation of *m* to *n* in the presence of the bilabial *p* in *čanaparh*.<sup>42</sup>

In any case, given the numerous other Iranian loans in Armenian featuring the same consonant cluster, it is probable that *ճանապարհ* <*čanaparh*> also has an Iranian origin. Giancarlo Bolognesi discusses different dialectal sources for the Armenian loanwords of Iranian origin with the alternation *hr* / *rh* / *h*.<sup>43</sup> He observes that the Iranian borrowings in Armenian typically exhibit the Northwestern Iranian, specifically Parthian, isogloss *hr*, which in earlier borrowings experiences either a metathesis *hr* > *rh* or a simplification into *h*. According to Bolognesi, *hr* remains unaltered in later Parthian borrowings. Jost Gippert illustrates that in Armenian, the outcome of Iranian *hr* < *\*θr* is *rh* in loans dating back to Armenian's pre-literary times, exemplified by the word *աշխարհ* <*ašxarh*> ('world, country').<sup>44</sup> Additionally, he notes that Georgian counterparts of Armenian words featuring the Iranian consonant cluster undergo a simplification from *rh* > *h* in loans of later attestations, particularly of the twelfth century.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, Acharyan documents various modern dialectal forms of *ճանապարհ* <*čanaparh*>, including *ճամփա* <*čamp'a*>, *ճնապա* <*čnapa*>, *ճանապար* <*čanapar*>, and *ճամբախ* <*čambax*>.<sup>46</sup> The most prominent variant is *ճամփա* <*čamp'a*>, also spelled *ճամբա(յ)* <*čamba(y)*>.<sup>47</sup> In this form, possibly through an intermediate stage *ճանապախ* <*čanapax*>, the second *a* is syncopated

41 Olsen 1999, 892–893; Bailey 1956, 104–107. See also Bailey 1986, 7–8 for a possible Iranian origin of *խորհ* <*xorh*> and *խոհ* <*xoh*> ('thinking, counsel') and the derivations *խորհուրդ* <*xorhowrd*> ('advice, idea, meaning') and *խորհիմ* <*xorhim*> ('to think').

42 Ritter 1986, 310; cf. also his etymological considerations on *-parh* as a cognate of *pa(r)hak* 'guard, watch' on pp. 308–310, concluding with a meaning of 'way, path'.

43 Bolognesi 1960, 15–17.

44 Gippert 2005, 148; see also Hübschmann 1895–1897, 14.

45 Alternatively, there is a potential for a third Western Middle Iranian source for *rh* vs *h*; see Korn and Olsen 2012 for more insights.

46 Acharyan 1926–1935, vol. 3, 183; it is also noteworthy that, for example, the colloquial Modern Eastern Armenian variant, *ճանապար* <*čanapar*>, which retains only the *p* <*r*> from this consonant cluster, represents yet another possible outcome.

47 For this spelling, see, for example, Acharyan 1926–1935, vol. 3, 182.



and the consonant cluster *rh* is reduced to zero. The passages from the manuscript M 196 cited earlier could be an attestation of this intermediary stage. Another attestation of this stage appears to be the dialectal variant ճամբախի <čambax̄>, in which the final *h* has undergone a sound change to *x*. This could also imply that a dialectal variation involving the alternation between ճանապախի <čanapax̄> and ճանապաքի <čanapax̄> cannot be ruled out.

## 5 Conclusions

The study of linguistic variation in the oldest textual witnesses of Armenian will help better envision the development of the literacy of the earliest stages of Armenian and its contact languages, afford a deeper understanding of language variation in early and modern times, and contribute to the history of text transmission of Armenian and its contact languages. Systematic analysis of this variation might reveal, among other things, more about the linguistic varieties of Old Armenian (fifth to tenth centuries). Reliance on manuscript evidence becomes essential as we endeavour to discern patterns of orthographic consistency. In this context, palimpsest fragments offer valuable insights, since they may date back to earlier times than the oldest dated non-palimpsested manuscripts.

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Emilio Bonfiglio

# Uncovering Lost Armenian Texts: Schøyen Collection MS 575 and the Armenian Translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*

**Abstract:** The codex Schøyen Collection MS 575 is a palimpsest consisting of eighteen parchment folios. The upper layer is in Syriac script, the lower in Armenian. This manuscript is part of an original codex once housed in the library of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai and now dismembered into four parts preserved in four separate locations. The Armenian lower layer is of particular significance, for it preserves the only witness of the unedited Armenian translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*, which predates any extant witness of the original Greek. Dated by Nersēs Akinean to the sixth century, the Armenian layer preserves remarkable palaeographical and codicological features. Together with other *membra disiecta*, it may be considered to be one of the oldest extant complete Armenian manuscripts.

## 1 Introduction

The codex Schøyen Collection MS 575 is an Armeno-Syriac palimpsest that originally belonged to a voluminous codex housed for centuries in the library of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, Egypt. At present, the original Sinaitic codex exists only in the form of *membra disiecta*, that is, in distinct separate parts, which are scattered over four locations. This study focuses on one of these *membra*, namely, the part now preserved in the Schøyen Collection (Oslo and London), and is divided into three parts. The first (Section 2) offers an overview of the three phases of the history of the codex, from the writing of the original Armenian lower layer (Section 2.1), through the process of palimpsestation and the writing of the Syriac upper layer (Section 2.2), to the modern history of the codex, which caused its dismembering and multifarious travels through various private and institutional locations in Central and Northern Europe (Section 2.3). The second part (Section 3) deals with some of the main codicological and palaeographical features of the Schøyen codex that I was able to detect thanks to a new inspection of the manuscript. The final part (Section 4) offers some considerations on the nature of the

text of the Armenian lower layer in relation to its Greek original. The research presented here has been possible thanks to a mission conducted *in situ* for the study of the Schøyen manuscript and the shooting of multispectral images that have greatly enhanced the readability of the lower palimpsested layer (see Section 3). While some of the results presented in this study should be taken as provisional, the analysis of Schøyen Collection MS 575 suggests that this codex is very likely part of one of the very oldest and most voluminous Armenian manuscripts still extant, even if fragmented and in palimpsested form.

## 2 The history of Schøyen Collection MS 575

The history of the eighteen folios that constitute Schøyen Collection MS 575 is tightly connected to the fate of the original, integral codex to which they once belonged. In its general lines, the history of this codex, an Armeno-Syriac palimpsest, has been reconstructed by Paul Géhin on the ground of the data provided by the upper Syriac layer.<sup>1</sup> In what follows, I subdivide the various steps of this history into three distinct, consecutive phases. In doing so, I have integrated some new findings that especially concern the Schøyen folios together with the data already known through Géhin's studies.

### 2.1 The making of the Armenian lower layer

The earliest phase consists in the making of the first original parchment codex, that is, the one transmitting the Armenian translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*. Today this text lies in the *scriptio inferior* of various *membra disiecta*. Being the only known copy of this Armenian text, the manuscript also represents a *codex unicus*. Whether the original manuscript to which Schøyen Collection MS 575 belongs is also the translator's autograph of the Armenian text or simply an *x* copy within a larger manuscript tradition cannot, at present, be determined. Should the latter hypothesis be given weight, considering the antiquity of the codex, it is fair to conclude that this copy could not be too far removed from the original. However, taking into consideration that the later Armenian literary tradition contains no traces of this text as well as that the manuscript under examination travelled eastwards to be palimpsested already by the eighth

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<sup>1</sup> See Géhin 2017a, 146–150 and Géhin 2017b, 279, n. 5.

or ninth century, there is a possibility that these Sinaitic *membra disiecta* indeed represent, as a *codex unicus*, the original manuscript of this Armenian translation of the Chrysostomian work.

Concerning the time, geographical provenance, and cultural milieu of the codex's production and writing, only tentative hypotheses can be made. If one assumes that these *membra disiecta* are the original codex of the Armenian translation and that the Armenian translator(s) worked *in situ*, then the city of Antioch emerges as a good candidate for the most likely place of provenance of the original Greek text as well as of the production of both the Armenian translation and our present Armenian codex.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, other locations could and should be considered too. First of all Constantinople, which was the obvious destination for late antique Armenian scholars in search of reliable Greek manuscripts (in addition to also being the place where John Chrysostom was bishop between 397 and 404),<sup>3</sup> and, second, Jerusalem, which was a crucial place of exchange of Greek, Coptic, Latin, Armenian, Syriac, Georgian, and, at a later stage, Arabic texts and manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> In spite of these hypotheses, however, nothing excludes that both the making of the Armenian translation and the production of the present codex could have been carried out in Greater Armenia, after the translator(s) had acquired a copy of the original Greek text in any of the aforementioned locations. As for the time of production of the Armenian layer, an open range between the sixth and the eight centuries can be considered.

## 2.2 Palimpsestation and the Syriac upper layer

The second phase of the history of the manuscript involves the acquisition of the Armenian codex from the community for which it was first produced and the ensuing technical process of palimpsestation. Following those steps was the act of copying a set of texts in Syriac script and the circulation of this newly rewritten Syriac manuscript within the communities it was written for. Although in this case, too, no material or textual clues have so far been discovered as to the area where the Armenian codex was acquired, Géhin formulated a number of points that I accept as sound, founded on a series of concomitant elements emerging from the analysis of the Syriac layer. These are ‘une origine très orientale pour sa

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<sup>2</sup> For details, see Section 4.1 below.

<sup>3</sup> See Terian 2022, 96–97. For a comprehensive biography of John Chrysostom in English, see Kelly 1995.

<sup>4</sup> On Jerusalem as a multilingual centre of exchange of texts, see Coulie 2016.

production' ('a very eastern origin of production'), in view of the fact that the new manuscript reuses an Armenian manuscript, which Géhin implicitly imagines having been used in Armenia proper (and not, for instance, in Jerusalem); the use of the manuscript within a Melkite monastic community, as attested by the presence of canticles particular to this tradition; and the circulation of the codex in Central Asia, more specifically in Sogdiana, as testified by a Greek diaconal litany which is transliterated in a distinct kind of Syriac alphabet, itself adapted from the Sogdian and Uyghur scripts.<sup>5</sup> According to Géhin, the Syriac layer of the codex should be dated to no later than the tenth century.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3 The modern history of the codex: From Sinai to Europe

At a time that at present cannot be determined, the palimpsested Armeno-Syriac codex travelled from Sogdiana to enter the library of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. While the pre-Sinaitic life of this codex can only be guessed at, we can follow the main lines of its more recent history in far greater detail. Since Géhin has already described the structure of the manuscript and outlined the history of its *membra disiecta*,<sup>7</sup> in what follows I will briefly summarise the fate of the first three *membra* and focus more closely on the Schøyen folios.

Before being dismembered, the original Sinaitic codex consisted of 116 parchment leaves.<sup>8</sup> It was split into unequal parts sometime between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, either before or just after leaving Mount Sinai. Although the precise circumstances of the removal of this codex from St Catherine's remain obscure, it is certain that the codex to which the folios now housed in the Schøyen Collection belong was brought to Germany from Egypt at the turn of the nineteenth century by Friedrich Grote de Leutkirch (1861–1922). A German Protestant clergyman and collector of Oriental manuscripts, Grote acquired the codex during one of his long travels to Egypt and Mount Sinai.<sup>9</sup> Over

5 Géhin 2017b. On Sogdian communities in Central Asia, see Dauvillier 1953; Parry 2012.

6 Géhin 2017a, 149; and, more succinctly, Coulie 2020, 250.

7 For the first codicological reconstruction of the codex and its recent history, see Géhin 2017a, 146–147 and Géhin 2017b, 279, n. 5.

8 Pace Géhin 2017a, 146–150. This has been calculated on the ground of the codicological structure of the 'Syriac codex'. The original Armenian codex may have had a different extent.

9 On Grote, see Hume 1906, 19: 'Dr. Grote, who has an intimate acquaintance with the peninsula'; Albrecht 2013, 269–270, n. 8 (with further references); Géhin 2017a, 8–9; and especially Tarras 2020, who paints a very interesting profile of the activities and methods of Grote in acquiring and selling a great number of fragments originating from St Catherine's Monastery.



the years, Grote had increased his familiarity with the monks and the manuscript treasures of St Catherine's Monastery, especially when he spent the three full winter months of 1892 there. This lengthy stay at St Catherine's allowed Grote to peruse the library's manuscripts at leisure, take photographs of the surroundings of the monastery, and get to know and help the local Bedouin communities. By a fortuitous coincidence, in 1892 Margaret Dunlop Gibson recorded in her journal how she unexpectedly ran into Grote during one of his expeditions, while she and her sister, Agnes Smith Lewis, were camping at the foot of the Naqb el-Hawa pass, located a few kilometres north-west of St Catherine's.<sup>10</sup> Shortly after that meeting, our codex left the monastery and was transported to Germany, where it remained for some years in the private collection of Grote.<sup>11</sup>

Over the years, Grote began selling parts of the codex piecemeal. In 1910, Monsignor Achille Ratti, then prefect of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana and later Pope Pius XI (sed. 1922–1939), bought one folio from an antiquarian in Munich (now Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, A 296 inf., Chabot 5 f. 4).<sup>12</sup>

The bulk of the manuscript (ninety-four folios) is now housed in the Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden as Or. 14236.<sup>13</sup> This part found its first home in the Viennese collection of Anton Wilhelm Neumann (1837–1919)<sup>14</sup> and then was sold at the famous 1922 'Hiersemann 500' auction in Leipzig to the Swiss industrialist Arnold Mettler-Specker (1867–1945),<sup>15</sup> who deposited the manuscript in the Zen-

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**10** See Gibson 1893, 35: 'and there to our great delight we met Dr. Gröte [sic], an Anglo-German missionary to the Bedaween, who had been spending the three months of winter in the convent, and had made good use of the time in exploring its Greek library.'

**11** At this stage it is not possible to tell for certain whether Grote bought the whole manuscript from the monks at the monastery, nor whether the manuscript was dismembered directly by him after acquiring it. While this point deserves further research, Tarras's study of the fate of other Sinaitic *membra disiecta* that were once part of the Grote Collection can be taken as a good case study of methodology for future research (see Tarras 2020, especially his conclusions at 85–86; and also Géhin 2017a, 8–9).

**12** This folio is part of a lot of 350 Syriac leaves bought by Ratti in 1910. They were summarily described by Jean-Baptiste Chabot in 1936 (see Chabot 1936, 39, no. 5). Chabot, however, does not mention the existence of the underlying Armenian text. See also Géhin 2012, 236–239.

**13** See Witkam 2007, 95. The catalogue claims that the content of the lower Armenian text is not yet identified. After having inspected the manuscript *in situ* during fieldwork in January and February 2023, I can now confirm that the lower Armenian writing contains another part of the Armenian translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*.

**14** On Neumann, see Géhin 2017a, 9.

**15** See *Katalog Hiersemann 500* 1922, 19–20, no. 42. On this catalogue, which Anton Baumstark prepared, see Outtier 1975. On Mettler-Specker, see Strothmann 1977.

tralbibliothek of Zurich (as MS Or. 83). In 1974, Mettler-Specker's heirs sold the manuscript to the University of Leiden.

In 1975, twelve fragments, now listed under the shelf mark Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, Syriac NF frg. 12, were accidentally discovered after a fire at the monastery opened up a forgotten storage room packed with manuscript fragments in various languages, the so-called New Finds.<sup>16</sup>

As for the eighteen Schøyen folios, their history is the most complex.<sup>17</sup> From Grote, who died in Regensburg on 20 January 1922, the fragments passed into the hands of Walther Adam (1881–1964), a German industrialist and collector of various kinds of artefacts.<sup>18</sup> Originally from Staßfurt (in Saxony-Anhalt, some 30 km south of Magdeburg), Adam held the office of consul of Czechoslovakia in Magdeburg. In the weeks following April 1945, to save the family collection from invading troops, Adam's nephew, Carl Wilhelm Adam, moved most of the collection from Staßfurt to Goslar, in Lower Saxony. Upon leaving the German Democratic Republic in the 1950s, Walther Adam too moved to Goslar, where from 1962 the family collection was open to the public as Kulturhistorische Sammlung zur deutschen und europäischen Geschichte (Sammlung Adam).<sup>19</sup> The folios that are now in the Schøyen Collection were kept there as two separate items of nine folios each, under the shelf marks S 11 and S 13.<sup>20</sup> Upon Walther Adam's death, Carl Wilhelm Adam took over the management of the collection, which was loaned to the city of Goslar and housed in the Gemeindehof. After the buildings that hosted the collection were closed in 1979, the largest part of the Adam Collection was sold in 1980 at the auction house Helmut Tenner, in Heidelberg. The Sinaitic folios, however, were sold by a descendant of the family only seven years later, on 1 June 1987, at the auction house Franz Dörling, in Hamburg (now belonging to Ketterer Kunst auction house), under lot no. 29. For two years, the folios remained in Hamburg in the hands of the antiquarian bookseller Wolfgang K. Görigk (1937–2021),

<sup>16</sup> On these Sinaitic so-called New Finds, see Brock 1995, 9–11, 163–170. For an overview of the palimpsests preserved on Mount Sinai, see Rapp et al. 2023 (with further references).

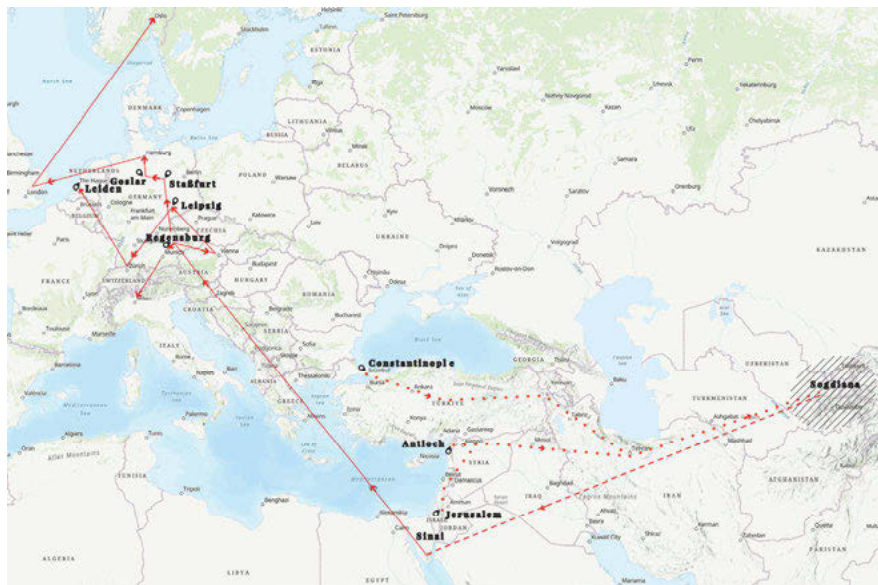
<sup>17</sup> The various steps are outlined on the website of the Schøyen Collection: <<https://www.schoyen-collection.com/patristic-literature-collection/ms-575>> (accessed on 24 November 2023). See also Géhin 2017b, 279, n. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Géhin (2006, 24) suggests that the selling and following dispersion of Grote's collection of Sinaitic fragments may have started in 1921.

<sup>19</sup> See Wiehle 2001 (with further references).

<sup>20</sup> They appear as such both in Aßfalg and Molitor 1962, XII (where, for the Armenian layer, the authors propose a date no later than the year 700: 'der armenische Text ist spätestens um etwa 700, wenn nicht schon früher, geschrieben worden'), and 117–121, nos 33–34; and in Aßfalg 1963, 211–214, nos 109–110.

until they were acquired, in 1989, by the London-based art dealer Sam Fogg. In the last leg of this journey, the Sinaitic folios were finally bought by Dr Martin Schøyen and added to the Schøyen Collection in Oslo and London.<sup>21</sup>



**Fig. 1:** Map with both certain and hypothetical movements and locations of Schøyen Collection MS 575. Dotted lines indicate travels in Late Antiquity; dashed lines, in the medieval and early modern times; solid lines, after Grote's time on Mount Sinai (after 1892).

### 3 Schøyen Collection MS 575: Codicological and palaeographical features of the Armenian lower layer

Schøyen Collection MS 575 is preserved in Schøyen's private collection, located in Oslo and London. The codex is also known as Codex Armenicus Rescriptus, which references the fact that it is a palimpsest with the lower layer written in Armenian

<sup>21</sup> The Schøyen Collection website does not give the date of acquisition.

script.<sup>22</sup> The current size of its leaves is approximately 230 × 170 mm. It consists of eighteen folios, all palimpsested throughout, the *scriptio inferior* being in Armenian (*erkat'agir*) and the *superior* in Syriac (*estrangela*). The codex is homogeneous and has been dated to no later than the tenth century for the Syriac layer<sup>23</sup> and the sixth or seventh century for the Armenian one.<sup>24</sup> As for its origin, there is no certainty: as far as the Syriac layer is concerned, it has been proposed that the manuscript circulated in Sogdiana in the tenth century (see Section 2.2); regarding the Armenian layer, no hypothesis has hitherto been proposed.<sup>25</sup>

The writing support consists of parchment throughout. The ink of the Armenian lower layer, having been erased (through washing, scraping, or both, though not homogeneously), now appears light brown, with no traces of other colours (see Fig. 2). The text of the Syriac layer is written in black ink, with some rubrications and decorations executed in red. No chemical analysis has been conducted on the inks of either layer.

Taking into consideration the age and reuse of the folios, the manuscript presents itself in acceptable, yet fragile, condition. The external and lower margins of every folio have been consumed by the mere age of the artefact, damp, general human usage through the centuries, and rodents. The fact that all folios and bifolios of this manuscript are loose makes this item particularly susceptible to possible further damage.

Schøyen Collection MS 575 was first catalogued by Julius Aßfalg (1919–2001) when the codex was still preserved in Goslar, in the collection of Walter Adam.<sup>26</sup> Aßfalg described the eighteen folios as two separate items of nine folios each, kept under the shelf marks S 11 and S 13. The folios of each item were numbered from 1 to 9 and received an identical short codicological description. That the two sets of folios were actually part of the same manuscript was later demonstrated by Paul Géhin, who was able to prove not only that Schøyen Collection MS 575 is part of an originally Sinaitic manuscript now existing in *membra disiecta* but also that the sequence of folios of manuscripts S 11 and S 13 as provided in Aßfalg's catalogue was faulty. Table 1 shows the sequence described by Aßfalg next to Géhin's correct reconstruction and vice versa.

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22 For the online page of the manuscript, see <<https://www.schoyencollection.com/patristic-literature-collection/ms-575>> (accessed on 24 November 2023).

23 See Géhin 2017a, 146.

24 Akinean 1917–1918, 29–32; Akinean 1922; Aßfalg and Molitor 1962, XII.

25 See Sections 2.2 and 2.1, respectively.

26 See Aßfalg and Molitor 1962, 117–121, nos 33–34; and Aßfalg 1963, 211–214, nos 109–110.

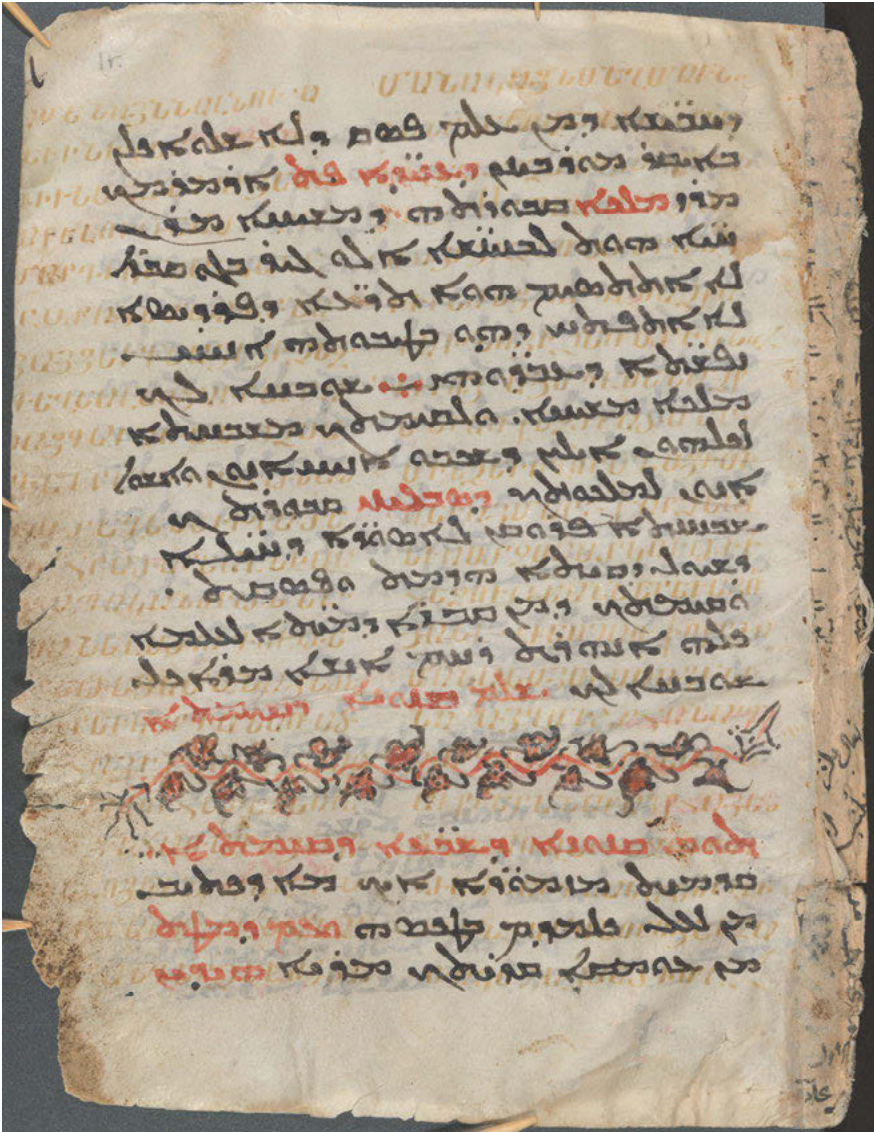


Fig. 2: Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. a\_1r.

Kept in a box at the Schøyen Collection, the eighteen folios of MS 575 now follow neither Aßfalg's nor Géhin's sequence. During a mission in Norway that took place from 31 October to 3 November 2022 for the purpose of taking multispec-

tral images of the manuscript,<sup>27</sup> I decided to photograph the Schøyen folios according to the sequence we found in the box. To get around the problem of the double numbering, for the sake of the creation of metadata I opted for an alphabetical sequence that also includes the number found on each folio.<sup>28</sup> Table 2 shows the correspondences between my metadata and the previous numberings.

**Table 1:** Folio numbers according to Aßfalg and Géhin.

<b>Aßfalg no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b>	<b>Géhin</b>		
fol. 1	fol. 10	<b>Géhin</b>	<b>Aßfalg</b>
fol. 2	fol. 11	fol. 1	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 1
fol. 3	fol. 3	fol. 2	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 2
fol. 4	fol. 4	fol. 3	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 3
fol. 5	fol. 5	fol. 4	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 4
fol. 6	fol. 6	fol. 5	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 5
fol. 7	fol. 7	fol. 6	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 6
fol. 8	fol. 8	fol. 7	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 7
fol. 9	fol. 9	fol. 8	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 8
		fol. 9	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 9
		fol. 10	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 1
		fol. 11	<b>no. 33 / 109 (S 11)</b> fol. 2
		fol. 12	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 3
		fol. 13	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 4
		fol. 14	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 5
		fol. 15	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 6
		fol. 16	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 7
		fol. 17	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 8
		fol. 18	<b>no. 34 / 110 (S 13)</b> fol. 9

<sup>27</sup> The photographs were shot by Ivan Shevchuk, with the assistance of Hasmik Sargsyan and myself.

<sup>28</sup> These numbers have been applied in pencil. It is not possible to determine when and by whom the numbers were applied.

**Table 2:** Correspondences of folio numbers according to Bonfiglio, Géhin, and Aßfalg.

Bonfiglio	Géhin	Aßfalg
a_1	fol. 10	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 1
b_2	fol. 11	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 2
c_4	fol. 13	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 4
d_2	fol. 2	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 2
e_3	fol. 12	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 3
f_1	fol. 1	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 1
g_3	fol. 3	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 3
h_4	fol. 4	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 4
i_5	fol. 5	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 5
j_6	fol. 6	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 6
k_7	fol. 7	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 7
l_8	fol. 8	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 8
m_9	fol. 9	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 9
n_6	fol. 15	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 6
o_7	fol. 16	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 7
p_8	fol. 17	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 8
q_9	fol. 18	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 9
r_5	fol. 14	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 5

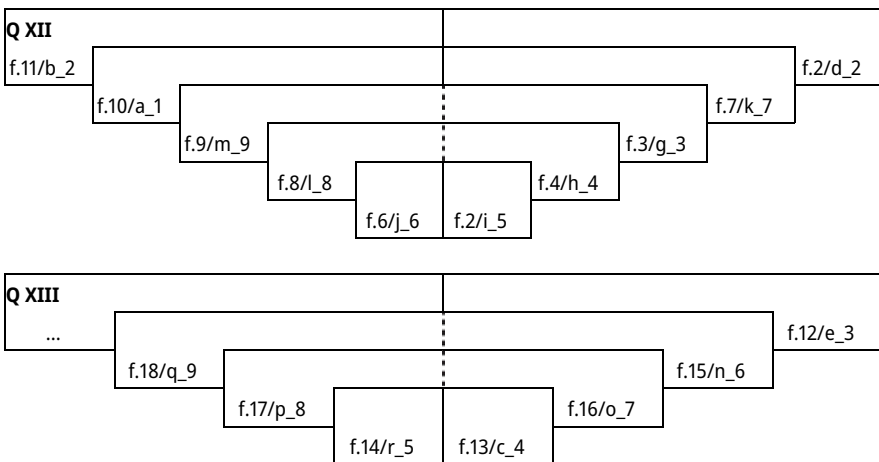
The reconstruction of the quires of the original codex to which the Schøyen folios belong had already been done by Géhin.<sup>29</sup> Table 3 shows the distribution of the quires that contain the Schøyen folios.

Leaving aside Géhin's fol. 1 (i.e. my f\_1), which is the last folio of quire XI, Table 4 shows the reconstructed quires with the additional specification of the current state of bifolios and loose folios.

<sup>29</sup> Géhin 2017a, 148–149.

**Table 3:** Sequence of quires and folios as established by Géhin with corresponding folio numbers according to Bonfiglio and Aßfalg.

Géhin	Bonfiglio	Aßfalg
<b>Q XI</b>		
fol. 1	f_1	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 1
<b>Q XII</b>		
fol. 2	d_2	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 2
fol. 7	k_7	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fol. 7
fols 3–6	g_3–h_4–i_5–j_6	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fols 3–6
fols 8–11	l_8–m_9–a_1–b_2	no. 33 / 109 (S 11) fols 8–9, 1–2
<b>Q XIII</b>		
fol. 12	e_3	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fol. 3
fols 15–16	n_6–o_7	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fols 6–7
fols 13–14	c_4–r_5	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fols 4–5
fols 17–18	p_8–q_9	no. 34 / 110 (S 13) fols 8–9

**Table 4:** Visual reconstruction of quires XII and XIII and respective folios according to the numbering of Géhin and Bonfiglio.

The layout of the Syriac upper layer consists of a full page of 19 to 23 lines, forming a writing surface area of approximately 130 × 180 mm, whereas the Armenian lower layer is in two columns of 20 to 25 lines, with a surface area of approximate-



ly 70 × 190 mm per column. The Syriac writing is superimposed on the layout of the former Armenian layer without any rotation of the page.

While the Syriac text is interspersed with some decorations on (Géhin's) fols 2<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>r</sup>, 9<sup>r</sup>, 10<sup>r</sup>, 14<sup>r</sup>, and 15<sup>v</sup>, the Armenian text has none.

The Schøyen folios have no binding. Some of the folios and bifolios, however, present a strip of paper glued along the spine. Almost every strip exhibits texts in Arabic script and appears to be a repair of some sort made out of recycled material. These strips were probably applied in the nineteenth century, if not earlier. At any rate, they must have been attached before the manuscript reached Europe.

As far as the Armenian lower layer is concerned, the Schøyen folios present no colophon, no marks of ownership, and no signs of interventions by later editors or readers, as is also the case for the Syriac layer.

From the palaeographical side, the Armenian lower layer presents a remarkable case of *scriptio continua*, in the sense that the text of the Armenian translation runs continually without any breaks (with the exception of punctuation marks) even when fundamental textual units come to an end. This can be seen, for instance, on folio b<sub>2</sub><sup>va</sup>, where no extra space is to be found between the end of the commentary on Psalm 123 and the beginning of the next one on Psalm 124 (left column, line 11): [ՅԱԻԻՐԵՆԻՅԱՐԷՆ: ՈՅՐՅՈՒՍԱՆ (yawitenic', amēn. Oyk' yowsan; 'for ever, amen. Those who hope'; see Fig. 3).

Each line of the Armenian text contains on average 15 to 18 letters. The number of letters increases to up to 21 in the presence of doxologies, due to the usage of smaller characters (see Fig. 3, col. a, lines 5–11). The difference between the two types of characters is, however, only in size and not in the morphology of the script. In addition to that, an even smaller type of character is sometimes employed at the end of a line to accommodate one or two letters of an ending or truncated word. These 'extra' letters can be written above the final letter of a line, next to it, or below it (see Fig. 3, col. a, lines 8, 9, 12, 25 and Fig. 4, lines 1, 6, 7). Smaller characters are also used for interlinear corrections or additions (see Figs 5 and 9).

Throughout the text, abbreviations are used only for four words, which are all *nomina sacra*. These are ՅԻՍՈՒՍ, ԲՐԻՍՏՈՍ, ԴԵՐ, and ԱՍՏՈՒԱԾ (Yisows, Kristus, Tēr, and Astowac; 'Jesus', 'Christ', 'Lord', and 'God'), always signalled by a horizontal stroke above the first and the last letter of the word (see Fig. 6, lines 1–2 and Fig. 7, line 4).

The script is a consistent *erkat'agir* or Armenian majuscule, very slightly slanted towards the right. There are no decorations or decorative letters, nor ligatures. Occasionally, however, a character larger than usual is employed to mark the beginning of a text or a biblical quotation (but not in a consistent way; see Fig. 7).

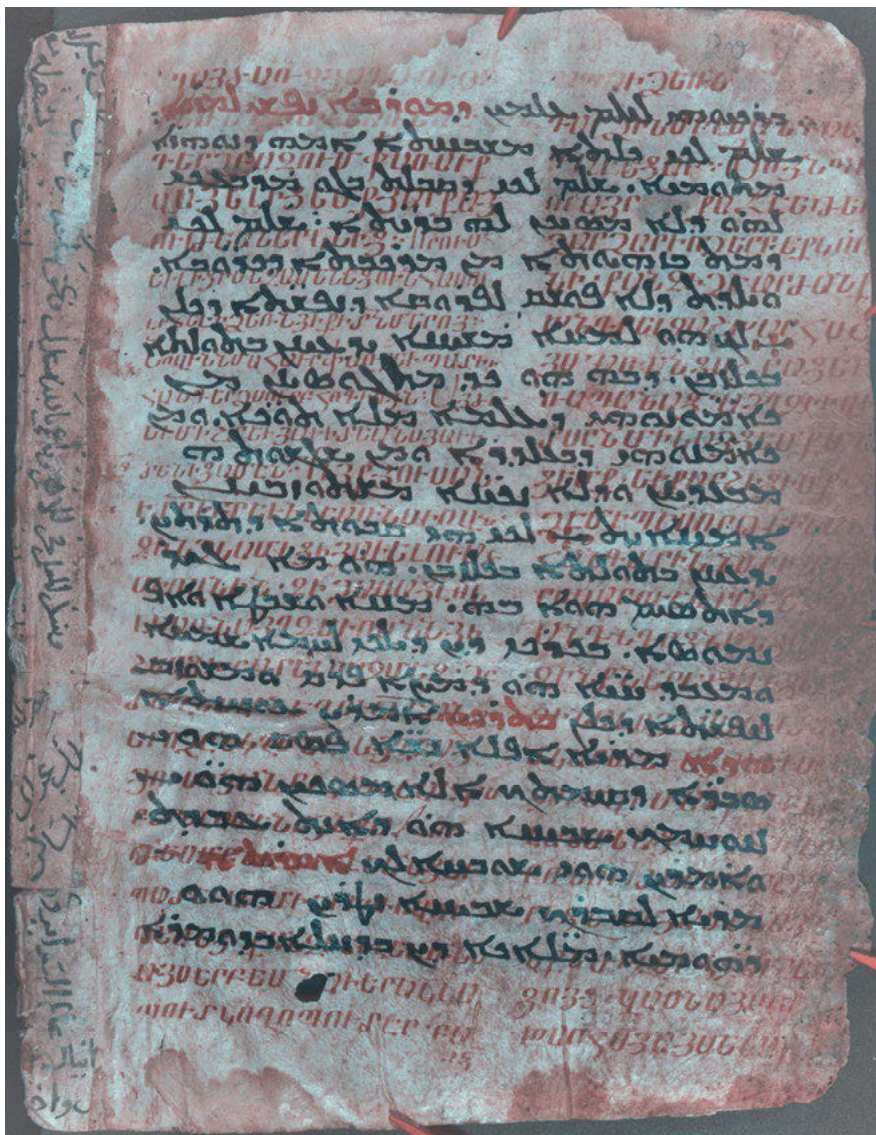
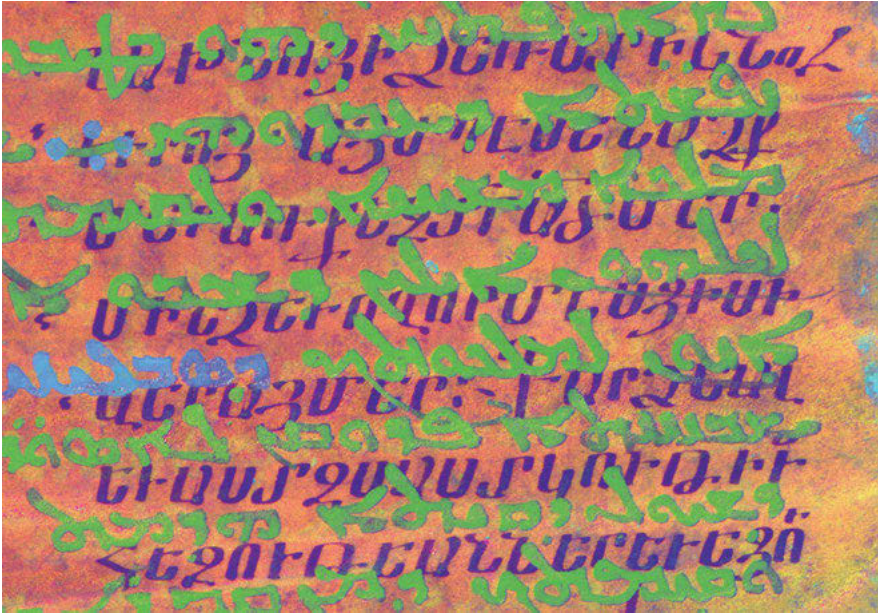
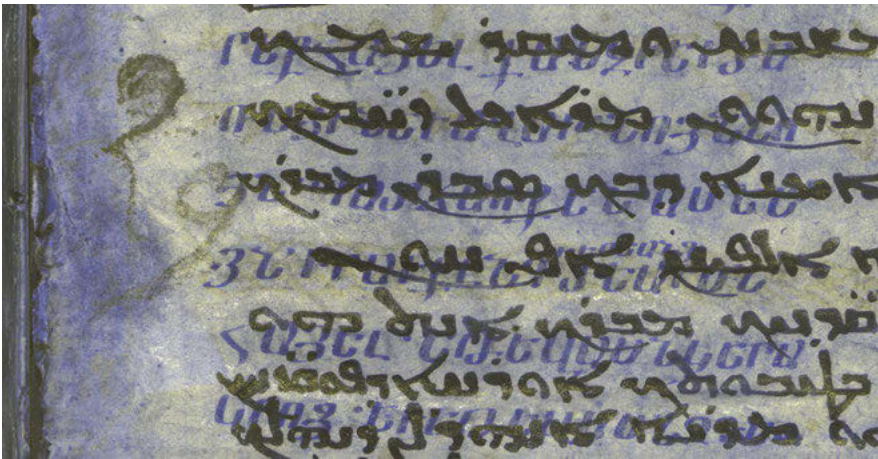


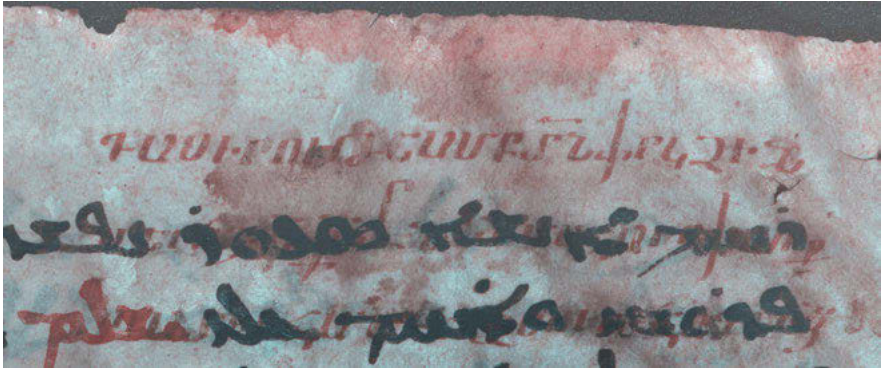
Fig. 3: Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. b\_2" (red-cyan pseudo-colour image based on a UV and a red image, 365/630 nm).



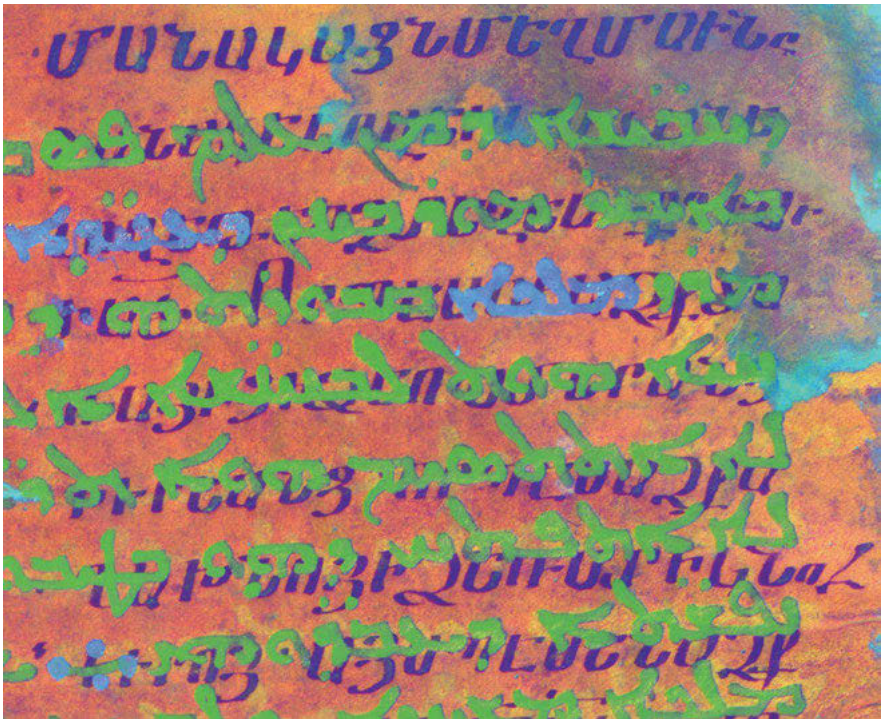
**Fig. 4:** Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. a\_1<sup>r</sup> (detail of a multispectral pseudo-colour image of the middle of the right column of the folio: *n.b.* the smaller letters at the end of lines 1, 6, 7).



**Fig. 5:** Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. k\_7<sup>v</sup> (detail of a blue-yellow pseudo-colour image based on a UV and a red image (365/630 nm) of the middle of the left column of the folio: *n.b.* the interlinear insertion of **ԻԻԵԱՆՅ** (*iwreanc*, ‘their’) in smaller letters).

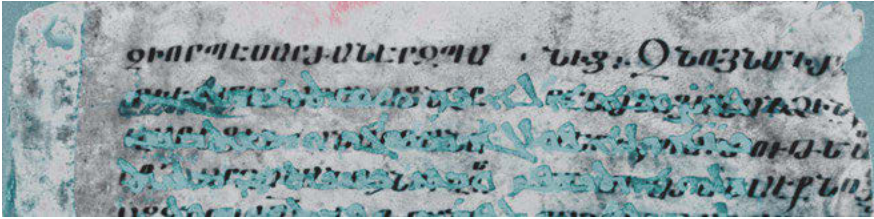


**Fig. 6:** Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. f\_1' (detail of a red-cyan pseudo-colour image based on a UV and a red image (365/630 nm) of the upper-right column of the folio: *n.b.* the abbreviations for ܬ(ܬܐܝ)ܢ (t(ear)n, 'of the Lord') in l. 1 and for ܐ(ܝܫܘܫ)ܝ (y(isows)i, 'of Jesus') and ܦ(ܪܝܫܬܘܫ)ܝ (k'(ristos)i, 'of Christ') in l. 2).



**Fig. 7:** Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. a\_1' (detail of a multispectral pseudo-colour image of the upper-right column of the folio: *n.b.* the larger initial letter in ܐܪܦܝܫ (Orpēs, 'As') in l. 4).

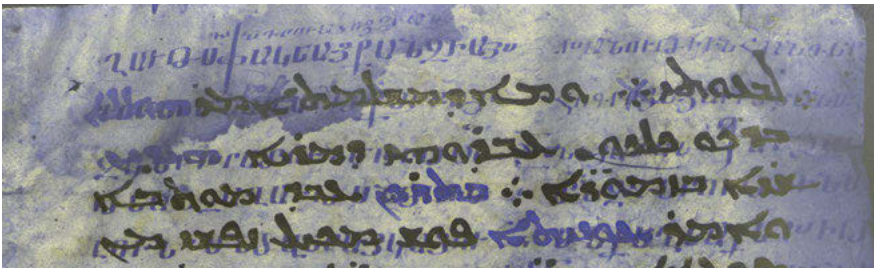
The scribe of the manuscript employs two kinds of punctuation marks. The first is a simple dot separating two clauses that is usually placed at middle height between the two virtual lines that delimit the body of the letters (see Fig. 3, col. a, line 14). The second consists of three dots arranged as the apexes of a triangle and is employed to mark the end of a larger textual unit (see Fig. 8, col. b, line 1).



**Fig. 8:** Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. f\_1<sup>v</sup> (detail of a multispectral pseudo-colour image of the upper part of the folio: *n.b.* the punctuation mark on the first line of col. b, which ends the biblical quotation marked on the left side of the column and followed by a larger letter).

Biblical quotations are always marked by means of special strokes placed along the left margin of the column. These strokes can appear along several lines, as they accompany the full length of the quotation (see Fig. 7, lines 4–8).

Finally, paratextual material in *erkat'agir* is occasionally found to mark the number of a psalm being commented upon at the beginning of each commentary (see Fig. 9). This material is not always accurate and appears to have been added next to the main text only in a second stage, probably by a different hand. As is usual in Armenian, the numbering system of the psalms follows that of the Greek tradition, not the Hebrew one.



**Fig. 9:** Schøyen Collection MS 575, fol. h\_4<sup>v</sup> (detail of a blue-yellow pseudo-colour image based on a UV and a red image (365/630 nm) of the upper part of the folio: *n.b.* the indication of the number of Psalm 125 (ՃԻԵ; '125') on the left side of col. b, line 3).

## 4 The text of the Armenian lower layer: John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*

The text transmitted in the lower layer of Schøyen Collection MS 575 is the Armenian translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms* (CPG 4413). Although Nersēs Akinean (1883–1963) had already identified this text as early as 1917, his findings referred only to the part of the original Sinaitic codex that eventually ended up in the University Library of Leiden.<sup>30</sup> As far as the Schøyen folios are concerned, the identification of the Armenian layer with the aforementioned commentary was made for the first time by Julius Aßfalg and Josef Molitor in their 1962 catalogue.<sup>31</sup> Before delving into the main features of this translation, I first provide an overview of the original Greek text and its medieval translations in the following two paragraphs.

### 4.1 The original Greek text

Next to the sixty-seven homilies of John's *Commentary on Genesis* (CPG 4409),<sup>32</sup> the so-called *Commentary on the Psalms* (CPG 4413) represents the second largest Chrysostomian exegetical work on any book of the Old Testament. Differently from the *Homiliae in Genesim*, however, the *Enarrationes in psalmos* do not cover the entire Book of Psalms. Indeed, the extant medieval manuscript tradition has preserved the ἐρμηνεῖαι (i.e. 'interpretations', to follow a term used by Photios)<sup>33</sup> of only 58 of the 150 psalms. These interpretations are grouped and transmitted into four distinct clusters, which include the commentaries on Psalms 4–12 [13] (CPG 4413.1); 43 [44]–49 [50] (CPG 4413.3); 108 [109]–117 [118] (CPG 4413.5); and 119 [120]–150 (CPG 4413.6).<sup>34</sup> Next to these pieces is a further exegetical item on specific passages of Psalm 41 [42] (CPG 4413.2), as well as a number of fragments on Psalms 103 [104]–106 [107] (CPG 4413.4).<sup>35</sup>

30 Akinean 1917–1918.

31 Aßfalg and Molitor 1962, 117–121, nos 34–33, where the authors technically identify John's text only for manuscript S 11, even if at page XII they implicitly consider the two fragments as belonging to a same unit.

32 *Homiliae 1–67 in Genesim*: see CPG 4409; and *Supplementum*, 275–276, no. 4409.

33 Photios, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 174 (ed. Henry 1959–1991, vol. 2, 167–170).

34 For a convenient overview, see CPG 4413; *Supplementum*, 277, no. 4409. A comprehensive introduction to the whole text is found in Hill 1998–1999, vol. 1, 1–41.

35 See Devreesse 1970, 241.

Concerning matters of authenticity, there is no scholarly consensus on the Chrysostomian paternity of some of these texts.<sup>36</sup> Equally not fully answered are questions concerning the material circumstances of composition of these interpretations, even though most scholars are inclined to assign them to the Antiochene period of John's life (386–397). As for the genre of composition, the stylistic and structural analysis of the *Commentary on the Psalms* offers contradictory information on whether John's interpretations should be read as homilies, that is, pieces actually composed for and delivered in front of a real audience, or as tracts, that is, pieces to be read perhaps for pedagogical purposes either privately or within a small circle of people – like, for instance, those attending Antioch's *didaskaleion*.<sup>37</sup> Finally, also not yet clarified is whether the four clusters of interpretations consist of complete series, that is, of texts to be read or heard sequentially as if enchainned to one another, or whether each cluster consists of items placed next to each other only because of their content and following a later editorial intention of making a continuous commentary.<sup>38</sup>

The many uncertainties surrounding John's *Commentary on the Psalms* reflect the current state of affairs surrounding this large exegetical work. Apart from some new complete translations,<sup>39</sup> and in spite of Johannes Quasten's qualification of the *In psalmos* as 'by far the best of [John's] homilies on the books of the Old Testament',<sup>40</sup> scholarly research has focused primarily on exegetical or specific thematic issues,<sup>41</sup> the identification of fragments and *inedita*,<sup>42</sup> and discussion of

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**36** This is the case, for instance, of the probably spurious *In psalmum 50 homilia 1* (CPG 4544), for which see Voicu 2017 and 2018, as well as of the commentary *In psalmum 41*, for which see de Aldama 1965, 194, no. 520.

**37** See Haidacher 1906; Haidacher 1907; Rondeau 1982, 127; Hill 1998.

**38** Indeed, over the past few decades, opinions on the original extent of John's *Commentary on the Psalms* shifted from the certainty of Chrysostomus Baur, who firmly believed in the existence of an original full commentary, to the more cautious approach of Laurence Brottier, who states, 'Nous pouvons donc considérer au moins comme probable l'existence d'un commentaire continu du psautier, dont il nous reste plusieurs tranches'. See, respectively, Baur 1908 and Brottier 1994, 167–168.

**39** Excluding the case of complete translations of the writings of John Chrysostom as, for instance, those in French or modern Greek, see at least Enache 2011, for Rumanian; and Hill 1998–1999; Hill 2003, and Hill 2004, for English.

**40** Quasten 1983, 435.

**41** See, for instance, Asensio 1982; Simmons 1993; Hill 2001; Trisoglio 2005; Stander 2013; Rémy 2015; Buchinger 2016; Ghormley 2017 (all with further references).

**42** See, *passim*, Malingrey 1964; Malingrey 1987; Vian 1989; Vian 1991; Curti 2003.

*pseudo-Chrysostomica*.<sup>43</sup> Contrary to that, the philological aspects of the *Commentary*, that is, the nature and quality of the currently available printed Greek text as well as the history of the manuscript tradition, remain issues that are still waiting to be tackled.<sup>44</sup>

The Greek text that is currently in use is the one prepared by Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741) for his edition of John Chrysostom's *Opera omnia*, published first in 1718–1738 and reprinted, as far as our text is concerned, in 1862 in *PG* 55, cols 39–498. The extent and ramifications of the manuscript tradition of John's *Commentary on the Psalms* is yet to be studied. In spite of that, even a cursory investigation of the listed extant manuscripts reveals an interesting picture.<sup>45</sup>

The cluster *CPG* 4413.1 (Ps. 4–12) is transmitted by forty-three manuscripts. The oldest witnesses, shown in Table 5, are from the tenth century, while the oldest codex containing the whole cluster dates from the eleventh century.

The cluster *CPG* 4413.3 (Ps. 43–49) is transmitted by twenty-two manuscripts. The oldest witnesses were copied in the eleventh century, and the oldest codex containing the whole cluster also dates from the eleventh century (see Table 6).

The cluster *CPG* 4413.5 (Ps. 108–117) is transmitted by fifteen manuscripts, the four oldest ones copied in the eleventh century (see Table 7).

Finally, the cluster *CPG* 4413.6 (Ps. 119–150) is transmitted by fifty-one manuscripts, the oldest ones copied in the tenth century (see Table 8).

**Table 5:** List of the oldest witnesses of *CPG* 4413.1.

Date	Shelf Mark	Folios
10th c.	Mt Athos, Monē Batopediou, 550	4 <sup>r</sup> –31 <sup>r</sup> ( <i>excerpta</i> )
10th c.	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 654	18 <sup>r</sup> –33 <sup>r</sup> (Ps. 4); 47 <sup>v</sup> –54 <sup>v</sup> (Ps. 5); 55 <sup>r</sup> –61 <sup>v</sup> (Ps. 6); 71 <sup>v</sup> –89 <sup>v</sup> (Ps. 7); 98 <sup>v</sup> –108 <sup>v</sup> (Ps. 8)
10th c.	Patmos, Monē tou Hagiou Iōannou tou Theologou, 161	79 <sup>r</sup> –98 <sup>v</sup> ; 103 <sup>v</sup> –155 <sup>r</sup> (Ps. 4–8)
11th c.	Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana, plut. D. XXVIII.2 (36)	23 <sup>r</sup> –100 <sup>v</sup> ; 148 <sup>r</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See Voicu 2017, 325–329 and Voicu 2018, 245–246, for *In psalmum 50 homilia 1* (*CPG* 4544); Datema and Allen 1986 and Kim 2013, 243, for *In psalmum 92* (*CPG* 4548); Marianelli 2008, for *In psalmum 22* (*CPL* 915).

<sup>44</sup> See Rondeau 1969 for a short note on the Greek indirect tradition.

<sup>45</sup> The data that follow were put together through the Pinakes search engine, which is available through the website of the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes at <<https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>> (accessed on 22 October 2023).



**Table 6:** List of the oldest witnesses of *CPG* 4413.3.

Date	Shelf Mark	Folios
a. 1027	Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana, plut. D. XXVIII.2 (36)	148 <sup>r</sup> –199 <sup>v</sup>
a. 1027	Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana, plut. D. XXVIII.3 (37)	9 <sup>r</sup> –15 <sup>r</sup> (Ps. 49)
11th c.	Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.gr. 524	178 <sup>v</sup> –181 <sup>v</sup>
11th c.	Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.gr. 525	163 <sup>v</sup> –214 <sup>r</sup>
11th c.	Mt Athos, Monē Ibērōn, 73 (Lambros 4193)	76 <sup>v</sup> –134 <sup>v*</sup>
11th c.	Messina, Biblioteca Regionale Universitaria ‘Giacomo Longo’, S. S. Salvatore 33	62 <sup>r</sup> –112 <sup>r</sup>
11th c.	Paris, Bibliothèq̄ue nationale de France, grec 655	1 <sup>v</sup> –102 <sup>v</sup>
11th c.	Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 111 (coll. 813)	63 <sup>r</sup> –103 <sup>r</sup> ; 104 <sup>r</sup> –113 <sup>v</sup>
11th c.	Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 112 (coll. 468)	112 <sup>v</sup> –201 <sup>r</sup>
11th c.	Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 562 (coll. 592)	87 <sup>v</sup> –151 <sup>v</sup>

**Table 7:** List of the oldest witnesses of *CPG* 4413.5.

Date	Shelf Mark	Folios
a. 1027	Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana, plut. D. XXVIII.3 (37)	15 <sup>r</sup> –74 <sup>v</sup>
11th c.	Mt Athos, Monē Ibērōn, 73 (Lambros 4193)	134 <sup>v</sup> –197 <sup>r*</sup>
11th c.	Paris, Bibliothèq̄ue nationale de France, grec 655 <sup>46</sup>	206 <sup>r</sup> –263 <sup>r</sup> and 164 <sup>bis</sup> <sup>r</sup> –200 <sup>bis</sup> <sup>r</sup>
11th c.	Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 562 (coll. 592)	151 <sup>v</sup> –208 <sup>v</sup>

**Table 8:** List of the oldest witnesses of *CPG* 4413.6.

Date	Shelf Mark	Folios
10th c.	Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ott.gr. 14	1 <sup>r</sup> –2 <sup>r</sup> ( <i>expositio</i> in Ps. 150 <i>tantum</i> )
970	Mt Athos, Monē Megistēs Lauras, B 37 (Eustratiades 157)	235 <sup>r</sup> –256 <sup>r*</sup>
10th c.	Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Fragm. 20 Exp. 2	3 <sup>r</sup> –7 <sup>v</sup> (in Ps. 140 <i>fragmenta duo</i> )
10th c.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Cromwell 20	p. 353, ll. 10–355, l. 7 ( <i>expositio</i> in Ps. 124)
10th c.	Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 569 (coll. 332)	1 <sup>r</sup> ( <i>excerptum</i> in Ps. 140)

<sup>46</sup> For the foliation of this manuscript, see Augustin and Sautel 2011, 119–120.

Although these data are provisional (they are exclusively taken from the Pinakes database and their content and exactness of dating ought to be taken with caution) and other earlier manuscripts may eventually come to light, nonetheless two points seem to be clear. The first is that the oldest witnesses date to either the tenth century (for the cluster *In psalmos 119–150*) or the eleventh (for all the remaining clusters). The second is that only very few manuscripts present a whole cluster of commentaries at every given point of the tradition. These two facts must be kept in mind when assessing the philological value of the Armenian translation of John's *Commentary on the Psalms*, which antedates any of the extant Greek manuscripts by centuries.

## 4.2 The medieval translations

Next to the Greek text and besides the Armenian translation, which is discussed in the next subsection, parts of John's *Commentary on the Psalms* were also translated into other Christian languages from the fifth century onwards.

The interpretations *In psalmum 122* and *In psalmum 150* were rendered into Latin probably already by the first quarter of the fifth century.<sup>47</sup> The two translations are found within a Latin collection of ascetical texts that contains both original and pseudo-Chrysostomian items.<sup>48</sup> Some of the Latin translations of this collection, including those on Psalm 122 [123] and on Psalm 150, are cautiously attributed to a certain Anianus of Celeda, an enigmatic figure (a semi-Pelagian deacon?) who was also responsible for the Latin rendering of other major Chrysostomian works, such as, for instance, the first twenty-five homilies of the *Commentary on Matthew* (CPG 4424).<sup>49</sup>

On the Oriental side, one manuscript preserved in the Vatican Library, Vat.copt. 57, contains fragments of a Coptic translation of *In psalmum 48* on fols 132<sup>r</sup>–136<sup>v</sup>.<sup>50</sup> The interpretation of *In psalmum 100* is known to exist in Syriac as well,<sup>51</sup> while in Arabic we find translations of *In psalmum 6* and *In psalmum 46*.<sup>52</sup>

No critical edition or studies of reference are available for any of the aforementioned translations.

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<sup>47</sup> See Wilmart 1918, 309–310, nos 3 and 4.

<sup>48</sup> See Wenk 1988, especially 9–10.

<sup>49</sup> See Bonfiglio 2009.

<sup>50</sup> See CPG 4413.

<sup>51</sup> See Sauguet 1986, 140, no. 40.

<sup>52</sup> See *Supplementum*, 277, no. 4413; Samir 1977, 195. A recent overview of the Arabic reception of John Chrysostom is provided in Bonfiglio and Stutz 2022 (with further references).

### 4.3 The Armenian text

The Schøyen folios contain the Armenian translation of John's *Commentary* for Psalms 119 to 126. The style of this translation is comparable to those preceding the so-called Hellenophile translations,<sup>53</sup> which are generally dated to the fifth century. Indeed, the Armenian translation tends to adhere more to the sense of the Greek original text than to a slavishly reproduced identical wording. For instance, Greek verbs that contain preverbs are always rendered by a simple Armenian verb with no preverb. The following examples may suffice: ἀναμνήσκω ('recall to mind') – Ի ՅԻՇԱՏԱԿ ԳԱՄ (i yišataks gam, 'come back to mind'); ἀποπηδάω ('depart from') – ՎԱԶԵՄ (vazem, 'trespass'); διαλάμπω ('shine') – ՓԵՅԼԵՄ (p'aylem, 'shine'); διορθόω ('correct') – ՈՒՂԻՄ (owllem, 'correct'); ἐκκρεμάννυμι ('hang') – ԿԱԽԵԱԼԵՄ (kaxeal em, 'hang'); καθίσταμαι ('stand, become quiet, calm') – ՆՈՒՎՃԵՄ + ՈՒՂԻՄ (nowaçem + owllem, 'faint, languish, become dim + correct'); καταστρέφω ('destroy') – ԱՄԵՐԵՄ (awerem, 'destroy'); κατοικέω ('dwell') – ԲՆԱԿԵՄ (bnakem, 'dwell'); προσηλόω ('nail') – ԲԵՒԵՈՒՄ (bewerem, 'nail').

One of the most peculiar features of the Armenian text is the way in which the biblical quotations have been translated. Studies on the biblical text used by John Chrysostom in his *Commentaries* on the Old Testament (especially those on the Books of Psalms and Job) have highlighted the difficulty of determining whether John adopted either the 'Lucianic' or the 'Antiochene' recension of the books of the Old Testament.<sup>54</sup> The reasons given for this uncertainty have to do with John's usual custom of citing the biblical text by heart, which has the inevitable consequence of purposefully modifying the details of the biblical wording in order to suit the theme John was preaching on. A full assessment of the Armenian translation of the biblical quotations requires an investigation in its own right and will be dealt with in a separate study.

At any rate, apart from the issue concerning which biblical recension John used, a distinctive characteristic of certain Chrysostomian exegetical homilies is the insertion of many hexaplaric variants. This is also the case in the *Commentary on the Psalms*, where different variant readings of the same passage are usually introduced by the word ἕτερος or ἄλλος.<sup>55</sup> In contrast to the Greek text, however, the passages of the Armenian translation that I have been able to examine so far do not contain any hexaplaric material. The following example taken from the

<sup>53</sup> On the problematic usage of this term and its limits, see Tinti 2016.

<sup>54</sup> See Cimosà 2006 (esp. 122–124), with further references.

<sup>55</sup> Similarly to Latin *alter* and *alius*, ἕτερος means 'other (than something else)', thus stressing difference, while ἄλλος is 'other (out of many)', stressing similarity. See van Emde Boas et al. 2019, 359.

commentary on Psalm 122 [123] may suffice. In the original Greek, the biblical text of Psalm 122 [123] verse 4 is given in two versions, together with two more variant readings:

Ἐπιπλεῖον ἐπλήσθη ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν. Τὸ ὄνειδος τοῖς εὐθηνούσι, καὶ ἡ ἐξουδένωσις τοῖς ὑπερηφάνοις. Ἐτερος, Πολλῶν ἐχορτάσθη ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν, ἐπιπλαούντων τῶν εὐθηνούντων, ἐξευτελιζόντων τῶν ὑπερηφάνων. Ἄλλος, Τοῦ μυκτηρισμοῦ τῶν ὑπερφερῶν. Ἄλλος, Ἐξουδενώσεως αὐτῶν εὐθηνούντων.<sup>56</sup>

Differing from the Greek, the Armenian translation omits the first clause of the quote (*ἐπιπλεῖον ἐπλήσθη ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν*; ‘our soul has had more than its fill’) and gives only one textual form of the remaining biblical text: **ՆԱՒԱՏԱՆԱՎ ՌՅՔ ՆԱՒԱՏԵՆ ՉՐԵՉ: ԱՐՏԱՐԱՐՏԱՆԱՎ ԱՐԲԱՐԱՎԵՆՑ (Naxatanawk’ oyk’ naxaten zmez, arhamarhanawk’ ambartawanic’**, ‘by the insult of those who insult us, (and) by the contempt of (those who are) proud’; f<sub>1</sub><sup>va</sup> ll. 23–25/f<sub>1</sub><sup>vb</sup> l.1).

The Armenian translation’s relative independence from the Greek text can also be observed in the doxologies, as for instance that added to Psalm 122 [123]. To the Greek *χάριτι καὶ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν* (‘by the grace and philanthropy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the glory and the power (be) for ever and ever, amen’; PG 55, col. 353, ll. 6–8) corresponds the Armenian **ՇՆՈՐԱՎԷ ԵՒ ՄԱՐԿԱՐԱՐՈՒԹԱՄԲ ԺԵՐՈՆ ՓՐԿՂԵՆ ՄԵՐՈՅ ՅԻՍՈՒՍԻ ՔՐԻՍՏՈՍԻ ԸՆԴՆԱՐԱՎ ՆԱԻՓՈՒՔ ԳԱՐԻՆ ՆՆԵՂԵՐՉ ՍՈՒՐԵ ՏՈԳԻՈՅՆ ԱՅԺՄ ԵՒ ՄԻՇՉ ԵՒ ՅՈՒԻՐԵՆՍ ՅՈՒԻՐԵՆՑ ԱՐԵՆ** (*Šnorhawk’ ew mardasirowt’eamb Tearñ p’rkč’in meroy Yisowsi K’ristosi and nma Hawr p’ark’ patiw handerj sowrb Hogwoyn ayžm ew mišt ew yawiteans yawitenic’ amēn*, ‘by the grace and mercy of the Lord, Our Saviour Jesus Christ with His Father, glory (and) honour together with the Holy Spirit now and always and for ever and ever, amen’; f<sub>1</sub><sup>ra</sup> l. 15/f<sub>1</sub><sup>rb</sup> ll. 1–5). Interestingly, the fifth-century Latin translation of the commentary on this psalm offers a yet different doxology: *per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum uiuentem et regnantem cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto in saecula saeculorum, amen* (Saint Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 103, p. 59), that is, ‘through Our Lord Jesus Christ living and reigning with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever, amen’.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> PG 55, col. 352, ll. 37–44.

<sup>57</sup> There is no critical edition of the Latin translation of John Chrysostom’s commentary on Psalm 122 [123]. I chose to consult the aforementioned codex for diagnostic purposes based on the antiquity of this manuscript, which dates to the ninth century.

## 5 Conclusion

The analysis of the codex Schøyen Collection MS 575 by means of multispectral imaging has allowed me to read the lower Armenian texts of most of its pages. As customarily happens with palimpsests, the degree of visibility of the lower writing varies considerably from folio to folio and from flesh to hair side, the former being always better readable. Despite the inevitable difficulties, it has been possible to confirm that the entirety of the lower writing of this manuscript contains parts of the Armenian translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*. Some codicological and palaeographical features of the manuscript point to an ancient dating of the codex, which could provisionally be set in the seventh or eighth century. On the ground of its style and technique, the translation could be dated to an earlier period. In order to confirm that, however, it is necessary to conduct a complete study of the ensemble of all four *membra disiecta* that considers all codicological, palaeographical, and textual data. Despite the present results being provisional, it seems plausible to state that Schøyen Collection MS 575 may be part of one of the oldest still extant full Armenian manuscripts. In addition to that, this manuscript is also the *codex unicus* of the Armenian translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*.

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## Abbreviations

CPG = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 2: *Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974.

CPL = Eligius Dekkers, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, 3rd edn, Turnhout: Brepols, 1995.

Katalog Hiersemann 500 = *Katalog 500: Orientalische Manuskripte* [...], Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1922.

PG = Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 162 vols, Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857–1886.

Supplementum = Maurits Geerard and Jacques Noret, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum: Supplementum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1998.

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Heinz Miklas<sup>†</sup>

# A Survey of the Palimpsests among the Slavic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai

**Abstract:** Mainly due to the lack of raw material in the desert, palimpsests are a typical trait of manuscripts written in the Sinai. This applies in particular to the Glagolitic Old Slavonic codices and fragments in St Catherine's monastery, the majority of which were discovered in the New Finds of 1975. Not all of them have been closely examined yet, so the exact amount of Sinaitic Glagolitic manuscripts with undertexts remains open. Even so, together with a few dislocated Glagolitic specimens from Sinai kept today in St Petersburg and at the Vatican, their number should be no fewer than eight, including a multiple palimpsest in the so-called Medical Folia. Their demarcation and closer assessment suffer from the fact that usually the underlayers are so heavily washed out or erased that it is extremely difficult to discover more than such indications as multiple rulings, remnants of letters, and the like. So, we must content ourselves with figuring out the number of layers and the scripts and languages of the underlayers. In the present paper, we will discuss these traces in the context of a short overview.

## 1 Introduction

Due to the lack of raw material in the desert, palimpsests are a typical type of manuscripts written in the Sinai. This applies in particular to the Glagolitic Old Slavonic codices and fragments in St Catherine's monastery, the majority of which were discovered in the New Finds of 1975. Not all of them have been closely examined yet, so the exact number of Sinaitic Glagolitic manuscripts with undertexts remains open. Even so, together with a few well-known dislocated Glagolitic manuscripts from Sinai kept today

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**Editors' note:** Heinz Miklas sent in his paper and presentation for the workshop 'Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective II' on 4 July 2023, to be read by the organisers on his behalf. The draft of the present version was prepared by Jost Gippert from the supplied materials and approved by the author on 17 November 2023. Unfortunately, Miklas passed away in the night of 12–13 December 2023, and so did not see the final version of the paper, which Gippert elaborated according to his proposals. The editors decided to publish the paper in its present form, in its rather oral style and without a final conclusion, as the *opus postumum* of our much beloved colleague.

in the National Library of Russia (RNB) in St Petersburg (Q.I.64, the Oktoechos Palimpsest) and in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV) in Vatican City (Vat.slav. 3, the Gospel-Codex Assemanianus; see Fig. 1), their number should be no fewer than eight, including a triple palimpsest in the so-called Medical Folia (see 3.2 below). Their demarcation and closer assessment suffer from the fact that usually the underlayers are so heavily erased that it is extremely difficult to discover more than faint indications, such as multiple rulings, remnants of letters, and the like. So, we must content ourselves with figuring out the number of layers and the scripts and languages of the underlayers.



**Figs 1a–b:** Vatican City, BAV, Vat.slav. 3 (Codex Assemanianus), colour image: fol. 157<sup>r</sup>; UV image: fol. 158<sup>r</sup>;  
© Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

## 2 Survey

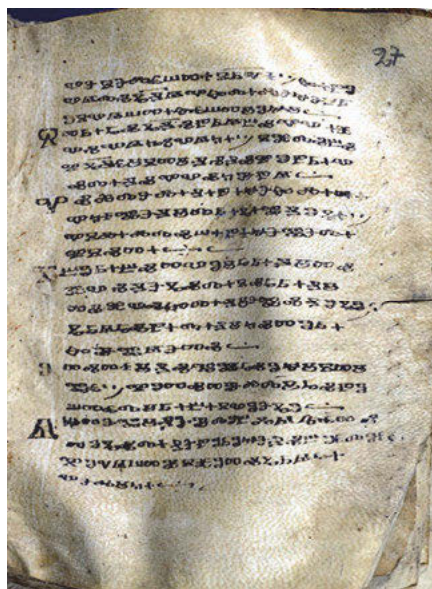
As far as we know today, the traces stem from up to twelve palimpsests:<sup>1</sup> two Glagolitic undertexts under a Cyrillic overtext (the Aprakos Palimpsest in Sinai,

<sup>1</sup> See the lists of Old Church Slavonic manuscripts and palimpsests in Miklas 2011, 50–52, and Miklas and Sadovski 2014, 1270–1271, to which at least the palimpsests in the Medical Folia (see 3.2 below) must now be added.

St Catherine's Monastery, slav. 39, fol. 45<sup>r</sup> [see Fig. 2]<sup>2</sup> and the aforementioned Oktoechos Palimpsest);<sup>3</sup> in addition, there are approximately eight under a Glagolitic overtext (in the new part of the Sinaitic Psalter, Sin. slav. NF 2; the main part of the Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiarium, Sin. slav. NF 5; the Medical Folia in Demetrius's Psalter, Sin. slav. NF 3; and, it seems, also Demetrius's Psalter itself [see Fig. 3], as well as in the Codex Assemanianus). Furthermore, we find one or two Latin undertexts, two most likely in Cyrillic but possibly in Greek, and one which cannot be identified.



**Fig. 2:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, slav. 39 (Aprakos Palimpsest), fol. 45<sup>r</sup>; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.



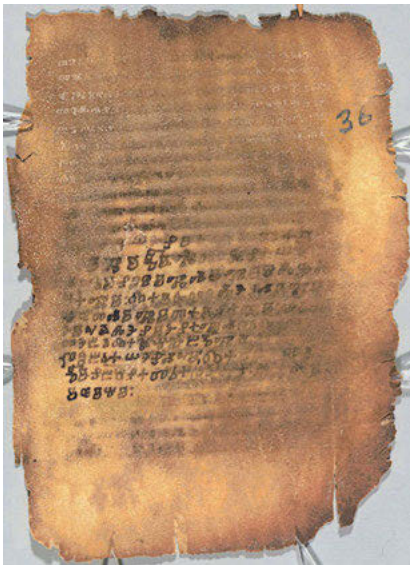
**Fig. 3:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, slav. 39 (Aprakos Palimpsest), fol. 45<sup>r</sup>; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

2 Often called Fragmentum Glagoliticum or Fragmentum Sinaiticum; see Altbauer and Mareš 1980 and Schaecken and Birnbaum 1999, 104 (III.2.7).

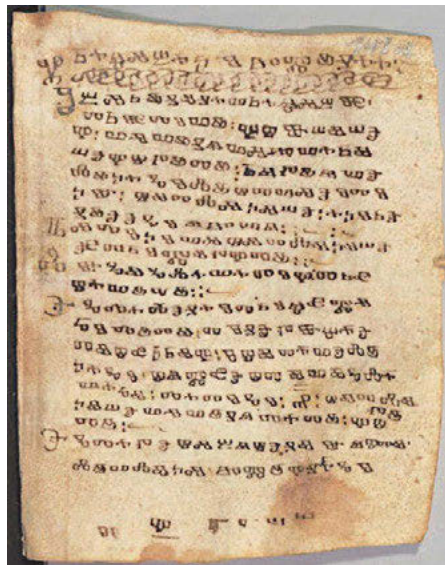
3 St Petersburg, RNB, Q.I.64, fols 1<sup>v</sup>, 2<sup>r</sup>, 3<sup>v</sup>, 5<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>v</sup>, 8<sup>r</sup>; see Schaecken and Birnbaum 1999, 125 (IV.8).

### 3 Two examples

Let me now pick out two interesting examples, with which my work began: the so-called Sinaitic Missal (actually the main part of the Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiarium, Sin. slav. NF 5; see Fig. 4) and the Medical Folia, which Ioannis Tarnanidis – to whom we owe a valuable catalogue of the Slavonic finds – left without their own shelf number because they were found inlaid in the Psalter of Demetrius (Sin. slav. NF 3; see Fig. 5).



**Fig. 4:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 5 (Sinaitic Missal within the Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiarium), fol. 36<sup>f</sup>; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.



**Fig. 5:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 3 (Medical Folia), fol. 141a<sup>f</sup>; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

#### 3.1 The Sinaitic Missal

At the time Tarnanidis started his work, in the early 1980s,<sup>4</sup> this codex presented itself as a compact mass of barely visible sheets under a half-charred cover (Fig. 6).

<sup>4</sup> After his first orientation visit to the monastery, Tarnanidis began his practical work during his second visit in the summer of 1982. His catalogue (Tarnanidis 1988) became a milestone in the

Obviously, Tarnanidis was unable to describe much of this manuscript. Later, the Athenian restorer Basileios I. Peltikoglou disassembled the codex by soaking it in an alcohol solution and, as soon as the pages could be opened, placing it between blotting paper and smoothing the sheets under a printing press for several days (Fig. 7). The result was sobering: many leaves partly lost their black ink, which was now only visible as a whitish layer of powder (Fig. 8). This is how I saw the codex during my first visit to the monastery in 1996. It was clear that the investigation of the codex could not be done without the aid of computer-vision specialists, who would image it with a multispectral camera and improve the images with special software. But even with the naked eye, I could see that the codex was a palimpsest, the underlayer containing a Glagolitic text in a script that looked very similar to the upper text (Figs 9a–b).

Due to unfortunate circumstances, it took until 2006 to start a project allowing our group of philologists, computer-vision specialists, and material chemists to go to the Sinai and take multispectral photographs.<sup>5</sup> Our colleagues took pride in improving these pictures using several methods (Figs 10a–c) so that we philologists had to compare new pictures again and again in stages (see Table 1). Based on these images, it immediately became clear that almost the entire manuscript is palimpsested. The continuous stratum is the Glagolitic one already mentioned; but now traces of other strata were discovered, which we cannot yet classify exactly. One is also Glagolitic, but the letters are bigger (Figs 11 a–c). Maybe they represent only headlines, but then one wonders why another hand made them? Later, some Cyrillic passages became visible on fol. 32<sup>v</sup>. Unfortunately, we have not succeeded in deciphering the texts with the new pictures either, so we will leave it at these comments.

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research of the *Slavica Sinaitica*, with its partly detailed descriptions of a total of forty-one manuscripts (without counting the *Medical Folia*) and an extensive image section.

5 The project, which was titled *The Sinaitic Glagolitic Sacramentary (Euchologium) Fragments* and kindly supported by the Austrian Science Foundation, ran from 2007 to 2011. Participants were philologists from the University of Vienna, Department of Slavonic Studies; chemists from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the Institute of Natural Sciences and Technology in the Arts; and computer vision specialists from the Vienna University of Technology, Computer Vision Lab.



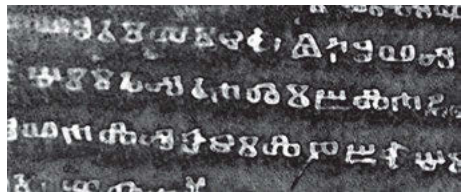
**Fig. 6:** St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 5 (Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiari-um): its state after the find; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.



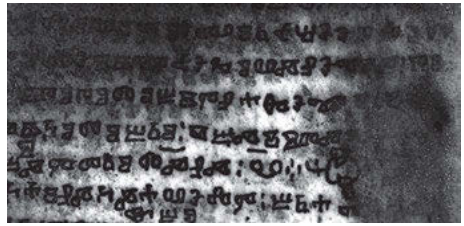
**Fig. 7:** St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 5 (Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiari-um): state after its restoration; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.



**Fig. 8:** St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 5 (Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiari-um), fol. 8', with lost ink; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.



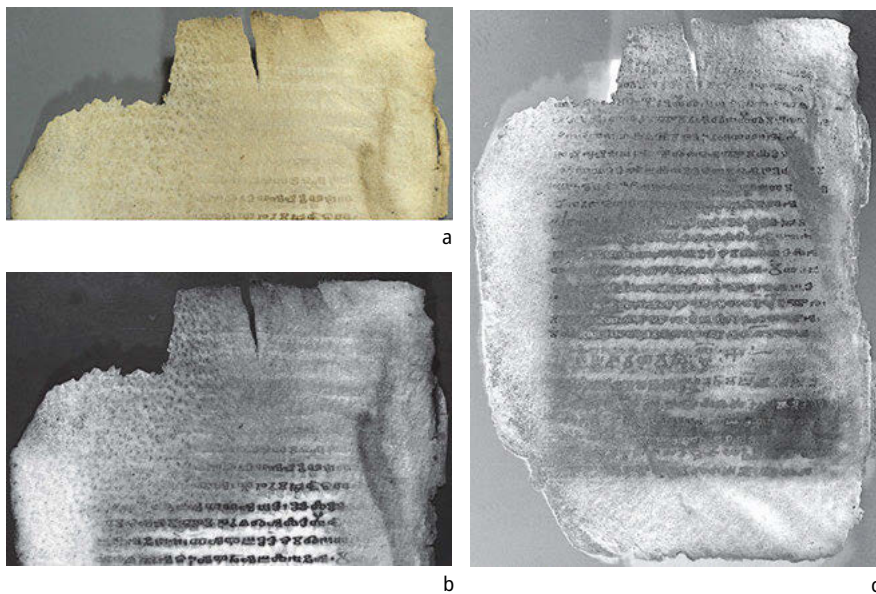
a



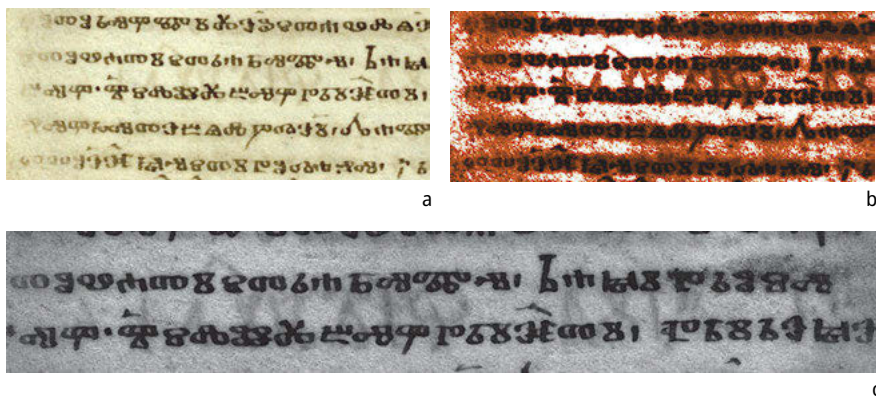
b

**Figs 9a–b:** St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 5 (Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiari-um), fol. 43': upper and lower text contrasted; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.





**Figs 10a–c:** St Catherine’s Monastery, slav. NF 5 (Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiarij), fol. 42’ showing several results of improvement; © Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai.



**Figs 11a–c:** St Catherine’s Monastery, slav. NF 5 (Sinaitic Glagolitic Liturgiarij), fol. 24’ with second palimpsest layer; © Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai.

## Missale Sinaiticum

.....кан[е].. і мѣкомъ [оу]-	f. 42v1
.....днн[е] : п[р]н[е]нѣлаъ	
в.се.нї : і рождаша]ѡ [ѡ] вѣ-	
ницъ · ѡн[он] мнрѣ дждн на[.]ъ	
насталекан покрѣлаъ ж[.]	5
знь нашъ · і да съ мнѡ...	
[м] твоѡя] влгости съло[А]..п-	
лъ съ въздригъ новати ..[ъ]	
[.]прастаъ · і приу- стъ[н]..-	
ци тѣкъ вѣлѣши · оуоуи [.]	10
ти съ ннн прѣдълажаѡа	
вмгѡ · тѣѡ іен датѣ	
вѣтѣвскѣхъ влгъ · в тѣкѣ	
[с]а[в]к вѣсѣлаѡа · съ в-	
знау- лнѣлѡ ти ѡцѣмъ ·	15
и прѣсѣлѡ · и влгѣлѡ ·	
и животворѡннѡ дѣомъ ·	
Отъ БѢНТИ : ѡ : а :-	
Иконн състоори бѣ : ѡѡ	
и хмѡк : хѡѣк жѡ вѣ нн-	20
[.]дннѡ : и нѣкѡннѡ : и тѣ-	
[.]а прѣхъ вѣдѣлѡнѡ · и дѣѡ	
[вѣк]и нѡшнн с- прѣхъ вѡ-	
[А]ѡн : и рѣнѡ бѣ да влгѣтѣ	25

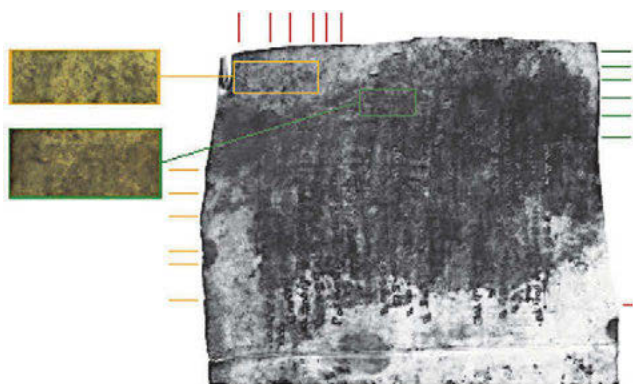
**Fig. 12:** Stages in the decipherment of Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery, slav. NF 5, fol. 42<sup>v</sup>; black: 1996–1998, based on analogue images; red: 2008, based on VIS + PCA-enhanced multispectral images; blue: 2013–2014, based on VIS + LDA-enhanced multispectral images; © Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai.

### 3.2 The Medical Folia

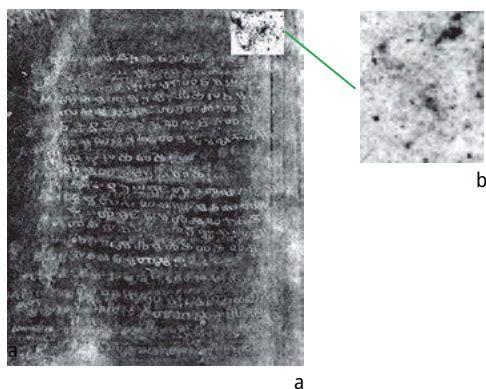
This is a unique small manuscript, both physically and content-wise. Physically it represents a booklet consisting of only three double leaves, of which three rectos contain text. The fact that the last word ends abruptly in its middle, alongside various other arguments, suggests that the fourth bifolium of the quaternion has been lost. The content of the manuscript represents twenty-two medical prescriptions for various diseases, of both men and women – obviously the notes of a healer who took care of not only a monastery but a whole community. It is the first such text in Slavonic literature and contains a good many new words, especially plant names.

When I held the manuscript in hand in 2007, I did not guess that we were dealing with a palimpsest. I got the same impression from the multispectral images – so I was very surprised when Dana Hürner, my collaborator on this project, approached me and said she had the feeling that one of the folia might contain the remains of a palimpsest.

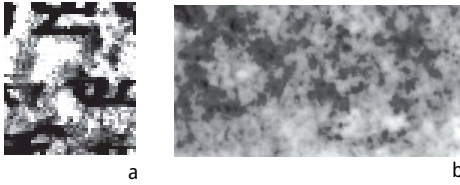
Together, we had a close look at the page on various screens and from various angles. And, indeed, we became aware of different ruling lines that crossed each other, such that there must once have been three ruling systems (Fig. 12). Consequently, we started searching for letters within these systems. The first to be discovered were the following Latin words, written in Carolingian majuscules and minuscules: *STE ecle*, for *S(anc)t(a)e ec(c)l(esia)e* (Fig. 13). Then, within a different system, we saw a few Glagolitic letters, unfortunately not combined, and finally, again in another system, the traces of an undertext which looked Cyrillic but might in fact have been in Greek majuscules (Figs 14a–b). So we had detected a triple palimpsest here.



**Fig. 13:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 3 (Medical Folia), with different ruling systems; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.



**Figs 14a–b:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 3 (Medical Folia), fol. 141a<sup>v</sup>, enhanced, with Latin undertext; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

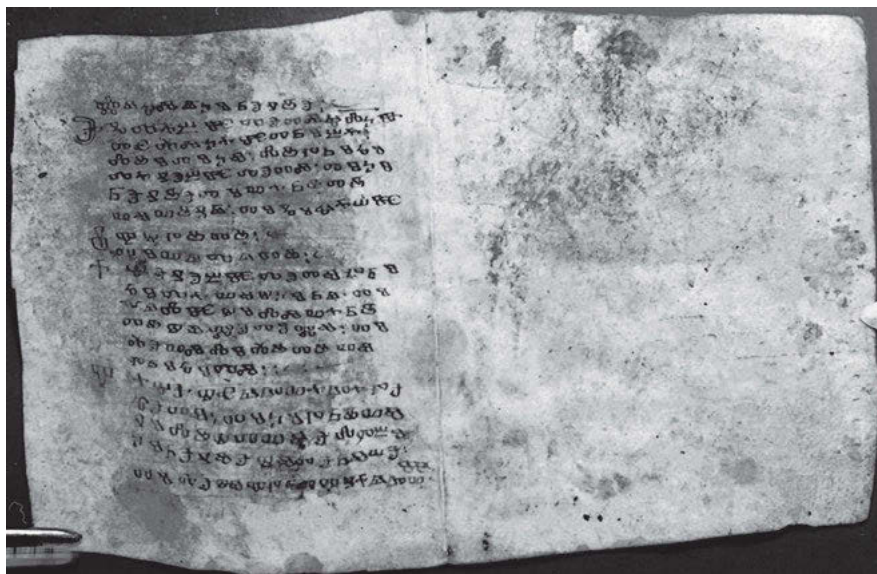


**Figs 15a–b:** Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery, slav. NF 3 (Medical Folia), Cyrillic or Greek and Glagolitic undertexts; © Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai.

But that was not the whole story yet. A few days later, I noticed certain indented lines that had nothing to do with the lines of text but must have formed an iconic image. Following the lines closely revealed, in all probability, a male figure with a helmet, a spear, and a further attribute on the other side, possibly a shield (Figs 15a–b). This, of course, matches Archangel Michael. I must confess that, some days before writing this down, I tried to follow the lines again but did not succeed in seeing an image. This probably has to do with the screen of my PocketBook, my older eyes, and other negative factors – so I must believe what I saw in 2009.

Less clearly, but nevertheless clear enough, I discovered similar traces on the opposite side of the bifolium. There, it seems, the image of the Mother of God had been drawn, most likely in the pose of the so-called Eleousa. Of course, this impression is just an assumption, aroused by my fantasy, and must by no means be taken for granted.

The image of the archangel gave ground for a new interpretation. In the beginning, I had thought that *S(anc)t(a)e ec(c)l(esia)e* represented the incipit of a liturgical text, but my searches produced only two such texts, which by no means could have stood in this context. However, it could have been the incipit of the caption of the adjacent picture of the archangel, running in vertical order, such as: *S(anc)t(a)e ec(c)l(esia)e archistratega archangelus Michael*, derived from the phrase *SANCTAE ecclesiae miles / protector / princeps gloriosissimae caelestis militiae, sanctus Michael Archangelus / SANCTAE ecclesiae archistratega archangelus Michael*.



a



b



c

**Figs 16a–c:** Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, slav. NF 3 (Medical Folia), fol. 141a<sup>v</sup> + f, with remnants of images discernible; © Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

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Ted Erho

# Ethiopic Palimpsests

**Abstract:** While spectacular scholarly breakthroughs and technological advances have led to a surge in recent scholarship on palimpsests, their existence within the Ethiopic manuscript tradition has hitherto received virtually no attention. Nonetheless, at least sixteen Ethiopic palimpsests have been identified, with many more to be found within collections inaccessible at present. Those available for study exhibit strong tendencies towards having biblical commentaries overwritten and being manufactured around the seventeenth century, though the only such manuscript to have undergone multi-spectral imaging thus far (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Petermann II Nachtrag 24) is of slightly later date. This manuscript contains no less than ten discrete *scriptiones inferiores*, but in this regard it likely constitutes an outlier to palimpsesting as practised within the Ethiopic tradition more broadly.

## 1 Introduction

In contrast to the Greek, Latin, Syriac, and even Arabic traditions, the subject of palimpsesting in Ethiopic manuscripts has received effectively no scholarly attention whatsoever. To date, the sum of strictly academic publications involving such material includes only a handful of references in catalogues describing relevant items (the most recent dating to 1935) and a scattering of passages on the unique palimpsest with a Greek overtext and Ge'ez undertext in the decades since the discovery of the St Catherine's New Finds in 1975.<sup>1</sup> Only a 2018 semi-popular article in *Bibliotheksmagazin* by Loren Stuckenbruck and Ira Rabin on the multi-spectral imaging of an Ethiopic palimpsest belonging to the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Petermann II Nachtrag 24) and a small assortment of internet references have supplemented these.<sup>2</sup> As no fewer than sixteen palimpsests involving Ge'ez are now known, most lying among the thousands of uncatalogued codices available in surrogate forms, the time seems ripe to fill in this lacuna with at least a provisional study of the phenomenon in the Ethiopic tradition. The aim here is twofold: firstly, to provide a general orientation to the

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1 d'Abbadie 1859, 190; Dillmann 1878, 52; Chaîne 1912, 115; Conti Rossini 1912, 458; Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 147, 180; Fiaccadori 2014, 513; Brown 2023, 98; Justin of Sinai 2023, 27; Phelps 2023, 35; Rapp 2023, 43, 47–49, 51; Rossetto 2023a, 55; Rossetto 2023b, 17–18, 38, 56, 265.

2 Stuckenbruck and Rabin 2018; e.g. Németh *s.a.*

practice in this tradition through a survey of all exemplars identified thus far, with some observations regarding noteworthy trends; and, secondly, to delve more deeply into the aforementioned Berlin manuscript, the only Ethiopic-Ethiopic palimpsest to have undergone multi-spectral imaging.

Before turning to these matters, it is necessary to remark upon two general considerations undergirding this study. First, the definition of ‘palimpsest’ adopted is 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. While not excluding any item traditionally classified as a palimpsest, this does eliminate 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. For example, in one of her *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften* catalogues, which remain the benchmark for cataloguing in the field, Veronika Six describes the opening and closing folios of a manuscript in Stuttgart as being palimpsested.<sup>3</sup> However, as, according to the description, no overwriting exists apart from scribbles on one page and the erased text seems to be a list of cereals – almost certainly a scribal *additio* rather than part of a copied work – this aligns much better with the types of erasures commonly seen upon Ethiopic flyleaves. Indeed, fundamental to the practice of palimpsesting is deliberate reuse, which is not evidenced in this instance; therefore it is not considered in the present context along with other comparable cases.<sup>4</sup>

Second, access to relevant materials and the form such access usually takes creates significant challenges. When factoring in the enormous quantity of privately owned manuscripts in the Horn of Africa – which are habitually overlooked in scholarly estimates in favour of a myopic focus on institutionally held volumes<sup>5</sup> – the number of extant Ethiopic codices in Ethiopia and Eritrea certainly approaches or exceeds one million. As direct scholarly access to nearly all of these is effectively non-existent, a situation unlikely to change, the field’s entry point to this

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3 Six 1994, 459.

4 For instance Strelcyn 1978, 36.

5 The prevalence of codices of this type (often defaced with crude miniatures before being trafficked) in Western sales of Ethiopic manuscripts over the past three decades provides a glimpse into the overwhelming abundance of such personal books still present in the Horn of Africa. On one of the earliest episodes of such Ethiopian miniature forgery for foreign markets, see Juel-Jensen 1991. The fabrication of miniatures over text, observable in many instances, can from a certain perspective be viewed as a form of palimpsesting. Since, however, such forgeries rarely cover more than a single folio within a quire, thus failing to comport with the more circumscribed definition adopted above, this myriad of contemporary cases shall not be considered here.



critical corpus instead comes through various surrogate copies taken of codices in Ethiopia, the majority on bitonal microfilm.<sup>6</sup> While *scriptiones inferiores* within these microfilm copies are sometimes identifiable, lack of contrast and resolution mean that additional identifications might be possible with direct physical access to the manuscripts or high-resolution colour digital photographs; the prospect of obtaining either generally remains improbable. Insufficient bitonal microfilm contrast also raises the possibility that particularly well-executed palimpsesting would be indistinguishable from the shade of the parchment, even if visible autoptically.

Despite these challenges, undertext identifications can and continue to be made on the basis of current resources, though not all have received extended attention. Yet, it would be amiss to become too heavily invested in the *scriptiones inferiores* alone, and not only because many of their identities will remain indecipherable. Much can be learned about the practice of palimpsesting in the Ethiopic manuscript tradition regardless of the precise undertexts involved, reorienting us towards not the volumes that were lost, but rather those which emerged via this phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

## 2 Survey of known Ethiopic palimpsests

The first Ethiopic palimpsests known to Western scholars were those to reach European libraries. Although exactly when and who initially identified them as palimpsests remains unclear, two codices of this type, the first to become part of any such institution, entered the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana as members of its earliest Ethiopic holdings. Their early entrance and combined use of parchment and paper as writing materials suggest that they likely came from Santo Stefano dei Mori in Rome,<sup>8</sup> with their shared sixteenth-century origins intimating that both probably were created by the Ethiopian community there. As detailed by Sylvain Grébaud and Eugène Tisserant, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.et. 39 forms a smallish 13.4 × 10.1 cm

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<sup>6</sup> Around half of all Ethiopic codices accessible for study derive from the labours of the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) project, which operated in Ethiopia between 1973 and 1994; on its history, see Stewart 2017.

<sup>7</sup> For similar methodological reflections criticising the myopic scholarly focus on the undertexts of palimpsests, see Butts 2017, 285–288.

<sup>8</sup> Such a mixture of supports appears to be exceptional during this era, despite growing evidence for the copying of Ethiopic manuscripts on paper outside the Horn of Africa, particularly in Egypt, throughout the second millennium. Nonetheless, parchment and paper remain broadly segregated as material supports until quite late. The integration of paper into Ethiopic parchment codices is almost completely unattested outside of Europe until the nineteenth century, when it begins to occur sporadically, particularly in Jerusalem. For examples, see Isaac 1976, 182–183 and Isaac 1984–1986, 59, 78.

volume of anaphoras, with its first eighty-eight folios written perpendicularly over sections of an erased fifteenth-century psalter.<sup>9</sup> Its counterpart, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.et. 30, is a composite volume containing six sections with quires of varying heights and support materials.<sup>10</sup> Only the last of these (fols 74–80), containing the end of the *Image of Jesus*,<sup>11</sup> is palimpsested, again along the vertical plane. Though not sufficiently legible to the naked eye for more than a few unconnected words to be read, a pair of underlying scribal hands are visible, of approximately the fourteenth (fols 75–78) and fifteenth (fols 74, 79–80) centuries respectively. These jointly constitute two rather abnormal cases among the known Ethiopic palimpsests: both can be characterised as personal books in their repurposed forms, whereas all the others are corporate volumes, and the use of a psalter as source material is unprecedented, despite being the most copied Gēez text by far. These elements further intimate that a likely extraordinary situation grounds these two cases of palimpsesting.

A more mainline exemplar arises with the next Ethiopic palimpsest to reach Europe, acquired and brought from Ethiopia, along with more than two hundred other manuscripts, by the French-Irish explorer Antoine d'Abbadie during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Eventually bequeathed to the Académie des sciences in Paris, this collection is now housed at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The solitary palimpsest, located under the shelfmark Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 191 (Fig. 1), measures a comparatively gargantuan 30 × 27.5 cm – the second largest among those identified to date.<sup>13</sup> Its *scriptio superior*, copied in the seventeenth century, consists of the Ethiopic translation of Ibn al-Ṭayyib's *Commentary on the Gospels*, written over parts of at least four *codices antiquiores*.<sup>14</sup> With the exception of one sheet, the underwritings are exclusively orientated parallel to the overtext. Two *scriptiones inferiores* have been identified: (1) parts of an early-sixteenth-century *Acts of the Martyrs* manuscript covering approximately fols 33–58 and 86–93; and (2) nearly forty leaves of a slightly earlier *Homiliary for Mary* (fols 94–132).<sup>15</sup> Their earlier counterparts, one possibly antedating the fourteenth century, have eluded identification thus far.

9 Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 176–180. Despite his penchant for such items, Angelo Mai (1831, 96–97) makes no reference to the palimpsested character of this manuscript or the following one.

10 Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 142–147.

11 No. 123 in Chaîne 1913, 199. Although this exemplar represents one of the earliest witnesses to this poetic text and provides a definitive compositional *terminus ante quem* for it in the sixteenth century, Tedros Abraha (2005) neglects the manuscript entirely in his study and translation.

12 On Antoine d'Abbadie's manuscript collecting, see especially Bosc-Tiessé and Wion 2010.

13 d'Abbadie 1859, 190; Chaîne 1912, 114–115; Conti Rossini 1912, 458.

14 Roger W. Cowley (1988, 443–445) ascertained the overtext's *Vorlage*.

15 For example, lines from the lives of Mamas and Basilides can be read on fols 42 and 41 respectively, while the *incipit* of the homily of Yoḥannes of Ethiopia on Mary is legible on fol. 105<sup>r</sup> (Fig. 1). Incred-

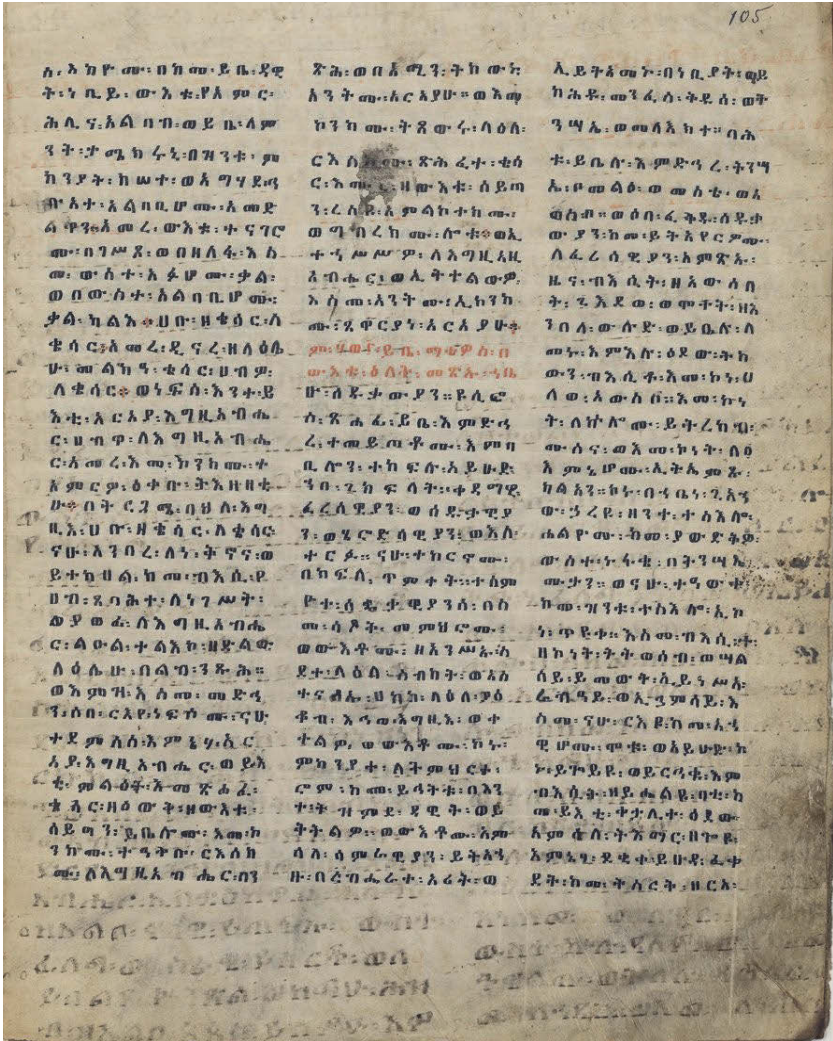


Fig. 1: Ibn al-Tayyib's *Commentary on the Gospels* (seventeenth century) over the homily of Yohannes of Ethiopia on Mary (fifteenth century) in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 191, fol. 105r; courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

ibly, although the same homily of Yohannes of Ethiopia was available elsewhere in the same collection (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 158), none of its three cataloguers (see n. 13 above) were able to identify this underwriting despite being able to read the author's name in the rubricated *incipit*. As the *scriptio inferior* on this page is quite legible, especially in the bottom margin, such an identification should have been a formality.

A few decades later, a fourth Ethiopic palimpsest arrived on the continent via Julius Heinrich Petermann, who probably acquired the small codex in Jerusalem. Now forming part of one of his legacy collections at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, this manuscript (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Petermann II Nachtrag 24) underwent multi-spectral imaging in 2016, revealing no less than ten *codices antiquiores* lying beneath the pages reinscribed in the eighteenth century with an abridged version of Ğirĝis al-Makīn b. al-'Amīd's *Universal Chronicle* and an Ethiopic commentary on the Apocalypse of John. The *scriptiones inferiores*, dating between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries and consisting of an assortment of biblical, parabiblical, homiletical, hagiographical, and other works, are explored in detail below.

Although the date of its arrival in Europe cannot be ascertained, a fifth Ethiopic palimpsest, hidden from view until now, entered the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana during the second half of the twentieth century as one of the items donated by Enrico Cerulli, an Italian civil servant and scholar, to that institution.<sup>16</sup> Unlike each of the previously mentioned palimpsests, no reference to this key feature appears in its official catalogue entry,<sup>17</sup> one of copious oversights and inaccuracies. Even setting aside the often ignored or misdescribed short excerpts included in this unusual miscellany manuscript, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cerulli et. 303, significant errors are to be found, most notably with respect to the end of the volume, where a version of the amorphous *Ordering of the Church* compendium occupies fols 97<sup>r</sup>–132<sup>r</sup>.<sup>18</sup> While not quite as woefully delineated, the remaining principal contents generally lack precision. For example, the two commentaries opening the manuscript are not merely on the Gospel of Luke (fols 5<sup>r</sup>–48<sup>r</sup>) and the Nicene Creed (fols 51<sup>r</sup>–68<sup>r</sup>) but the Lukan portion of Ibn al-Ṭayyib's *Commentary on the Gospels* and the tenth chapter of the so-called *Sec-*

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**16** Among his multiple foreign postings, Cerulli served more than one stint in Ethiopia, including from 1937 to 1940 as a high-ranking official in the occupying Italian administration. While it is more likely than not that certain Ethiopic manuscripts in his collection were acquired during this period, particularly those commissioned in the preceding years by departed Emperor Haile Selassie, others clearly were obtained in different contexts; see Dege-Müller 2015. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cerulli et. 303 bears no indication of belonging to the former category, though its precise provenance admittedly cannot be ascertained.

**17** Cerulli 2004, 224–225.

**18** This compendium is entitled *Šer'ata bēta krestiyān* in the indigenous tradition, a name that denotes not a particular fixed work but rather an assemblage of loosely related texts appearing together in a variety of forms. Isolation of the individual works encompassed by these collections and identification of their Arabic *Vorlagen* remains a desideratum.

ond Book of Sawīros ibn al-Muqaffa'.<sup>19</sup> Even less accurate portrayals exist for two shorter following works: an extremely rare *erotapokriseis* of Basil and Gregory extant only in Syriac and Ethiopic (fols 81<sup>r</sup>–84<sup>r</sup>),<sup>20</sup> and a slightly mutilous excerpt from the portion of the Copto-Arabic florilegium *I'tirāf al-abā'* pertaining to the Council of Nicaea (fols 85<sup>v</sup>–91<sup>r</sup>). Only the indigenous conciliar theological treatise titled *Mazgaba hāymānot* (fols 68<sup>v</sup>–79<sup>v</sup>), a work edited by Cerulli himself from other manuscripts in 1960,<sup>21</sup> and a version of the apocryphal Abgar correspondence (fols 95<sup>r</sup>–97<sup>r</sup>) are reasonably well described.<sup>22</sup> These were copied towards the beginning of the eighteenth century over both new leaves and folios culled from perhaps three *codices antiquiores*, most often orientated horizontally, though not exclusively. While the texts transmitted by at least two different contemporary or slightly later hands visible in the second half of the manuscript are insufficiently legible to identify with the naked eye, it has been possible to determine that the earliest *scriptio inferior*, underlying the initial handful of quires, is the *Weddāsē masqal* ('Praise of the Cross') of famed Ethiopian theologian Giyorgis of Saglā.<sup>23</sup> Edited by Getatchew Haile in 2011 on the basis of the single witness then known to him (EMML 5041),<sup>24</sup> this palimpsested exemplar, copied in the late fifteenth century, stands as the oldest yet to come to light. These two, along with a third copy in the library of Dimā Giyorgis (EMDA 399),<sup>25</sup> constitute the only direct evidence for this indigenous composition, and so its failure to attain a more mainstream circulation may have contributed to the work's expendability in this case. Written in a two-column, twelve-line format, the *codex antiquior* probably did not exceed the 13.7 × 12.7 cm dimensions of Cerulli et. 303 by much, if at all.

<sup>19</sup> Further information on the Ethiopic attestation of the latter is detailed below.

<sup>20</sup> While a number of *erotapokriseis* texts involving Basil and Gregory developed in Late Antiquity, this particular one appears to be preserved only in one other relatively late Ethiopic witness (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 214) and a ninth- or tenth-century Syriac manuscript (Wadi Natrun, Deir al-Surian Monastery, Syr. 17). For the latter, see the thorough, professional description in Brock and Van Rompay 2014, 90–92. Although an Arabic intermediary will have stood between the two extant versions, its loss may be inferred from Roggema 2018, 400.

<sup>21</sup> Cerulli 1960, 1–101.

<sup>22</sup> Several different forms of the Abgar correspondence (CAVT 88) are found in Ethiopic; the version attested here is the one edited in Haffner 1918.

<sup>23</sup> The *incipit*, for example, is discernible on fol. 33<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Getatchew Haile 2011. For EMML, see n. 6 above.

<sup>25</sup> The Ethiopian Manuscript Digital Archive (EMDA) is a collection of digitised Ethiopian manuscripts available from the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library. Unlike the EMML, this collection remains open for additions to the series, which at present mainly consists of items from Marṭula Māryām, Moṭā Giyorgis, Dabra Q<sup>w</sup>ayaṣā, Qarānyo Madhānē Ālam, Dabra Ḍaḥāy Mārḡos, Dimā Giyorgis, Dabra Gannat Ēlyās, and Na'akk<sup>w</sup>eto La'ab.

Ethiopian palimpsests started to come to light through microfilming projects in Ethiopia during the 1970s and 1980s. This began at the start of the former decade, when a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) mobile microfilm unit visited the important monastery of Dimā Giyorgis in Goḡḡām and filmed two such manuscripts in succession as project numbers 10.71 and 10.72.<sup>26</sup> The first, measuring 23.5 × 19.5 cm and containing the Ge'ez translations of *Josippon* and the *Physiologus*,<sup>27</sup> was written on palimpsested leaves, orientated both horizontally and vertically, of three *codices antiquiores* dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While the contents of one of the three remain enigmatic, the other two consist of Exodus (or perhaps the entire Octateuch) and the *Maṣḥafa berhān* ('Book of Light') of Emperor Zar'a Yā'eqob.<sup>28</sup> This copy of the latter scarce work might even have been penned during its author's lifetime, but two hundred years later was apparently deemed of insufficient value to escape erasure when *Josippon* and *Physiologus* were needed in the seventeenth century. Likely manufactured a few decades later, UNESCO 10.72 is a slightly smaller manuscript (19 × 17 cm) with Ibn al-Ṭayyib's commentaries on the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. Although still unidentified, at least two discrete underwritings seem to be attested within certain quires, each of approximately fifteenth-century origin but orientated in a different direction. A third palimpsest contemporaneous to the last and with similarly bi-orientated undertexts was more recently photographed at Dimā Giyorgis (EMDA 380). Repurposed for a copy of the widely diffused Ge'ez translation of Dāḏišo' Qaṭrāyā's *Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers*, the number, content(s), and age(s) of the underwriting(s) cannot be ascertained. The potential interrelationships between these three palimpsests and any others held in the large Dimā Giyorgis library provides one avenue for further research. No other single repository possessing as many Ethiopic palimpsests has emerged in the Horn of Africa, and as the *scriptiones superiores* cluster around c. 1700 a local workshop for this purpose may have existed in the area around that time. Such a possibility is enhanced by the presence of another manuscript microfilmed by the UNESCO project at the nearby monastery of Dabra Warq.<sup>29</sup> Manufactured at roughly the same time, UNESCO 12.1, presented on

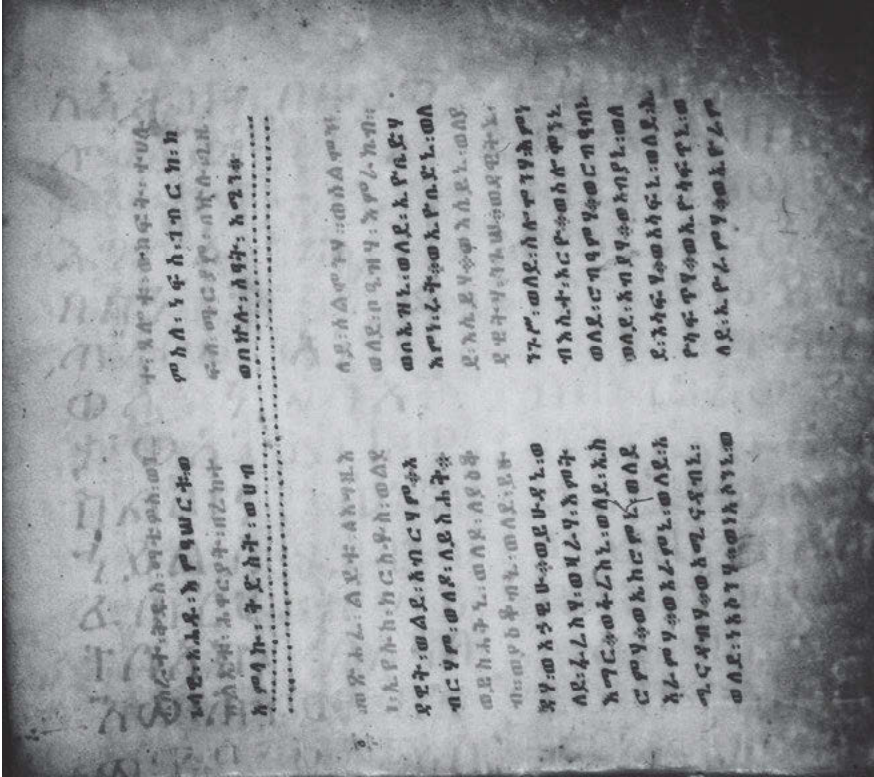
<sup>26</sup> On this project, see Department of Fine Arts and Culture 1970. A map detailing the monastery's location is available in Persoon 2005, 162a.

<sup>27</sup> On the Ethiopic versions of these texts, see Kamil 1938 and Villa 2021.

<sup>28</sup> *Maṣḥafa berhān* is edited and translated in Conti Rossini 1964–1965; supplementary textual material appears in Getatchew Haile 2013.

<sup>29</sup> For the monastery's location, see Bosc-Tiessé and Fiaccadori 2005, 51b. Dabra Warq's library may be the largest of any ecclesiastical institution in Ethiopia but is almost completely unstudied beyond the twelve codices microfilmed by the UNESCO project more than half a century ago.

nearly square leaves measuring 20.5 × 20 cm, includes a combination of both biblical (1 Enoch [CAVT 61], Job, and Exodus 25:1–40:32) and non-biblical (the treatise of Sawīros ibn al-Muqaffa' entitled *Kitāb al-majāmi'*) overtexts.<sup>30</sup> Underlying these are portions of a late-fourteenth-century synaxarion, some of the oldest surviving evidence for this now fundamental churchbook, orientated perpendicularly on account of the much larger size of the *codex antiquior*. Additional underwritings might also be present.



**Fig. 2:** Beginning of the Gospel of Matthew (late sixteenth century) over the homily of pseudo-Basil on angels, divinity, and faith (thirteenth or fourteenth century) in EMMI 6620, fol. 17'. Image courtesy of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library. Published with permission of the owners. All rights reserved.

Other palimpsests might well be preserved in this library if a regional workshop existed in the vicinity some three hundred years ago.

<sup>30</sup> A slightly more detailed description of this manuscript appears in Erho and Stuckenbruck 2013, 125–126.

Together with some other microfilming endeavours in 1960s Ethiopia, the UNESCO project laid the groundwork for a much more ambitious undertaking of this type: the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML).<sup>31</sup> Between 1973 and 1994, the EMML microfilmed more than 9200 codices held principally in Ethiopian Orthodox churches and monasteries, and as this project accounts for nearly half of all Ethiopic manuscripts currently accessible for scholarly consultation, it is not surprising from a statistical standpoint that some palimpsests exist therein. None of them, however, are found in the opening 6000 catalogued items,<sup>32</sup> which mostly came from Addis Ababa and nearby parts of Šawā province, but instead surface in the final third of the series, when more venerable ecclesiastical libraries further afield became the focus in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The first EMML palimpsest emerged from the church of Werāf Abbā Libānos in north Wallo in the form of a late-sixteenth-century Gospel Book microfilmed as project no. 6620.<sup>33</sup> Though fresh parchment may have been integrated sporadically, a single *codex antiquior* underlies the vast majority of the manuscript, several texts from which can be identified: (1) the conclusion of the second part of the homily of Jacob of Serugh on the Annunciation (fols 12, 13),<sup>34</sup> which is immediately followed by (2) the beginning of an anonymous one on Frumentius (fols 12<sup>v</sup>, 18, 23),<sup>35</sup> (3) three contiguous leaves from a homily of pseudo-Basil on angels, divinity, and faith (fols 17 [Fig. 2], 24, 83, 85, 88, 90),<sup>36</sup> (4) a section of the third part of the homily of Jacob of Serugh on the Annunciation (fols 131, 132, 182, 193); and portions from the indigenous homilies of (5) the earlier Retu'a Hāymānot on the Nativity (fols 130, 133, 140, 143, 169, 170)<sup>37</sup> and (6) Ēleyās on Maṭṭā' (fols 81, 92).<sup>38</sup> While some of these texts are also found in other contexts, the one attributed to Retu'a

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31 Stewart 2017, 447–448.

32 William Macomber and Getatchew Haile published ten catalogues covering the first 5000 project numbers between 1975 and 1993. An eleventh catalogue covering a further 1000 manuscripts, prepared by Getatchew Haile before his recent death, awaits editing and posthumous publication.

33 Zuurmond 1989, 244 assigns the manuscript to the early seventeenth century, a plausible alternative dating.

34 The Ethiopic version of this homily is edited and translated in Tedros Abraha 2019. Together with Aaron Butts, I am currently preparing an updated inventory of homilies attributed to Jacob of Serugh circulating in Ethiopic homiliary and homiletical-hagiographical manuscripts.

35 Published in Getatchew Haile 1979. A new edition of this homily, based on a wider manuscript attestation, is in the final stages of preparation by Aaron Butts.

36 Cf. EMML 1763, fols 86<sup>r</sup>–88<sup>r</sup>.

37 Cf. EMML 1763, fols 90<sup>v</sup>–96<sup>v</sup>.

38 Edited and translated in Getatchew Haile 1990.



Hāymānot has yet to be attested outside the so-called *Homiliary for the Year*.<sup>39</sup> Since the others commonly appear in this context as well, and in fact cluster together in its first part, the *codex antiquior* can be described as an exemplar thereof. Although all the identified texts stem from the first half of the year, the sequencing wherein the homily on Frumentius immediately follows the second part of Jacob of Serugh's homily on the Annunciation is otherwise only evidenced in another manuscript of the homiliary from Wallo, the celebrated EMLL 1763, whose contents span the entire *annum*.<sup>40</sup> Ancillary evidence suggesting that the *codex antiquior* probably covered this period as well comes from the manuscript's dimensions, as the folded and trimmed leaves measure 21.5 × 19 cm; a height exceeding 38 cm comports closely with that of EMLL 1763 (44.5 cm) and EMLL 8509 (39 cm),<sup>41</sup> both covering the full year, while standing markedly taller than London, British Library, Or. 8192 (30.3 cm),<sup>42</sup> which encompasses only its latter half. However, the underwriting of EMLL 6620 lies slightly anterior to the early-fourteenth-century manufacture of the three aforementioned codices, rendering it the earliest exemplar of this important homiliary yet discovered.

A couple years later, the project encountered a second, smaller palimpsest in the library of the north Šawān monastery of Ġar Šellāsē, located not far from the provincial border with Wallo.<sup>43</sup> Transmitting a series of commentaries (dubbed *Mamhera Orit* by Roger Cowley)<sup>44</sup> on the Octateuch and 1–4 Kingdoms, an excerpt from 1 Enoch consisting of the entire *Astronomical Book*, and the tenth chapter of the *Second Book* of Sawīros ibn al-Muqaffa,<sup>45</sup> along with some more minor pieces, the rear half of EMLL 7202 contains two *scriptiones inferiores*, neither of which have been identified. Dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they are distinguishable from their differing hands and orientations – one appears upside

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39 Unlike all of its medieval counterparts, the ancient Ethiopic name for this homiliary has yet to be isolated, so I use here and elsewhere the construct *Homiliary for the Year* to refer to it. The most complete and accessible of its recorded witnesses are noted below, though this represents only a minority of those now known.

40 For its full description, see Getatchew Haile 1981, 218–231. Perhaps no other manuscript in the whole EMLL series has been the subject of more scholarly publications than EMLL 1763.

41 Sergew Hable-Selassie 1991, 67. Fiaccadori 1989, 150 and 162 offers an important corrective to the dating of this manuscript.

42 Strelcyn 1978, 89.

43 For its location, see Raineri 2005, 695b. The leaves of this manuscript measure 17 × 15 cm.

44 See Cowley 1988, 116 and throughout. In the indigenous tradition, these texts are entitled *Terg<sup>w</sup> amē orit* ('Commentary on the Old Testament') or the like, thereby indistinguishable on this basis from a variety of other commentaries to which the same generic title is applied.

45 James Hamrick made the first precise identification of the *Vorlage*.

down, while the other reads in the same direction as the *scriptio superior*. This palimpsest's creation can be placed in the seventeenth century via palaeography.

**Table 1:** Identified *scriptiones inferiores* in EML 6620.

Location <sup>46</sup>	Textual identification
fols 13 <sup>v</sup> + 12 <sup>r</sup> , 13 <sup>r</sup> + 12 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of Jacob of Serugh on the Annunciation (second part); homily on Frumentius (beginning fol. 12 <sup>v</sup> )
fols 18 <sup>v</sup> + 23 <sup>r</sup> , 18 <sup>r</sup> + 23 <sup>v</sup>	Homily on Frumentius
fols 88 <sup>v</sup> + 85 <sup>r</sup> , 88 <sup>r</sup> + 85 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of pseudo-Basil on the angels, divinity, and faith
fols 17 <sup>v</sup> + 24 <sup>r</sup> , 17 <sup>r</sup> + 24 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of pseudo-Basil on the angels, divinity, and faith
fols 83 <sup>v</sup> + 90 <sup>r</sup> , 83 <sup>r</sup> + 90 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of pseudo-Basil on the angels, divinity, and faith <sup>47</sup>
fols 132 <sup>r</sup> + 131 <sup>v</sup> , 132 <sup>v</sup> + 131 <sup>r</sup>	Homily of Jacob of Serugh on the Annunciation (third part)
fols 182 <sup>v</sup> + 193 <sup>r</sup> , 182 <sup>r</sup> + 193 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of Jacob of Serugh on the Annunciation (third part)
fols 169 <sup>r</sup> + 170 <sup>v</sup> , 169 <sup>v</sup> + 170 <sup>r</sup>	Homily of Retu'a Häymānot for the Nativity
fols 143 <sup>v</sup> + 140 <sup>r</sup> , 143 <sup>r</sup> + 140 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of Retu'a Häymānot for the Nativity
fols 130 <sup>v</sup> + 133 <sup>r</sup> , 130 <sup>r</sup> + 133 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of Retu'a Häymānot for the Nativity
fols 81 <sup>v</sup> + 92 <sup>r</sup> , 81 <sup>r</sup> + 92 <sup>v</sup>	Homily of Ēleyās on Maṭṭā'

The rich monastic libraries of Lake Ṭānā, which the EML reached in the late 1980s, brought forth two more palimpsests, both from the august monastery of Kebrān Gabre'el. The first to be microfilmed, as EML 8265, is another copy of Ibn al-Tayyib's *Commentary on the Gospels*, contemporaneous in manufacture to Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 191. With leaves measuring 35 × 30 cm, it stands even larger than that manuscript as the most expansive Ethiopic palimpsest currently known. Given these dimensions and the comparatively robust numbers of extant medieval witnesses to the text, the *scriptio inferior* unsurprisingly consists of an early-fifteenth-century Octateuch, manuscripts of which are typically among the biggest in the Ethiopic tradition. The availability of an even more massive Octateuch of similar antiquity at the monastery, still preserved in its library today (Ṭānāsee 4),<sup>48</sup> may have contributed to the reuse of this *codex antiquior*. Little can be said about the second manuscript, EML 8339, a much smaller (18 × 13 cm) eighteenth-century volume containing commentary and

<sup>46</sup> Dividing lines in the table denote non-contiguous leaves from the original manuscript.

<sup>47</sup> The recto of this sheet is illegible but will contain the *desinit* of this text and the *incipit* of the following one, most likely the third part of Jacob of Serugh's homily on the Annunciation.

<sup>48</sup> Hammerschmidt 1973, 98–99.

computus materials relating mostly to the *Astronomical Book* of 1 Enoch. Underwriting in a fairly late hand appears towards its end.

A fifth palimpsest was microfilmed in the province of Gondar during the final stages of the EMLL project, possibly the oldest manuscript from Ethiopia attesting this practice. A composite codex dating primarily to the sixteenth century, EMLL 8971 exhibits palimpsested writing from approximately two hundred years earlier beginning on fol. 52. Orientated vertically, the *scriptio inferior* seems to be limited to one or two quires. The *scriptiones superiores* consist of a wide assortment of Ge'ez Old and New Testament commentaries and related texts, among them portions of Cowley's *Mamhera Orit*, as well as one of the two Ethiopic versions of pseudo-Athanasius's *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* (CPG 2257).<sup>49</sup>

A more recent endeavour, a project funded by the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), has revealed one further palimpsest in Ethiopia, a damaged fragment with a contiguous section of a commentary on the Minor Prophets belonging to the Abuna Yoḥannes Museum in the Tigrayan capital, Mekelle (EAP 357/1/2).<sup>50</sup> Badly miscatalogued – a growing threat to the field<sup>51</sup> – its unidentified underwriting dates not more than two hundred years earlier than the *scriptio superior* from c. 1800 CE. This therefore represents the youngest Ethiopic palimpsest yet known. Uniquely among the manuscripts surveyed here, the scrip-

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<sup>49</sup> Both versions are represented in e.g. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 96. The second text in this manuscript corresponds to the one attested in EMLL 8971 (fols 40<sup>r</sup>–43<sup>v</sup>, 135<sup>r</sup>–137<sup>r</sup>) and covers in sequence the following sections of CPG 2257: I, III–XI, XIII, XV–XVII, XIX–XXI, XXIV–XXVI, XXXIV–XXXVII, XXXIX, XLVI, XLIX–LI, XLV, LV, LVII, LXIV–LXV, CI–CII, CXI, CXIII, CXV, CXXIV. For the sections included in the other Ethiopic version, see Zotenberg 1877, 257.

<sup>50</sup> Copied in a two-column, nineteen- to twenty-three-line format, the manuscript contains commentaries on Micah (acephalous, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>), Joel (fols 1<sup>v</sup>–4<sup>r</sup>), Obadiah (fols 4<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>r</sup>), Jonah (fols 5<sup>r</sup>–6<sup>r</sup>), Nahum (fols 6<sup>r</sup>–10<sup>r</sup>), Habakkuk (fols 10<sup>r</sup>–16<sup>r</sup>), Zephaniah (fols 16<sup>r</sup>–18<sup>r</sup>), and Haggai (fols 18<sup>r</sup>–19<sup>v</sup>). These commentaries are the same as those transmitted in e.g. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. quart. 986, but they lack the lemmata included in that witness. A variant description of the manuscript is offered on the Endangered Archives Programme website at <<https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP357-1-2>> (accessed on 1 May 2024).

<sup>51</sup> Given the growth of the subfield of Ethiopic manuscript studies over the past few decades and the slow progress of cataloguing historically, an absence of catalogue information cannot be understood to present an obstacle so long as the manuscripts or photographs thereof are openly accessible, since scholars may then consult them without prejudice. Conversely, the insidious, pernicious upsurge of erroneous manuscript descriptions in recent years, principally in electronic databases, must be characterised as a major threat, given that they obscure reality via misleading competent specialists and scholars from other fields alike.

*tio inferior*, lying perpendicular to the overtext, is in three columns – a format rarely seen in Ethiopic codices of the medieval era, but increasingly common thereafter. Although these leaves now measure 23 × 16 cm, they have been trimmed, and those of the *codex antiquior* probably were nearly square and exceeded 30 cm along each axis.

Lastly, there is the exceptional case of an assuredly non-Ethiopian Ethiopic palimpsest,<sup>52</sup> the curious thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Greek horologion with seventeen folios containing Ge'ez undertext discovered in 1975 among the new finds at St Catherine's Monastery (Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, gr. NF M 90 [Diktyon 60917]). The Ethiopic writing, allegedly transmitting portions of a funeral rite in part,<sup>53</sup> does not significantly antedate the Greek *scriptio superior*.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, as the *terminus ante quem* provided by the overtext unambiguously places the *scriptio inferior* of these leaves in the pre-Solomonic period (before 1270 CE), a rarely encountered stratum within this tradition's surviving material evidence,<sup>55</sup> its careful study and publication via experts in early Ge'ez manuscripts and palaeography working together with image-processing specialists on the multi-spectral-imaging data produced by the Sinai Palimpsests Project remains a *desideratum*.

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52 Given the enormous quantity of Ge'ez manuscripts produced outside the boundaries of modern Ethiopia in locales such as Eritrea, Egypt, Jerusalem, and Rome, which cannot be properly dubbed Ethiopian, and the thriving Arabic manuscript culture within Ethiopia, the products of which are as Ethiopian as Ge'ez scrolls and codices, the equation of 'Ethiopian manuscripts' with 'Ethiopic manuscripts' must be eschewed.

53 Rapp 2023, 43.

54 Rossetto 2023b, 56 assigns the manuscript to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, a seemingly preferable position to the thirteenth-century date in Holy Monastery and Archdiocese of Sinai 1999, 172; Hieromonk Justin of Sinai 2023, 27; and Rapp 2023, 43, insofar as the latter falls uncomfortably close to the most likely age of the *scriptio inferior*. It cannot be precluded, however, that a quite recently produced Ethiopic codex became fodder for another in a different language if its contents were unintelligible to a new owner.

55 At this juncture, the earliest securely dated Ethiopic manuscript evidence comes from elsewhere in Egypt; see Maximous el-Antony, Blid and Butts 2016. The previously unidentified text on the recto of this fragment can now be correlated with the short anonymous monastic treatise extant in EMMML 7469, fols 560<sup>v</sup>–561<sup>v</sup>, which stands as the only more or less complete exemplar of this work despite the existence of at least ten additional Ge'ez witnesses.

### 3 Trends in Ethiopic palimpsesting

All fifteen known Ethiopic-Ethiopic palimpsests (we shall turn to Petermann II Nachtrag 24 in depth below, which in no way contradicts these findings) postdate the medieval period. Such is perhaps a surprising result from the perspective of other traditions which preserve significant numbers of late antique and medieval codices. However, comparatively few medieval Ethiopic manuscripts exist, and the vast majority of extant codices derive from the last two hundred years, so the attestation of no more than a single palimpsest from the latter timeframe should instead probably be considered statistically significant, providing evidence that palimpsesting became more or less extinct in this tradition after the Gondarine Period (c. 1632–1769). Although the earliest *scriptiones superiores* date to the sixteenth century, this fact, conversely, should not necessarily be construed as a *terminus post quem* for the practice, given the much more limited surviving corpus of codices from this era and earlier. But the clustering of palimpsests in and along the boundaries of the seventeenth century does seem to indicate the ostensible zenith of Ethiopic palimpsesting.

If the current repositories of manuscripts in Ethiopia can serve as approximate geographic indicators of their origins, it may be significant that seven of the ten items under concern reside in ecclesiastical libraries located within 150 km of Lake Ṭānā. Šawā, Tegrāy, and Wallo have been subject to far more extensive microfilming and digitisation projects than Goḡḡām and Gondar (the two provinces covering Lake Ṭānā and its environs), but only single palimpsests have been unearthed in each member of the former trio.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, the presence of multiple palimpsests at both Kebrān Gabre'el and Dimā Giyorgis heightens the possibility of this practice having been performed either at or in the vicinity of those monasteries. Historical and economic factors that may have contributed to a palimpsesting peak in this region in the seventeenth century would be a topic worthy of a historian's attention.

With the possible exception of the two manuscripts from the early part of the Vatican etiopici fonds, which likely have somewhat anomalous histories,<sup>57</sup> each palimpsest represents a corporate, not private, volume; that is, it was intended for a church or monastic library, not personal use. So far as identifications have progressed, this holds equally true for overt texts and undertexts, suggesting a predominantly, if not exclusively, institutional phenomenon.

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<sup>56</sup> Ongoing lack of open and unrestricted scholarly access to the full corpus of materials digitised in Tegrāy during the course of the ERC-funded Ethio-SPaRe project (Universität Hamburg), in contrast to the fully consultable EMMML archives focusing on Šawā, Wallo, Goḡḡām, and Gondar, means that this impression might prove illusory in part.

<sup>57</sup> See Adankpo-Labadie 2021.

A gap of approximately two centuries between a *scriptio superior* and the youngest underwriting beneath is broadly attested despite the diverse range of works being sacrificed. Such a timeframe is more indicative of dismemberment of *codices antiquiores* with texts that had fallen out of common use than of damaged ones. Together with the mid-sixteenth-century revision of the Ethiopic Bible, which rendered many earlier manuscripts at least somewhat obsolescent, the presence of numerous scarce works among the identifiable *scriptiones inferiores* – most notably *Weddāsē masqal*, *Maṣḥafa berhān*, and various sermons from the *Homiliary for the Year* – also supports a reconstruction along these lines.

Nonetheless, the most remarkable trend exists with respect to what texts these institutions were pursuing: Ge'ez biblical commentaries stand as principal overtexts in a majority of the known Ethiopic-Ethiopic palimpsests. Laying aside the Vaticani etiopici manuscripts, nine of the remaining thirteen contain *scriptiones superiores* of this type. Nowhere, however, is the striking connection between palimpsesting and biblical commentaries more visible than in manuscripts transmitting the Lukan section of Ibn al-Ṭayyib's *Commentary on the Gospels* (normally alongside most or all of the remainder), as close to one-third of its witnesses exhibit this feature.<sup>58</sup> A much rarer, but equally conspicuous, correlation arises with the *Second Book* of Sawīros ibn al-Muqaffa'. While two copies of the full Ge'ez translation are now known,<sup>59</sup> another pair of manuscripts contain only the tenth chapter, presenting it as an anonymous commentary on the Nicene Creed; both of the latter are palimpsested and also include biblical commentaries. In one of these manuscripts, EMMML 7202, the biblical commentary materials consist of parts of an Ethiopian work exegeting certain Old Testament writings – the materials Cowley dubbed *Mamhera Orit*. Many of the same sections of this text appear in another palimpsest alongside interpretative works on a wide range of other biblical books. Other Old Testament commentaries appear in two further palimpsests, one with materials related to the *Astronomical Book* of 1 Enoch, an ancient treatise held canonical by the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox churches, and the second with a series on the Minor Prophets. Lastly, Petermann II Nachtrag 24 – a manuscript to which we shall turn in detail momentarily – contains a commentary on one of the New Testament books, the Apocalypse of John, as one of its two princi-

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<sup>58</sup> Several exemplars can be appended to the listing in Cowley 1988, 444. Together with Aaron Butts, I am preparing an updated study on the Ethiopic reception of Ibn al-Ṭayyib, which makes numerous additions to Cowley's pioneering work.

<sup>59</sup> Located respectively in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 155 and UNES-CO 10.46. The former served as the basis for the study of the Ge'ez version in Leroy and Grébaut 1911.

pal overtexts.<sup>60</sup> Although not rare, Ge'ez biblical commentary manuscripts are certainly scarce, magnifying the significance of this correlation.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, entire major categories of Ethiopic literature, such as hagiographies and homiliaries, have yet to provide any *scriptiones superiores* whatsoever.

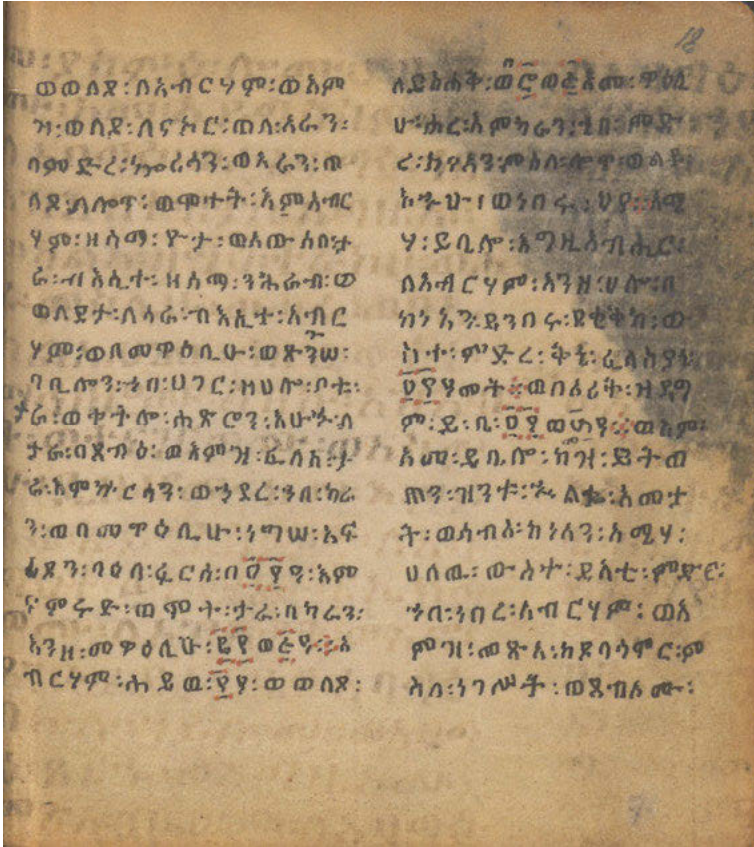


Fig. 3: Natural-light image of the *Universal Chronicle* of Ġirġis al-Makīn b. al-'Amīd (eighteenth century) over the *Animal Apocalypse* of 1 Enoch (early sixteenth century) in Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Petermann II Nachtrag 24, fol. 18<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> An annotated translation of this commentary on the Apocalypse of John was published in Cowley 1983, 63–156.

<sup>61</sup> This is not the only tradition with a strong link between palimpsesting and production of a particular type of manuscript, as a similar situation has been observed with Greek Euchologia; see Rapp 2023, 43.

## 4 An unusual Ethiopic palimpsest: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Petermann II Nachtrag 24

Of all known Ethiopic-Ethiopic palimpsests, only one has been subject to extended academic study and scientific treatment: a smallish manuscript now residing in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin acquired by the orientalist scholar Julius Heinrich Petermann, most likely during his appointment as German vice-consul in Jerusalem in 1867–1868.<sup>62</sup> Copied in a two-column, seventeen- to twenty-line format, the codex's *scriptiones superiores* consist of an extremely rare abridged version of the thirteenth-century Egyptian historian Ġirġis al-Makīn b. al-'Amīd's *Universal Chronicle* trailed by a somewhat more popular indigenous Ethiopian commentary on the Apocalypse of John.<sup>63</sup> Although August Dillmann noted that Petermann II Nachtrag 24 was a palimpsest in his 1878 description of the manuscript,<sup>64</sup> no progress seems to have been made towards deciphering its underwritings until 2014, when I was able to determine on the basis of a microfilm reproduction that several leaves contain portions of Old Testament books.<sup>65</sup> Subsequent colour images and a visit to examine the manuscript in person led to the identification of two further texts: the *Testament of Abraham* (CAVT 88) and, critically, 1 Enoch (Fig. 3). With Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft funding previously secured for a new critical edition and translation of the Ethiopic version of Enoch, the presence of the latter resulted in arrangements being made for multi-spectral imaging via reallocation of part of the grant. Led by the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library, this was undertaken in Berlin between late October and early November 2016.

Unlike other Ethiopic palimpsests, where a single *codex antiquior* often seems to underlay extended spans, the multi-spectral imaging revealed fragments of no less than ten independent manuscripts scattered throughout Petermann II Nachtrag 24, often with long gaps between leaves of the same *scriptio inferior*. The underwritings range in date from the sixteenth to the thirteenth century, with the number of discrete undertexts likely to rise if the contents of more leaves can be identified.

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<sup>62</sup> On Petermann, see Bobzin 2001.

<sup>63</sup> While Cowley translated the latter through consultation of four manuscripts, at least twice as many are now known. Only one other copy of this abridged version of the *Universal Chronicle* has come to light via EMMML 7109. For the Arabic original, see the important new edition of Diez 2023.

<sup>64</sup> Dillmann 1878, 52.

<sup>65</sup> Multi-spectral imaging helped to determine that these comprised the remnants of a medieval Old Testament lectionary (codex ε), only one other of which has been located among the accessible parts of the Ethiopic manuscript tradition.



**Table 2:** *Scriptiones inferiores* in Petermann II Nachtrag 24.

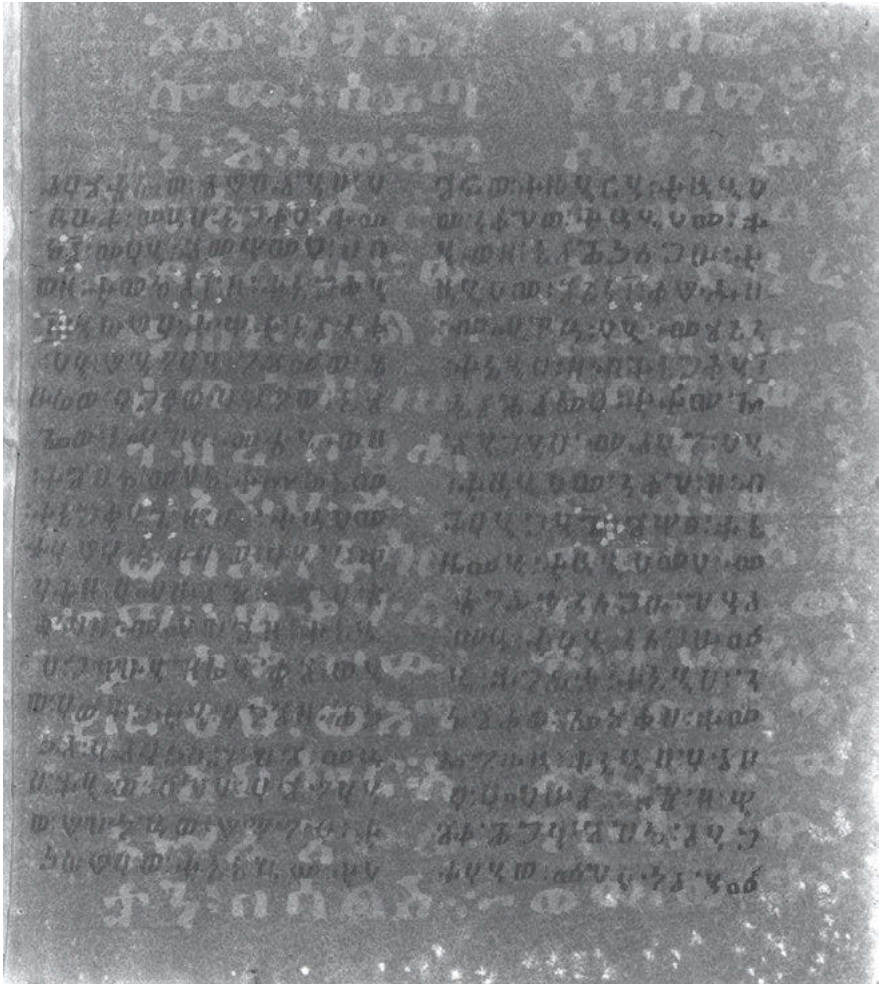
	Leaves	Orientation	Codex	Textual identification
<b>Quire 1</b>				
Sheet 1	1 + 7	Vertical	α	Homily of pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Resurrection (CPG 3598)
Sheet 2	2 + 6	—	—	Not palimpsested
Sheet 3	3	—	—	Not palimpsested
Sheet 4	4 + 5	—	—	Not palimpsested
<b>Quire 2</b>				
Sheet 1	8 + 15	Vertical		Unidentified
Sheet 2	9 + 14	Vertical	β	<i>Martyrdom of Romanos</i> (BHG 1600y)
Sheet 3	10 + 13	Vertical	γ	Chants
Sheet 4	11 + 12	Vertical	β	<i>Martyrdom of Cyprian and Justina</i> (BHG 455)
<b>Quire 3</b>				
Sheet 1	16 + 23	Vertical	δ	1 Enoch (CAVT 61)
Sheet 2	17 + 22	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (2 Chronicles 6:29–39)
Sheet 3	18 + 21	Horizontal	δ	1 Enoch
Sheet 4	19 + 20	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (Deuteronomy 4:3–16)
<b>Quire 4</b>				
Sheet 1	24 + 31	Vertical	ζ	Homily of Retu'a Häymānot on Easter
Sheet 2	25	Horizontal	η	<i>Testament of Jacob</i> (CAVT 99)
Sheet 3	26 + 29	Vertical	δ	1 Enoch
Sheet 4	27 + 28	Horizontal?		Unidentified
Sheet 5	30	Vertical	η	Homily of pseudo-Ephrem on Abraham and Sarah (CAVT 90)
<b>Quire 5</b>				
Sheet 1	32 + 39	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (Habakkuk 3:1–16 preceded by another lection)
Sheet 2	33 + 38	Vertical	β	<i>Martyrdom of Theocritus the Lector</i>
Sheet 3	34 + 37	Vertical	δ	1 Enoch
Sheet 4	35 + 36	Vertical	γ	Chants
<b>Quire 6</b>				
Sheet 1	40 + 47	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (Isaiah 6:3–7:3)
Sheet 2	41 + 46	—	—	Not palimpsested
Sheet 3	42 + 45	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (Isaiah 7:4–23)
Sheet 4	43 + 44	Vertical	θ	<i>Life of Basilides</i> (BHO 162)

	Leaves	Orientation	Codex	Textual identification
<b>Quire 7</b>				
Sheet 1	48 + 55	Vertical	δ	1 Enoch
Sheet 2	49 + 54	Horizontal	η	<i>Testament of Abraham (CAVT 88)</i>
Sheet 3	50 + 53	Vertical	θ	<i>Life of Basilides</i>
Sheet 4	51 + 52	Vertical	β	<i>Martyrdom of Theodotus; Martyrdom of Theocritus the Lector</i>
<b>Quire 8</b>				
Sheet 1	56 + 63	Vertical	β	<i>Martyrdom of the Forty Soldiers of Cappadocia (BHG 1201)</i>
Sheet 2	57 + 62	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (Daniel 3:62–63)
Sheet 3	58 + 61	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (Isaiah 11:13–12:6, 2:3–4)
Sheet 4	59 + 60	Horizontal	α	Homily of pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Resurrection
<b>Quire 9</b>				
Sheet 1	64 + 71	Vertical	θ	<i>Life of Basilides</i>
Sheet 2	65 + 70	Horizontal	ι	On the True Cross; <i>Life of Zenobios and Zenobia</i>
Sheet 3	66 + 69	Horizontal	ι	On the True Cross; <i>Life of Zenobios and Zenobia</i>
Sheet 4	67 + 68	Horizontal	ι	On the True Cross
<b>Quire 10</b>				
Sheet 1	72 + 79	Vertical	γ	Chants
Sheet 2	73 + 78	Horizontal	α	Homily of pseudo-Chrysostom for Easter Monday; homily of Benjamin of Alexandria for Easter Tuesday
Sheet 3	74 + 77	Vertical		Unidentified
Sheet 4	75 + 76	Vertical	θ	<i>Life of Basilides</i>
<b>Quire 11</b>				
Sheet 1	80 + 87	Vertical	ζ	Homily of Retu'a Hāymānot on Easter
Sheet 2	81 + 86	Vertical	ζ	Homily of Retu'a Hāymānot on Easter
Sheet 3	82 + 85	Horizontal	α	Homily of pseudo-Chrysostom for Easter Monday; homily of Benjamin of Alexandria for Easter Tuesday
Sheet 4	83 + 84	Vertical	ε	Lectionary (Zephaniah 3:10–20 followed by another lection)
<b>Quire 12</b>				
Sheet 1	88 + 95	Vertical		Unidentified
Sheet 2	89 + 94	Horizontal	α	Homily of Benjamin of Alexandria for Easter Tuesday
Sheet 3	90 + 93	Horizontal	α	Homily of pseudo-Chrysostom for Easter Monday
Sheet 4	91 + 92	Horizontal	α	Homily of Benjamin of Alexandria for Easter Tuesday

	Leaves	Orientation	Codex	Textual identification
<b>Quire 13</b>				
Sheet 1	95 <sup>bis</sup> + 104	Horizontal	κ	Acts 9:39–10:9, 10:38–47
Sheet 2	96 + 102	Horizontal	κ	Acts 9:23–38, 10:48–11:13
Sheet 3	97 + 100	Horizontal	κ	Acts 9:10–22, 11:13–22
Sheet 4	98 + 99	Horizontal	κ	Acts 10:10–38
Sheet 5	101	Horizontal		Unidentified
Sheet 6	103	Horizontal		Unidentified
<b>Quire 14</b>				
Sheet 1	105	Vertical	α	Homily of pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Resurrection
Sheet 2	106 + 107	Vertical		Unidentified
Remainder of codex apparently not palimpsested				

Despite this overarching tendency, it is useful to begin a review of the manuscript's *scriptiones inferiores* with the two cases confined to single quires. These represent the sole instances in which contiguous leaves from any of the antecedent codices lie alongside one another in Petermann II Nachtrag 24, a situation possibly due in part to the fact that they are also the only underwritings exclusively oriented horizontally, that is, parallel to the *scriptio superior*. This suggests that even though the leaves have been trimmed somewhat, these two manuscripts possessed folios not significantly larger than the 12 × 11 cm dimensions of Petermann II Nachtrag 24.<sup>66</sup> However, since this palimpsest contains only a single quire, or segment thereof, of each of the earlier codices, it is impossible to offer a reasonable conjecture as to which, if any, additional works might have appeared with the fragmentarily preserved texts in either case.

<sup>66</sup> No axis could have reached 20 cm in any of these instances, however.



**Fig. 4:** Acts 10:38–42 (c. thirteenth century) underwritten on Petermann II Nachtrag 24, fol. 95bis<sup>v</sup>; image processed by Keith Knox, © Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung.

Notwithstanding two singletons with unidentified underwritings, quire thirteen of Petermann II Nachtrag 24 is composed of a quaternion from a copy of the Acts of the Apostles (codex κ), with running text spanning 9:10–11:22 preserved with scattered lacunae (Fig. 4). After being erased, the outermost sheet of the quaternion became the third sheet of the new quire (fols 97 + 100), and the second sheet of the quaternion was placed behind it as the second sheet of the new quire (fols 96 + 102). Both were folded backwards and consequently reversed from their prior orienta-

tion. To the rear of these, the third sheet of the quaternion was positioned upside down, which thus became the outermost sheet (fols 95<sup>bis</sup> + 104). Inside the new quire the innermost sheet of the quaternion was deposited, orientated in accordance with the original manuscript (fols 98 + 99). On palaeographic grounds, this highly imperfect witness is among the oldest known material evidence for the Old Ethiopic translation of the Acts of the Apostles, standing at least a century earlier than any available to Curt Niccum for his 2014 critical edition.<sup>67</sup> In view of the highly unsettled state of early Ethiopic manuscript palaeography,<sup>68</sup> it cannot be precluded that these fragments antedate the thirteenth century, with various linguistic archaisms and unique variant readings aligning with the Greek *Vorlage* corroborating their antiquity. For example, throughout the leaves, assorted prepositions, relative pronouns, and conjunctions exhibit a robust mixture of normal forms terminating in the first order vowel (-a) and archaic ones ending with the fifth order (-ē), the latter being one of the most common features in non-standardised early Ge'ez.<sup>69</sup> Since the tremendously valuable textual readings of this witness cannot be characterised so generally, two cases illustrate its uniqueness and importance. One of these appears in Acts 11:2, wherein the second clause stands asyndetically in contrast to the rest of the Ethiopic tradition according to Niccum, but aligning with the absence of a conjunction in Greek there. A more striking case, however, lies in the first half of Acts 10:39, where a concentration of elements brings a previously fairly distant Ge'ez text into far closer conformity with its *Vorlage*:

καὶ ἡμεῖς μάρτυρες πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ.<sup>70</sup>  
 ‘We are witnesses of everything that he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.’

<sup>67</sup> Niccum 2014.

<sup>68</sup> While in most cases the limited amount of legible underwriting means that the undertexts in Petermann II Nachtrag 24 will remain more of a curiosity than textually significant, together with some other early palimpsest inferior hands they shall play a role in another sphere: namely, a prolegomenon to early Ethiopic manuscript palaeography intended to address this deficiency, which will be prepared and published within the context of the ERC-funded ‘Beyond Influence: The Connected Histories of Ethiopic and Syriac Christianity’ project. Uhlig 1988 remains an indispensable and reliable resource for Ethiopic palaeography apart from the earliest period (pre-1350), which, among other issues, is unduly compressed.

<sup>69</sup> This is particularly well attested with ጎበ/ጎቤ, እለ/እሌ and እንበ/እንቤ, but archaic forms are also found elsewhere, such as መንጎሌ and ሶቤ in Acts 10:6 and 11:15 respectively. On archaic Ge'ez, see especially Bausi 2005 and 2023.

<sup>70</sup> Aland et al. 2012, 414.

ወንሕነ ፡ ኩልነ ፡ ሰማዕቲ ፡ በዘገብረ ፡ በብሔረ ፡ አይሁድ ፡ ወበኢየሩሳሌም ፡<sup>71</sup>

‘All of us are witnesses to what he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.’

ወንሕነ ፡ ኩልነ ፡ ሰማዕቲ ፡ በዝ ፡ ግብረ ፡ በብሔረ ፡ ደሁዳ ፡ ወበኢየሩሳሌም ፡<sup>72</sup>

‘All of us are witnesses to this thing in the land of Judea and in Jerusalem.’

Given its textual significance and accompanying antiquity, codex κ represents one of the most significant *scriptiones inferiores* uncovered in this palimpsest.

Somewhat similarly, three contiguous sheets from codex ι form the inner portion of the ninth quire of Petermann II Nachtrag 24, with no material from it found elsewhere. In this case, the innermost sheet of the original quire occupies the same position, albeit inverted (fols 67 + 68), and the preceding two sheets lie adjacent to it, having been folded backwards together and then also jointly inverted (fols 66 + 69 and fols 65 + 70). Although the bottom third of these leaves has been trimmed away,<sup>73</sup> their surviving sections preserve portions of two texts: the end of an anonymous narrative on how the Cross appeared as an image to Constantine and how Helen found it (fols 66<sup>v</sup>, 66<sup>r</sup>, 65<sup>v</sup>, 65<sup>r</sup>, 68<sup>v</sup>, 68<sup>r</sup>, 67<sup>v</sup>),<sup>74</sup> and the beginning of the *Life of Zenobios and Zenobia* (fols 70<sup>v</sup>, 70<sup>r</sup>, 69<sup>v</sup>, 69<sup>r</sup>).<sup>75</sup> Despite being codicologically conjoined here, these works do not collocate anywhere else in the Ethiopic manuscript tradition, as the first is otherwise only attested within copies of the *Homiliary for the Year* and the second within *Acts of the Martyrs* manuscripts. As both of these extensive external collections are transmitted through large codices, the appearance of two of their seemingly independent members together in a relatively diminutive late-thirteenth- or early-fourteenth-century manuscript should not be casually disregarded. While this combination might simply represent a rare instance of a small quasi-hagiographical Ethiopic miscellany akin to Oslo, Museum of Cultural History, UEM35900,<sup>76</sup> both texts may have been translated from Greek. This opens the possibility that the two may have been transmitted together at times in smaller codices during an earlier stage of the Ethiopic manuscript tradition and only later separated when norms changed after

71 Petermann II Nachtrag 24, fol. 95bis<sup>v</sup>.

72 Niccum 2014, 150.

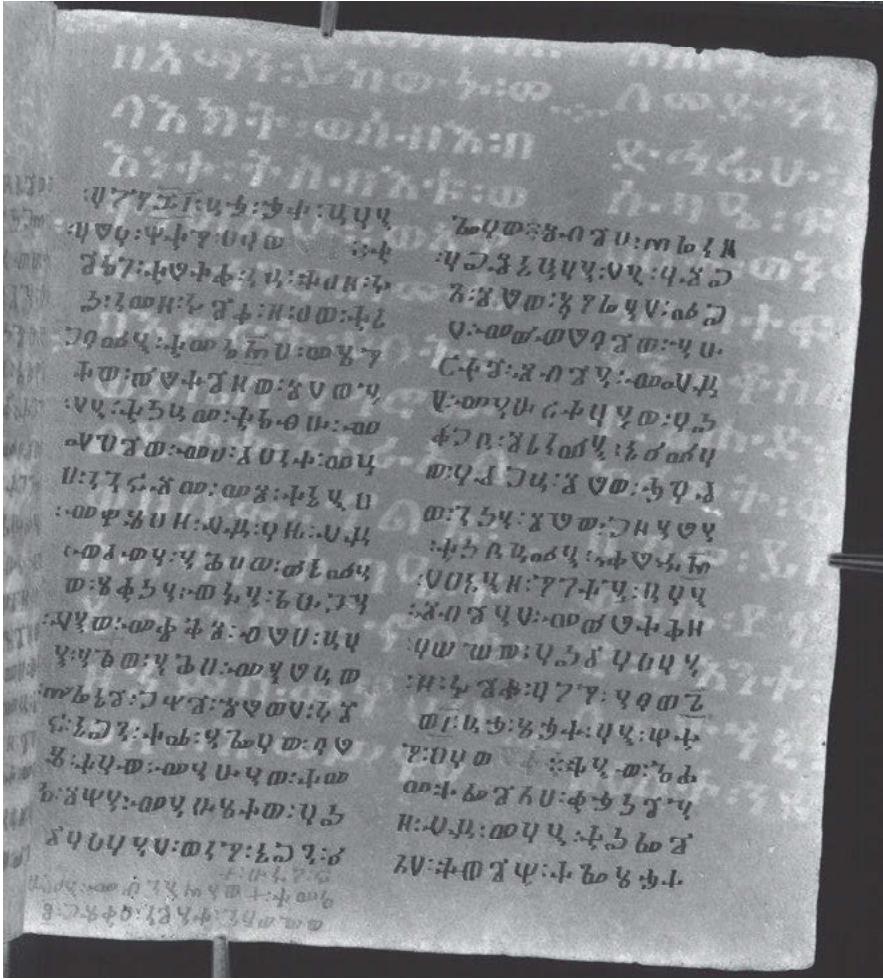
73 Twelve of a reconstructed eighteen lines of text per page are usually preserved on these leaves.

74 For the Ethiopic text and translation of this narrative, see Getatchew Haile 2018, 130–149.

75 Cf. Ṭānāsee 121, fols 71<sup>r</sup>–73<sup>r</sup> (Six 1999, 89). The story found in Ethiopic is completely different from the Greek accounts (*BHG* 1884–1885), and while a Latin translation of this version with introductory notes appeared in van Hecke et al. 1883, 270–273, scholars from multiple fields would doubtless welcome a critical edition and updated translation.

76 See Erho 2017, 54–56. The unusual compositional history of this manuscript is described in its colophon.

the massive influx of new hagiographic and homiletic translations from Arabic in the early second millennium.



**Fig. 5:** Homily of pseudo-Benjamin of Alexandria (fourteenth century) underwritten on Petermann II Nachtrag 24, fol. 94<sup>v</sup>; image processed by Keith Knox, © Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung.

Other *scriptiones inferiores* lie upon both the horizontal and vertical axes in Petermann II Nachtrag 24, likely representing a set of slightly larger original codices than the two just described. The most widespread of these – and indeed the most

dispersed antecedent manuscript represented in the palimpsest, with seven sheets and a singleton spread throughout six quires – is codex α, a fourteenth-century copy of a medieval Ethiopic homiliary entitled *Dersāna pantaq<sup>u</sup>astē* ('Homiliary for Pentecost'). Only leaves from the opening section of this homiliary are present, attesting portions of the first three of its seventeen total works: (1) a homily of pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Resurrection (CPG 3598, on fols 1, 7, 59, 60, 105);<sup>77</sup> (2) a homily of pseudo-Chrysostom on the Resurrection for Easter Monday (fols 73, 82, 85<sup>r</sup>, 90, 93);<sup>78</sup> and (3) an otherwise unknown (and probably spurious) homily of Benjamin of Alexandria on the Resurrection for Easter Tuesday (fols 78, 85<sup>v</sup>, 89, 91, 92, 94 [Fig. 5]), in which is embedded the *Narratio de vita sua* of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (CPG 6633).<sup>79</sup> A second bi-orientated codex (η), probably penned in the early fifteenth century, survives in a more limited fashion via two singletons and a sheet located within the fourth and seventh quires of Petermann II Nachtrag 24. Three hagiographical-homiletical works appear across these leaves: the *Testament of Abraham* (fols 49, 54), the *Testament of Jacob* (CAVT 99, on fol. 25), and a homily of pseudo-Ephrem on Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (CAVT 90, on fol. 30).<sup>80</sup> Together with the *Testament of Isaac* (CAVT 98), these homilies commonly circulate as a unit within the Ethiopic manuscript tradition,<sup>81</sup> often alongside a diverse range of other works.<sup>82</sup> A third codex (δ) displaying this multi-orientational

77 While neither the tertiary Ge'ez version nor the well-preserved Coptic original of this homily have been edited or translated, van den Broek 2013, 82–86 presents an extended summary of its contents. Two other Ethiopic witnesses to CPG 3598 are noted in Erho 2024, 321, though a comprehensive listing of its known Ge'ez exemplars will appear only in a future publication.

78 This is a different recension (i.e. a discrete Ethiopic translation of a different Arabic version) of the same homily found in the Ethiopic *Homiliary of the Fathers* corresponding to CPG 5160.11 (as in e.g. London, British Library, Or. 774, fols 108<sup>v</sup>–111<sup>v</sup>).

79 An edition of the Ethiopic version of CPG 6633, which takes into account only a handful of recent manuscripts, was published in Muthreich 2019. Copies of this homily offer the earliest Ge'ez evidence for this apocryphon by far, but a definitive answer to the important question of whether the *Narratio de vita sua* was interpolated into the Ethiopic version of the homily soon after its translation or belonged to the original translated text and then served as the basis for a fuller version subsequently executed from Arabic must await the publication of the full pseudo-Benjamin sermon.

80 For editions and translations of the Ethiopic versions of these works, see Caquot 1988; Heide 2000; Heide 2012. Further updates to their manuscript attestation are provided in Erho 2013 and forthcoming.

81 The *Testaments of the Three Patriarchs* (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) are all formally homilies spuriously attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria in Ethiopic.

82 It seems more plausible that additional leaves from codex η might emerge than from almost any of its counterparts, insofar as this undertext thus far has been one of the most difficult to recover. For a handful of examples illustrating the surprisingly diverse works with which these four homilies collocate, see Erho 2013, 92–93.



character transmits but a single work, 1 Enoch, which may have been the sole text contained in the original manuscript, especially given its textual affinities and probably closely related provenance to the unipartite Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Petermann II Nachtrag 29.<sup>83</sup> The two are also of similar age, with the fragments palaeographically datable to the early sixteenth century, thus representing the latest *scriptio inferior* in this palimpsest. Five sheets from this codex bearing witness to chapters from the three concluding tractates of 1 Enoch (the *Astronomical Book*, *Book of Dreams*, and *Epistle of Enoch*) lie between quires three and seven (fols 16, 18, 21, 23, 26, 29, 34, 37, 48, 55).

Insofar as Petermann II Nachtrag 24 constitutes a relatively small manuscript, especially in comparison to the significantly larger average dimensions of surviving medieval Ethiopic codices,<sup>84</sup> the largest number of antecedent volumes are represented by sheets forming bifolia orientated in an exclusively vertical direction. Each of these must therefore have stood at least 22 cm tall, a height likely exceeded significantly in most cases.

The two youngest *codices antiquiores* of this type are attested by series of single sheets spread out among multiple quires. Codex  $\theta$  transmits the *Life of Basilides* (BHO 162) across four sheets (fols 43, 44, 50, 53, 64, 71, 75, 76), offering in an early-fifteenth-century hand some of the earliest Ethiopic evidence for this work, translated into Ge'ez in 1396/1397 CE according to a colophon included in some copies.<sup>85</sup> Forming three sheets (fols 10, 13, 35, 36, 72, 79) and probably harkening from later in the same century, the roughly contemporaneous chants codex  $\gamma$  embodies the only palimpsested liturgical material identified in Petermann II Nachtrag 24.

One of their counterparts, also conveying only a single text in its surviving portions, presents an interesting case. The homily of the earlier Retu'a Hāymānot on Easter, represented by three sheets in the fourth and eleventh quires (fols 24, 31, 80, 81, 86, 87), comprises the entirety of the fourteenth-century codex  $\zeta$ .<sup>86</sup> Since the leaves are well over 20 cm tall and this is a relatively short text, it certainly would have been accompanied by others – a supposition bolstered by its external

<sup>83</sup> See Dillmann 1878, 1 and Erho 2023, 193–195.

<sup>84</sup> This may well represent an illusion, however, in view of the types of early Ethiopic manuscripts that survive in relatively large quantities versus those that do not, especially liturgical and personal books. Almost all early Ethiopic manuscripts of these types are found in European libraries, and in some of these collections, especially the oldest parts of those in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, they are relatively well attested.

<sup>85</sup> For instance Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien d'Abbadie 127, fol. 80<sup>v</sup>. For a now quite dated edition of the Ethiopic text, see Esteves Pereira 1955, 1–67.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. e.g. EMMML 1763, fols 190<sup>r</sup>–199<sup>r</sup>.

presence only in large homiliary manuscripts. The extent to which the full contents of the *codex antiquior* might have mirrored these contemporaneous witnesses, such as London, British Library, Or. 8192 or EMLL 1763, can only be conjectured, however.<sup>87</sup>

No prior codex supplied more writing material for Petermann II Nachtrag 24 than ε, from which are derived eight sheets spread out among five quires. These constitute the remnants of a late-thirteenth- or early-fourteenth-century Old Testament lectionary written in a two-column, twenty-five-line format on folia approximately 25 cm in height. Whereas New Testament lectionaries are scarce in the Ethiopic tradition, counterparts devoted solely to the Old Testament are virtually unknown, with these leaves forming one of just two fragmentary exemplars unearthed to date. In addition to a portion of 2 Chronicles 6 (fols 17, 22), which offers the earliest Ge'ez evidence for any part of that biblical book, the extant lections include passages from Deuteronomy 4 (fols 19, 20), Habakkuk 3 (fols 32, 39), Zephaniah 3 (fols 83, 84), Isaiah chapters 2, 6, 7, 11, and 12 (fols 40, 42, 45, 47, 58, 61), and the Song of the Three Young Men from the Septuagintal version of Daniel (fols 57, 62).<sup>88</sup> The 2 Chronicles leaf also contains the non-standardised spelling ዩሥራኤል (*Yesrā'ēl*) for 'Israel' in 6:33, though the normal form, ኤሥራኤል (*Esrā'ēl*), appears elsewhere in the codex (e.g. Isaiah 11:16 and 12:6). Principally attested in the earliest manuscripts of 1–4 Kingdoms, some have adduced this unusual spelling as an archaism.<sup>89</sup>

A final codex (β) whose leaves are orientated exclusively on the vertical axis brings forth the last *scriptiones inferiores* identified in Petermann II Nachtrag 24. These consist of the martyrdoms of Romanos (*BHG* 1600y, on fols 9, 14), Cyprian and Justina (*BHG* 455, on fols 11, 12),<sup>90</sup> and the forty soldiers of Sebaste in Cappadocia (*BHG* 1201, on fols 56, 63),<sup>91</sup> each represented by single leaves, as well as an acephalous fragment of the *Martyrdom of Theodotus* of Galatia (fols 51<sup>r</sup>, 52) and a slightly larger portion of the *Martyrdom of Theocritus the Lector*, including its

<sup>87</sup> Such a connection can be more readily inferred in the case of EMLL 6620, discussed above, in view of its wider range of identified undertexts, which jointly cohere fully with the established patterns of the *Homiliary for the Year*.

<sup>88</sup> A few lines of two other lections are extant, but neither has yet been identified due to the lack of clear textual markers among the handful of surviving words and letters.

<sup>89</sup> For instance Gehman 1931, 103.

<sup>90</sup> An edition and translation of the Ethiopic version is available in Goodspeed 1903.

<sup>91</sup> A preliminary comparison of the Ethiopic version of this text with the Greek form published in von Gebhardt 1902, 171–181 reveals a number of notable differences, particularly in the absence of certain passages and the names of Kandidos (Kyriion often fills his role) and Peter, but it may nonetheless preserve an ancient form of the story going back to the same ultimate source.

beginning (fols 33, 38, 51<sup>v</sup>, 52<sup>r</sup>). Since these hagiographies are all generally otherwise found in Ethiopic *Acts of the Martyrs* codices, this may have constituted an early form of such a manuscript, even though differing in certain respects from the main stream of this tradition. Unless, for instance, the leaf containing the story of the forty martyrs of Sebaste derives from another codex (a possibility that, while unlikely, cannot be ruled out entirely), the sequential progression from the *Martyrdom of Theodotus* of Galatia directly into the *Martyrdom of Theocritus the Lector* excludes an ordering strictly following the martyrological calendar, since the commemoration of the first (13th Maggābit) falls between the other two (7th and 17th Maggābit [March–April in the Gregorian calendar]). Though sequences failing to adhere perfectly to the yearly progression do exist elsewhere in the tradition, hagiographies from this month also seldom appear in manuscripts together with those from Ṭeqemt (October–November), when Cyprian and Justina (7th) and Romanos (18th) are celebrated.<sup>92</sup> This precise grouping is found in a few cases, however, most notably in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien 131,<sup>93</sup> one of the earliest surviving Ethiopic *Acts of the Martyrs* codices. Perhaps, then, these palimpsest fragments provide corroboratory evidence for the production of such volumes in accordance with different norms earlier in the medieval period.<sup>94</sup> As commonly seen in the surviving remnants of the early Ge'ez tradition, several archaisms are attested in β, such as the undivided rendering of ኢጲስቆጶስ (*ēppisqoppos* [‘bishop’], on e.g. fols 38<sup>v</sup> [Fig. 6] and 56<sup>r</sup>).<sup>95</sup> Others include the fifth order *ē*-ending on words such as the relative pronoun ኢለ (*ella*) and the preposition ውስተ (*westa*). On palaeographic grounds alone, codex β does not postdate the early fourteenth century, though creation up to a couple hundred years earlier cannot be precluded. Despite the full texts being available elsewhere, such an early dating underscores the importance of these fragments to the study of hagiographies translated into Ge'ez.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> See Bausi 2002, 3–6.

<sup>93</sup> For the full contents of éthiopien 131, see Zotenberg 1877, 196–198. Zotenberg's thirteenth-century dating must be eschewed in favour of the early fifteenth century.

<sup>94</sup> As discussed above, the testimony of codex ι buttresses the possibility of significant production changes in the Ethiopic hagiographic manuscript tradition during the late medieval period.

<sup>95</sup> In later Ge'ez, this noun is invariably written as ኢጲስ : ቆጶስ (*ēppis qoppos*).

<sup>96</sup> The extant Ethiopic manuscript tradition is much younger overall than any of its Eastern Christian counterparts, with less than fifty known Ethiopic codices and fragments that likely antedate the fourteenth century. At present, no more than four of these can be placed prior to the second millennium on any reasonable scientific grounds.



**Fig. 6:** *Martyrdom of Theocritus the Lector* (c. thirteenth or early fourteenth century) underwritten on Petermann II Nachtrag 24, fol. 38<sup>v</sup>; image processed by Roger Easton, © Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung.

With at least ten discrete prior manuscripts contributing to its *scriptiones inferiores* – a number that may well be augmented through further image processing allowing for the identification of additional undertexts<sup>97</sup> – Petermann II Nachtrag 24 seemingly constitutes a rather curious Ethiopic palimpsest. Although none of its Ethiopic-Ethiopic counterparts have undergone similar multi-spectral imaging, such examination as they have been subject to suggests assembly through large sections taken from one to four *codices antiquiores* as a general practice. Peter-

<sup>97</sup> On one of the important image-processing developments for this palimpsest, see Knox 2023, 404–405.

mann II Nachtrag 24 reveals a very different pattern of manufacture, combining a significantly higher number of source manuscripts from which individual pieces were randomly dispersed to form most quires. This pattern suggests the existence of a pile of leaves from many concurrently disbound and erased codices, which was then drawn upon for writing material to create multiple new volumes – that is, a palimpsest workshop of some sort. Such a practice most closely aligns with that attested in some non-Ethiopic codices; for example, certain complex Arabic palimpsests include leaves derived from up to twenty independent manuscripts, with those manufactured in the same locale sometimes sharing source materials.<sup>98</sup> Given this seemingly unprecedented situation for the Ethiopic manuscript tradition and the fact that no evidence exists for Petermann II Nachtrag 24 coming from the Horn of Africa,<sup>99</sup> a foreign origin seems likely, especially Jerusalem, where a diaspora Ethiopian community with a large library and probably limited access to parchment existed.<sup>100</sup> The identification of *membra disiecta* from any of the *codices antiquiores*, in palimpsested form or otherwise, would resolve the provenance matter more definitively.

While the question of why so many codices were being simultaneously re-purposed in this case, in contradistinction to the much more circumscribed Ethiopic palimpsesting witnessed elsewhere, is perhaps unanswerable, an interrelated one pertaining to why these particular manuscripts were involved can be addressed. Since both the *scriptio superior* and *scriptio inferior* are exclusively Ge'ez, this cannot be a circumstance where the texts were discarded simply due to in-

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<sup>98</sup> See Kessel 2023.

<sup>99</sup> Since few Ethiopic manuscripts contain colophons, especially with geographical information, it is often a misguided assumption in scholarship that they ought to come from the Horn of Africa, and especially Ethiopia, unless there are overwhelming markers to the contrary, despite much evidence for scribal activity in foreign locales such as Rome and Egypt. For one recent example of this scholarly phenomenon involving Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Or. 148, see Nosnitsin 2022, 44. Careful examination of this manuscript reveals no evidence whatsoever for Ethiopian or Eritrean production, while numerous elements, including its unconventional textual assembly, challenge such an origin in view of established codicological norms in that region, implying creation in a foreign land. Indeed, prior to the late eighteenth century, the number of Egyptian, Jerusalemite, Roman, and other Ethiopic codices of foreign manufacture in European collections may well have exceeded those of Ethiopian and Eritrean provenance. This situation only began to shift with the rise of European travellers to Ethiopia for cultural and missionary purposes, from James Bruce (1730–1794) onwards, who brought back manuscripts with them, exponentially widening a previously microscopic direct transmissional pathway.

<sup>100</sup> See Isaac 1984–1986. Islamic and virtually all non-Ethiopian Christian communities had shifted to writing on paper long before this time, so new parchment bifolia probably would have required considerable effort and financial resources to source in this region.

comprehensibility or a complete lack of situational value, as may have been true for the Ethiopic leaves at Sinai overwritten with Greek. This palimpsesting must have taken place within an Ethiopian Orthodox community as part of a process of internal literary readjustment, providing texts more needed in that particular situation than those offered by the dismembered volumes.<sup>101</sup> All ten of the discarded manuscripts in fact exhibit a certain obsolescence that probably contributed to their involvement. The chants book lacks musical notation, an element that became standard for all Ethiopic collections of this type in the sixteenth century. Hagiographies of foreign saints, which form the basis of multiple *codices antiquiores*, became superseded by the synaxarion, with its shorter and more compendious notices, around the same time, leading to a sharp decline in the production of *Acts of the Martyrs* manuscripts and smaller volumes of this type. Similarly, no evidence exists for the copying of the homiliaries that supplied further leaves after the beginning of the sixteenth century, indicating that they too had fallen out of active use throughout the tradition long before. Different issues probably rendered other *codices* superfluous. The Acts of the Apostles and 1 Enoch remain integral parts of the *de facto* Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox canon, but their textual standardisation alongside the rest of the Ethiopic Bible during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries might well have led to the consignment of older copies for palimpsesting, especially if the updated versions had become available to the community.<sup>102</sup> The linguistic archaisms saturating the Acts of the Apostles as well as one of the *Acts of the Martyrs* manuscripts may have made these texts difficult to read nearly half a millennium after Ge'ez had reached a fairly standardised state, further undermining their communal value. Lastly, as Old Testament lectionaries are nearly unknown within the tradition, that codex probably had seen little use since its creation, rendering it particularly expendable. Only the *Testaments of the Three Patriarchs* manuscript cannot be readily characterised as obsolescent, but the works contained therein stand on the periphery of the Ethiopic literary landscape, and any number of possible explanations for its presence alongside the other *codices antiquiores* might be postulated.<sup>103</sup> All, therefore, seem to have been culled from the fringes of a library pos-

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**101** This is not to claim that the community necessarily physically dismembered the *codices antiquiores* itself, but that one or more of its members possessed them before their erasure, instigated this process, and ultimately were the recipients and end users of the resultant manuscripts.

**102** On the *de facto* Ethiopian Orthodox canon, see Erho 2015.

**103** Two plausible and particularly simplistic explanations are that the manuscript was damaged and thus discardable due to its physical condition or contained duplicates of works available elsewhere in the library.

sessing plenty of volumes from a bygone era and repurposed for works more central and useful to a community whose literature, practices, and needs had developed in new directions.

## 5 Concluding considerations

While stories abound narrating the exciting discoveries of lost and unknown texts hidden within palimpsests from other traditions, not a single comparable case has surfaced in Ethiopic. Lack of scholarly attention and multi-spectral imaging does not fully account for this situation, however. A comprehensive understanding of the Ethiopic manuscript tradition and its development reveals a level of homogeneity fairly distinct from that found elsewhere. Codices were customarily copied as complete units; indigenous compositions are exceptional until the end of the medieval period. The literary corpus is relatively narrow, and even though unknown texts are disproportionately found in pre-fourteenth-century manuscripts,<sup>104</sup> well-attested ones (mostly biblical) populate that same earliest stratum to a far greater extent. Thus, the literary homogeneity that allows so many underwritings in Ethiopic palimpsests to be identified without multi-spectral imaging or other special tools implies that few new Ge'ez texts will come to light from this quarter, despite dazzling results in others. Although it always remains possible that an unknown writing might emerge from one of these manuscripts, in no individual case is this likely. Moreover, since translations dominate early Ethiopic literature, even a new work in Ge'ez often will be available in one or more prior traditions, reducing the overall impact of such a find.<sup>105</sup>

Admittedly, *scriptiones inferiores* contribute significantly to the comparatively small corpus of pre-fourteenth-century Ethiopic textual evidence, whose general lateness stands in contrast to other Christian manuscript traditions where larger – and sometimes quite voluminous – amounts of first millennium material survive. Nonetheless, such cases are exceptional within the palimpsests identified to date, which are generally composed of late-medieval and early-modern *codices antiquiores*, overlapping with a well-preserved cross-section of mainstream manuscripts. Not only, therefore, is Ethiopic palimpsesting modern, but most of its underwritings appear to be relatively late, especially when compared to the broader cross-cultural landscape.

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<sup>104</sup> For instance Erho and Henry 2019; Bausi 2021.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Butts and Erho 2023.

Just a fraction of extant Ge'ez manuscripts are accessible for academic study: only approximately 20000 out of an estimated total that may surpass one million. The fifteen identified Ethiopic-Ethiopic palimpsests among this corpus suggests a rate of approximately one per thousand corporate volumes,<sup>106</sup> though the sample size and potential outlier repositories, such as Dimā Giyorgis and its multiple holdings, could be skewing these figures drastically. However, if this is a somewhat accurate representation, this ratio intimates that perhaps 400 palimpsests might exist among the 36000 church and 1500 monastic libraries in Ethiopia. Their Eritrean counterparts would augment this figure further. However, insofar as age seems to play such an essential role in whether volumes have any reasonable, albeit remote, possibility of being palimpsested, the inclusion in these calculations of numerous ecclesiastical institutions founded in recent centuries almost certainly results in an overestimation. Nevertheless, a surviving total exceeding one hundred stands as the most reasonable conjecture. Most of these unstudied Ethiopic palimpsests are very likely to remain inaccessible to scholars, but, if the prevailing trends hold, their *scriptiones inferiores* are also likely to be comparatively uninspiring.<sup>107</sup>

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**106** An increasing number of private prayerbooks and other manuscripts lacking any real scholarly value have been added to this total over the past two decades through the injudicious labours of various institutions and private collectors, so the number of corporate volumes lies a few thousand below the total number of accessible Ethiopic codices. Although still represented in earlier times, both collecting activities and microfilming projects were instead orientated towards the larger and more diverse corporate manuscripts, with the result that they formed a strong majority of items available to Western scholars.

**107** Due to their accessibility and the accompanying possibilities of applying new scientific techniques like multi-spectral imaging to them, academic study of Ethiopic palimpsests in the future seems likely to focus on the five in European libraries and the unique Ethiopic-Greek palimpsest at St Catherine's Monastery. Given that private books, not corporate ones, now almost wholly drive increases of Ethiopic manuscripts in Western collections, additions to this corpus are unlikely to be forthcoming.



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## Abbreviations

*BHG* = François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3rd edn (Subsidia Hagiographica, 8a), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1957; *Novum Auctarium* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 65), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1984.

*BHO* = Paul Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 10), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1910.

*CAVT* = Jean-Claude Haelewyck, *Clavis Apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1998.

*CPG* = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 2: *Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974.

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Alba Fedeli

# Personal Qur'ans in Early Islam: A Case of Palimpsesting and Training

**Abstract:** Included by Adolf Grohmann among the examples of seventh-century Qur'anic manuscripts, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, PER Inv. A. Perg. 2 is the remains of a bifolio described in the catalogue of Qur'anic fragments from the Papyrus Collection of the Austrian National Library as an unusual palimpsest. A. Perg. 2 is a puzzling case because it contains part of the passage about the biblical Korah (surah 28, verse 76–82) written three times. Recent imaging of the fragment using multispectral imaging has enabled the manuscript to be re-read. Rather than chronological layers, the three identical sections of surah 28 are part of one and the same project that happened on the given leaf in a single session. The script styles, peculiar dynamics of the object production and possible training context suggest that this fragment is a 'personal Qur'an' produced for practising how to write it.

## 1 A different approach to the written artefact in palimpsest studies

The process of palimpsesting is associated with rewriting (*scriptio superior*) over an earlier text (*scriptio inferior*) after it has been removed. However, the essence of palimpsesting is the reallocation of written materials for a new project and not only the presence of two or more layers of script.<sup>1</sup> Some cases of intertwined *scriptio inferior* and *scriptio superior* do not fall under the category of palimpsest where the definition of a palimpsested artefact depends on the fact that it was carried out as a new project on previously used material. The Qur'anic manuscript Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (hereafter: ÖNB), PER Inv. A. Perg. 2 (hereafter: A. Perg. 2)<sup>2</sup> contains strata of the Qur'anic text but is not the result of a palimpsesting process. Its strata are the result of a process that likely took place as a single event. The definition of 'palimpsest' cannot be divorced from the tech-

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1 Cavallo 2001.

2 A. Perg. 2 is the shortened shelf mark used by Loebenstein 1982.

niques, actors, and intentions of the palimpsesting process that occur on the manuscript page.

The relationship between two or more objects in the *scriptio inferior* and *scriptio superior* is an essential aspect of the palimpsesting process. This relationship also encompasses the connection between the cultures and languages in which the old and new objects were produced. A survey of the known cases of Qur'anic palimpsests was recently carried out to identify the patterns they exhibit.<sup>3</sup> There are two types of Qur'anic palimpsests: those that are objects completely disintegrated and recycled in a different cultural context, and those that are objects partially destroyed and recycled within the same culture and possibly the same community. Examples of the former case are the Sinai and Damascus Qur'anic palimpsests, that is, Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287 (large and small leaves) and Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L 120 sup. from Sinai, as well as the lost Damascus palimpsest leaf preserved in the 1908 photographic album of fragments from the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus. The only known examples of partially destroyed objects are the Qur'anic palimpsest from the Great Mosque of Şan'ā'<sup>4</sup> and the recently discovered Qur'anic leaves on paper from West Africa (see Section 3.3 below).

In her analysis of historical sources on the manuscript production process, Asma Hilali surveyed the techniques of 'palimpsesting', paying close attention to the Arabic terminology for rubbing, washing, soaking, and crossing out (*darb*) sections of the text as well as rewriting the text (*ğandara*, 're-inking'). In this context, the object and the text are a single unity with traces of their use and afterlife, rather than two separate projects resulting in two objects.<sup>5</sup> In Arabic manuscript culture, a *mabşūr* (i.e. 'scraped off, shaved off, scratched') manuscript also can be a manuscript where single words or groups of words have been scraped off and then rewritten. The *Glossary of Technical Terms* edited by Adam Gacek defines the palimpsest as *mabşūr*, meaning 'pared, erased', with the process being *başr*, meaning: (1) 'paring, dressing (of leather)'; (2) 'erasure with a pen knife or scraper'; and (3)

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3 Fedeli 2023.

4 My survey did not include this very interesting case of a more recent reuse of a Qur'an on paper in West Africa, discovered by Khaoula Trad and Darya Ogorodnikova; see their contribution to the present volume. The traces I identified in Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MS. 67.2007 and matching fragments (see Fedeli 2023, 276, n. 131) have the characteristics of Qur'anic text written on top of Qur'anic text but I have not yet accessed the objects using multispectral imaging.

5 'The palimpsesting techniques can be summarised in three ways: to keep the text as close as possible to the way it was written (*jandara*), to rub it out and to wash it out (*ħakk*) or to cross out (*darb*) certain passages. These techniques find their *raison d'être* in the transformations which have occurred in the text: fading ink and partial or major errors' (Hilali 2017, 11).



‘cancellation by means of drawing lines above a word or words to be erased’.<sup>6</sup> According to Kūrķīs ‘Awwād’s list of the oldest Arabic manuscripts, there exists a case of *nushah maktūbah bi-l-ḥaṭṭ al-kūfi ‘alā l-raqq al-mabšūr*, that is, a copy written in Kufic script on parchment leaves that have been erased or shaved off. The term *mabšūr* is accompanied by a footnote explaining that it corresponds to the English term ‘palimpsest’ and refers to previously used parchment from which the writing is removed and then written on again.<sup>7</sup> The copy listed by ‘Awwād is a manuscript held at the Topkapı Sarayı, whose writing has been partially re-inked.<sup>8</sup> In Arabic manuscript culture, the focus is on the script and its ink rather than the entire object and its structure.

There is more to the process of palimpsesting than script, ink, and single words, Guglielmo Cavallo argues. It also involves repurposing an object for a new project. That is, the presence of multiple layers of writing is not the only aspect of the process. In ‘L’immagine ritrovata: in margine ai palinsesti’, Cavallo surveys the birth and definition of a specific interest in erased and rewritten codices. He stresses the importance of understanding palimpsests as a relationship between two or more objects, going beyond the decipherment of their *scriptio inferior*. In the frame of *Palimpsestforschung* (‘palimpsest research’), Cavallo emphasises that the reuse of parchment (palimpsesting) was related to a mentality around reusing materials to produce new objects. That is, a palimpsest implies the reallocation of an object.<sup>9</sup> This is a key point in defining as a palimpsest an artefact that has two layers of script but does not embrace two objects. Based on Cavallo’s theory, I argue that A. Perg. 2 is not a palimpsest, although it has two layers of script on part of its parchment surface.

## 2 A. Perg. 2 as described in previous scholarship

The object described in this article is known as an example of the early Qur’anic manuscripts from the seventh century CE. The manuscript is a parchment fragment measuring approximately 237 × 205 mm.<sup>10</sup> It is part of a collection of twenty-one items donated by Franz Trau Senior (1842–1905) to the papyrus collection of

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6 Gacek 2001, 13, s.v. *b-š-r*.

7 ‘Awwād 1982, 32.

8 Fedeli 2023, 255–256.

9 See Cavallo 2001, 8.

10 Loebenstein 1982, 23.

Archduke Rainer in Vienna in 1892.<sup>11</sup> Trau, owner of a tea trading company founded by his father in 1850, was an art collector connected with Josef von Karabacek, director of the Papyrus Collection of the Austrian National Library from 1899 to 1917.<sup>12</sup>

In his 1958 article on the dating of early Qur'anic manuscripts, Adolf Grohmann included a black-and-white reproduction of the manuscript to provide an example of the similarity of the script style of early Qur'anic manuscripts and that used in early papyri from the seventh century.<sup>13</sup> Grohmann compares the Qur'anic manuscripts to the Arabic papyri of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century. These manuscripts include London, British Library, Or. 2165; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter: BnF), arabe 328 (a) and 328 (d); Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ar. 1605; Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, Qaf 47,<sup>14</sup> reproduced in the *Arabic Palaeography*,<sup>15</sup> which matches Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, ms. or. f. 4313; Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Medina 1a,<sup>16</sup> parchment no. 1700 in the papyrus collection of the Egyptian National Library in Cairo (reproduced by Grohmann as plate III a); and A. Perg. 2 in the Archduke Rainer collection in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Plate V of Grohmann's publication features a black-and-white image of the Vienna manuscript, labelled as 'Qur'ān Sūra 28 61–73'. This description refers to the content on the hair side of the almost completely preserved leaf on the left side of the fragmented parchment bifolio.

In 1980, Helene Loebenstein provided a comprehensive description of the manuscript and other early Qur'anic fragments from the Papyrus Collection of the Austrian National Library.<sup>17</sup> Her article includes reproductions of both the hair and flesh sides

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<sup>11</sup> Loebenstein 1982, 7 (referring to Grohmann) and Schwartz 1984, 524.

<sup>12</sup> See for example the catalogue for the auction of part of Trau's collection that also includes a postcard with Franz Trau Senior, Karabacek, and the numismatists Alexander Missong and Friedrich Kenner (Trau 1935).

<sup>13</sup> Grohmann 1958, 222: 'If we compare the Qur'āns Brit. Mus. Or. 2165, Mss. Paris. Arabe 328 (1), 328 (4), Codex Vat. ar. 1605, Arabic Palaeography Pl. 44, Istanbul, Saray, Medina 1a, the parchment no 1700 in the Papyrus-collection of the National Egyptian Library in Cairo (Plate III a) and Inv. Perg. Ar. 2 in the Archduke Rainer Collection in the National Austrian Library in Vienna (Plate Va) with these papyri, it is fairly possible to ascribe them to the first century of the Islamic era (viith or beginning of viiith cent. A. D.)'. Among the manuscripts listed in Grohmann 1958, 222 as dating to the seventh century, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, ms. or. f. 4313 (which belongs to the same codex as Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, Qaf 47) has been radiocarbon dated. Two pieces of parchment from fols 2 and 5 have been dated to 606–652 CE (1423,14 BP). See the details in Marx and Jocham 2019, 201, 216.

<sup>14</sup> See the dataset *MC*.

<sup>15</sup> Moritz 1905, pl. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Altıkulaç 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Loebenstein 1982; Schwartz 1984.

of the parchment fragment and observations of traces of folding as well as remnants of a second leaf, whose text she was unable to identify.<sup>18</sup> Grohmann's content (i.e. surah 28, verses 61–73, on the hair side of the parchment) is supplemented by the reading of the flesh side. Loebenstein notes that the page contains surah 28, verse 75–80 from l. 1 to l. 10 and then, from l. 12 to l. 18, the scribe wrote verses 75–77 again, with the parchment being lacunose at its bottom (ll. 19–23 on the flesh side and ll. 20–23 on the hair side). She also observes that the upper part of the flesh side of the parchment is a palimpsest. The *scriptio inferior* is visible only in the outer margin of the page. Its script resembles the script style of the whole page on the hair side and the bottom part of the flesh side.<sup>19</sup> The *scriptio superior* on ll. 1–10 is a continuation from the recto of the leaf (the hair side). As described by Loebenstein, l. 11 and half of l. 12 show traces of a later undeciphered text by a third hand, which differs from both *scriptio inferior* and *superior*.<sup>20</sup> The scholar was unable to read the *scriptio inferior* of the upper part of the page on the flesh side. However, she considers the possibility that it is the continuation of the hair side due to its similarity with the script of the recto.<sup>21</sup> This assumption led Loebenstein to investigate why the same text was repeated at the bottom of the same page. She offers two possible scenarios to explain this repetition: (1) the upper half of the page on the flesh side had an incorrect text that was repeated in the bottom half and overwritten in the upper half; or (2) a text was mistakenly repeated twice in the upper and bottom half, and the scribe resolved the issue by removing the script in the upper half, which was later rewritten by another hand.<sup>22</sup> The later smaller script at ll. 18–23 on the flesh side is likely a gloss introduced by the *basmalah* (the invocation 'In the name of God, the truly Merciful'). Loebenstein analysed the script style of the hair side and the bottom half of the flesh side. She noted a resemblance to the script of early Arabic papyri, as did Grohmann. Specifically, the letters *dāl* and *rā'*; the open *'ayn* in the medial position and its elongated shape in the initial position; the rounded *mīm*; the sickle-shaped *nūn*; and the *hā'* are identified as similar to the Vienna papyrus ÖNB, G 39.726 (PERF 558). Loebenstein notes the two different shapes of the letter *alif*, either inclined from top right to bottom left or a vertical upright line, both without a return at their foot, which does not coincide with the main feature of the early Qur'anic manuscripts but with the script of the early papyri.

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<sup>18</sup> Loebenstein 1982, 23.

<sup>19</sup> See Section 3.1 and Table 1 below on the script style of fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (hand A1) and the bottom of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> (hand A2).

<sup>20</sup> Loebenstein 1982, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Loebenstein 1982, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Loebenstein 1982, 24–25.

The slanting appearance of the ascenders of the letter *alif* is the main element of distinction for placing A. Perg. 2 in the seventh century, as Grohmann, Loebenstein, and Beatrice Gründler do, or in the eighth or ninth century, as W. Matthews Malczycki. Gründler includes A. Perg. 2 among the examples of very early Qur'anic manuscripts. In her book *The Development of the Arabic Scripts*, the scholar surveys Nabatean and Arabic documents dated from the pre-Islamic to the Islamic period to trace the history of the Arabic scripts and their contacts with Nabatean and Syriac scripts. In this diachronic approach to Arabic scripts, Gründler identifies five types of script associated with certain functions: the epigraphic script, the chancellery cursive for gubernatorial correspondence, the chancellery cursive for bilingual notifications, the cursive of the protocols, and the slanting Qur'anic script of certain manuscripts. Gründler's corpus of early Qur'anic fragments includes those mentioned in Grohmann's article. A. Perg. 2 is also mentioned.<sup>23</sup> Gründler's book includes a drawing of the script of the Vienna manuscript traced after the reproduction in Grohmann.<sup>24</sup> If we compare Gründler's tracing with Grohmann's reproduction, we can see that the remains of the further fragmented leaf are missing in Gründler's work.

Both scholars identify the content of the almost complete leaf on the hair side as surah 28, verses 61–73. They do not consider the few traces of the additional leaf that Loebenstein had noticed<sup>25</sup> nor the traces of an underwriting. Similarly, Malczycki does not mention the palimpsested nature of the fragment.<sup>26</sup> In his dissertation on the literary papyri from the University of Utah's Arabic Papyrus, Parchment and Paper Collection, the scholar mentions A. Perg. 2 due to its similarity with the script of the papyrus Utah, University of Utah, Marriott Library, P. Utah inv. 342 and their nature as personal Qur'ans.<sup>27</sup> Malczycki criticises Loebenstein's attribution of A. Perg. 2 to the seventh century; instead he proposes a later date, suggesting it may be from the eighth or ninth century. This argument is based on the fact that A. Perg. 2 lacks the right-slanting characteristic of the *hiǧāzī* style.<sup>28</sup>

In the *Islamic Codicology* handbook edited by François Déroche (2005), the nature of A. Perg. 2 as a palimpsest is mentioned to help explain the production of

23 Gründler 1993, 135, n. 206. The author quotes Grohmann and his list of Qur'anic manuscripts in the 1958 article.

24 Gründler 1993, 170.

25 Loebenstein 1982, 23.

26 Malczycki 2006, 122–123. The scholar did not notice the different hands in the lower and upper layers.

27 The papyrus P. Utah inv. 342 is available online (<<https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6g73ss7>>, accessed on 14 February 2024). See Malczycki 2006, 98–127 and Malczycki 2015.

28 Malczycki 2006, 123.

the Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest (Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287) through assembling different materials:

the lapse of time between one text being copied and the next was not necessarily very long; indeed, a scribe, on noticing he had made a mistake, might use the same process to correct his own copy.<sup>29</sup>

In 2004, one word in the margin was identified, the bifolio reconstructed, and the hypothesis of the palimpsest challenged. On the basis of visual inspection of the original artefact and printed copies of its photographs, the few letters in the right margin of the flesh side noticed by Loebenstein were related to the main text area.<sup>30</sup> At l. 3 in the margin was identified the word *fa-baḡā*, which also occurs at l. 2 of the main text area in surah 28, verse 76. The parchment surface is torn here, dividing the word in the *scriptio superior* into two physical parts and leaving a gap. The presence of the same word in a complete form in the margin and in a fragmented form in the text area led to the interpretation of the margin as an auxiliary space for clarifying the text. A few isolated letters were noticed and associated with the main text area as clarifications and corrections based on the occurrence of the word *fa-baḡā* in both the margin and main text area. The logical sequence of marginalia and main text area was explained as being the result of a teaching and learning context. Furthermore, the few words and letters found on the remains of the second leaf have been interpreted as part of surah 26, verses 115–145 on the flesh side and part of surah 26, verses 177–178 on the hair side. The manuscript appears to have been a bifolio consisting of fol. 1, which contains part of surah 26 on its recto and verso (the narrow strip on the flesh and hair sides); fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, which contains surah 28, verses 61–75 (on the hair side); and fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, which repeats surah 28, verses 75–80 and 75–77 in the upper and bottom halves, with traces of the same section of text in the margin of the upper half of the folio (on the flesh side). The hypothesis of palimpsesting dynamics behind the production of A. Perg. 2 has been ruled out because of the relationship between the margin with traces of the *scriptio inferior* and the main text, which is repeated twice in the upper and bottom halves of the leaf. If palimpsesting practices imply the reallocation of the writing surface for a new project, the Vienna fragment cannot be considered a palimpsest as it is a single object produced in the same context and at the same time. The hypothesis that the manuscript is no longer a palimpsest has been wide-

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<sup>29</sup> See Déroche 2005, 44, n. 90 and 91 concerning the Ṣan'ā' palimpsest manuscript; n. 93 on the Mingana-Lewis *Leaves from three ancient Qur'ans possibly pre-Othmānic*; and n. 94 on the Loebenstein catalogue.

<sup>30</sup> Fedeli 2005.

ly accepted.<sup>31</sup> The 2004 reading was somehow incomplete because of the lack of special imaging or image-processing techniques known from the literature, such as those used in the *Rinascimento Virtuale* project from 2001 to 2004.

The new reading of A. Perg. 2 proposed in this article is the result of a collaboration in a project carried out by the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL). Michael Phelps, Roger Easton, and Keith Knox involved me in the processing of the spectral images of the manuscript that Damianos Kasotakis took (see Figs 1 and 2).<sup>32</sup> The images were processed by the team to enhance the visibility of specific features of the scripts on the parchment. This was done in several steps. The team provided pseudo-colour and monochromatic images to address the challenges and incomplete results that arose during the process. The main challenge was the deterioration of the parchment and the ink that penetrated through it. The parchment suffered extensive damage due to ink corrosion and likely poor storage conditions before entering the antiquarian market, resulting in the loss of inked areas and the spread of degradation reactions to adjacent materials. As a result, several misleading holes appear in the images. To address this issue, the team has produced new images that clearly distinguish the holes and shadows from the ink (see Fig. 3). As for the second issue, since all layers were visible simultaneously on each physical side of the parchment, separating the different layers of the images of the flesh and hair sides proved challenging. The team proposed creating a single image containing the scripts from both sides. Rather than examining the parchment's two separate sides, we accessed the merged scripts from both the flesh side and hair side, which corresponds to the object's deterioration. Considering the two sides as a single item, rather than two distinct objects with separate unconnected images, has been incredibly helpful. When reading a palimpsest, scholars usually request to split the layers,<sup>33</sup> but in this case, the first step has been to merge the recto and verso into one single image, including all the layers in one image, as this reflects the reality of the object. This outcome was made possible after the team observed my methodology for accessing and using images. The team's production of merged images of the two sides was crucial to identifying the layers and the subsequent research (see Figs 4 and 5).

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<sup>31</sup> See for example the list of Qur'anic palimpsests in Small and Puin 2007, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Phelps is the executive director of the EMEL, Damianos Kasotak is its director of imaging, and Keith Knox is its chief scientific advisor. Roger L. Easton is at the Chester F. Carlson Center for Imaging Science, Rochester Institute of Technology, NY.

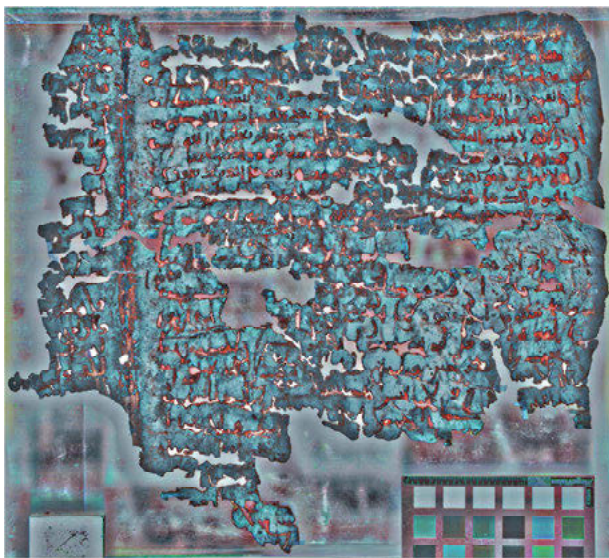
<sup>33</sup> This has been my experience in working on the images of the Cambridge Qur'anic palimpsest (Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287). The result of the work is available in the Cambridge Digital Library and described in Fedeli 2015.



**Fig. 1:** A. Perg. 2 flesh side, image by Damianos Kasotakis, 2020; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.



**Fig. 2:** A. Perg. 2 hair side, image by Damianos Kasotakis, 2020; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.

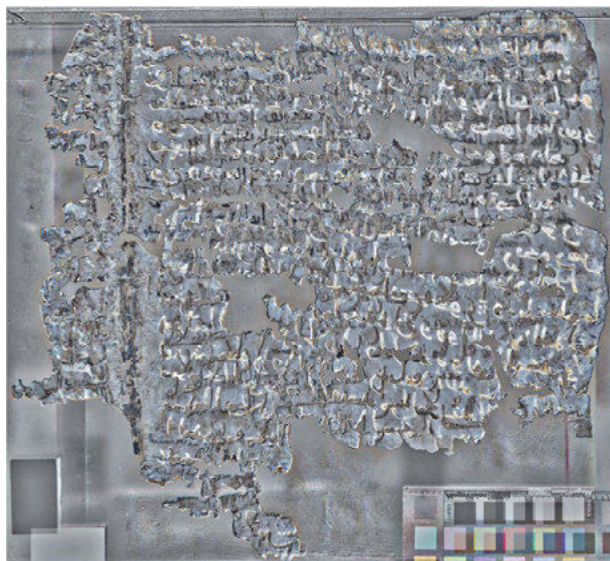


**Fig. 3:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessed by Keith T. Knox to distinguish misleading holes and ink; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.



**Fig. 4:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessed by Keith T. Knox with superimposition of all layers, from flesh and hair sides, to visualise them as a unique entity; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.





**Fig. 5:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessed by Keith T. Knox with superimposition of all layers, from flesh and hair sides, to visualise them as a unique entity; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrus-sammlung.

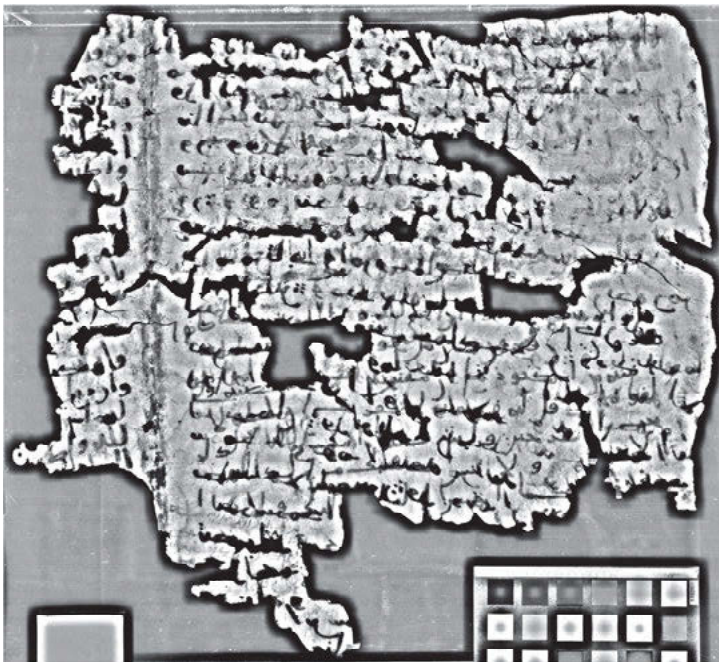
The content of the lower and upper layers has been identified through a kinaesthetic-palaeographic feedback loop. The physical act of tracing the contours of letters over the images and the knowledge of them constantly influence each other in a loop.<sup>34</sup> The new images produced during the step-by-step processing and the iterative work revealed new details about the manuscript's layout, composition, codicological structure, and palaeographic features. This approach led to a new interpretation of the object and its sociocultural context, as well as the discovery of previously unseen text. The identification of new lines of text allowed an answer to be suggested for Loebenstein's research questions from 1982 regarding the reason for and function of the repetition of a specific portion of the Qur'anic text. The study of the material aspects of A. Perg. 2 made it possible to reconstruct the social dimensions of its writing.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Tarte 2011.

<sup>35</sup> On the reconstruction of the social dimensions of writing in antiquity (the 'ecosystem of writing'), competences in producing written material, and graphic schooling, see Bentein and Amory 2023.

### 3 The new reading of A. Perg. 2 enabled by the recent imaging and image postprocessing

As mentioned previously, Loebenstein observed traces of old writing in the margin of the upper half of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> (flesh side). There, in 2004, *fa-bağā* (surah 28, verse 76) and a few isolated letters were identified. The new images and joint work with Phelps, Easton, and Knox enhanced the readability of the manuscript and enabled us to identify fragments of whole lines of text in the *scriptio inferior* of the upper half of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, rather than just single letters (see Fig. 6). After several steps, fragments of whole lines of text were enhanced also in the *scriptio inferior* of fol. 2<sup>r</sup>. This occurred at ll. 1–2, as well as for some isolated letters at ll. 4 and 6. The discovery of two lines of *scriptio inferior* on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> and a *scriptio inferior* in the text area of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, along with the palaeographic analysis of the different strata of writing and the new layout of the text, contributed to a new reading of the object. The manuscript text is edited in the appendix to this article.



**Fig. 6:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessed by Roger L. Easton, enhancing traces of full lines of *scriptio inferior* on fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, top half; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.

### 3.1 Visual appearance, different script styles, and layout in A. Perg. 2

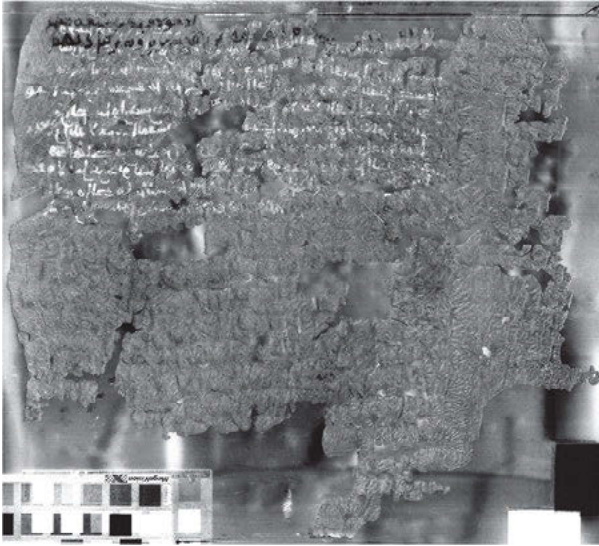
A. Perg. 2 is characterised by a varied and inconsistent appearance of the bifolio, with different writing styles, asymmetrical text frames, and unevenly proportioned structuring into lines. The deformation, deterioration, and fragmentation of the parchment has created split and wavy baselines, which may exaggerate the unevenly proportioned structuring into lines. Analysing the palaeography and layout is essential for understanding the possible mechanisms that connect the written layers on the manuscript pages.

There are two main writing styles in A. Perg. 2: a larger and a smaller round-script with distinctive letter shapes.<sup>36</sup> The letters in the larger script are twice the size of the letters in the smaller script. The smaller script is used at ll. 1–2 of fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (*scriptio superior*), at ll. 1–10 of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> (*scriptio superior*), and also at ll. \*16 and \*17 of fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, likely one stratum only (see Figs 7–10).



**Fig. 7:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessed by Roger L. Easton, enhancing the small round script on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–2; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.

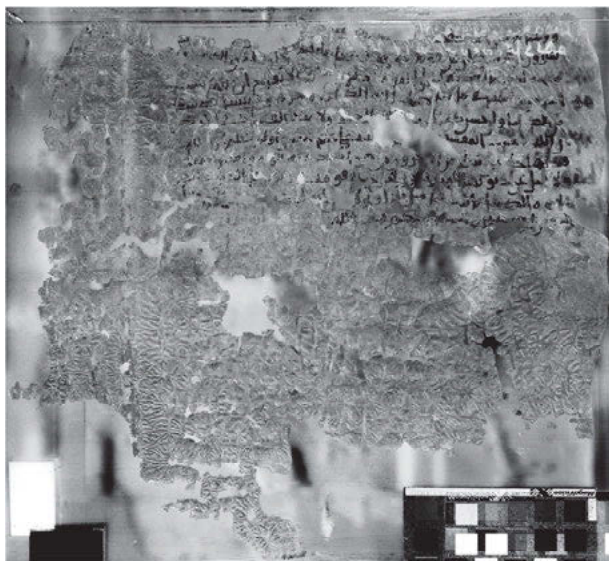
<sup>36</sup> See Blair 2006, 143–194 on round script.



**Fig. 8:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessed by Roger L. Easton, enhancing the small round script on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–2 (the white characters are the small script on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>); © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.



**Fig. 9:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessing by Roger L. Easton, enhancing the small round script on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–10; © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.



**Fig. 10:** A. Perg. 2, image postprocessed by Roger L. Easton, enhancing the small round script on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–10 (the white characters are the small script on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>); © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung.

The upper and lower layers run in the same direction and do not completely overlap due to their different sizes. The smaller script has little spacing between letter blocks, tends to space words, and does not split words across two lines. Additionally, no signs mark the end of the verse. Although the text areas with the small script may look crowded, word units are recognisable. In the larger script, a cluster of oval or rounded dots marks the final word of a verse, words are split over two lines, and the space that separates letter blocks is consistent between and within words.

The two script styles are characterised by distinctive letter shapes that connect them with the script of some early Arabic papyri. In the larger script, the final *mīm* has an extended horizontal tail that curves slightly upwards, while in the smaller script, the tail extends downwards. In some papyri, the former shape is more archaic, and the latter became the regular downward-pointing longer tail of the *mīm* used in documents in the eighth century.<sup>37</sup> In the larger script, the isolated *alif* may slant to the right, with its bottom part slightly curving to the right

<sup>37</sup> See Sijpesteijn 2020, 456.

or left. The *alif* never extends below the imaginary baseline in either its isolated or final forms. In the smaller script, the isolated *alif* is short, and in its final position, it extends below the imaginary baseline.<sup>38</sup> In both writing styles, the medial letter *ḡim/ḥā/ḥā'* does not sit on the imaginary baseline. Instead, it has the shape of an oblique stroke through the baseline, which also can be observed in papyri.<sup>39</sup> With the cautiousness needed due to the legibility of the overlapping lines and cancelled ink, the letter *dāl/dāl* has the characteristic shape found in the early Qur'anic manuscripts in the larger script, with two horizontal elongated arms ending in a rightward bend at the top of the upper arm. The smaller round script includes both the archaic form with parallel arms (e.g. in *al-dunyā*, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 9) and the angular smaller shape with a slight rightward bend (e.g. in *qad*, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 7).

In 1958, Grohmann compared the script of early undated Qur'anic manuscripts with the Arabic papyri and included A. Perg. 2 in the corpus, as mentioned earlier. This Qur'anic fragment also exhibits a peculiarity observed in Arabic papyri, namely the coexistence of different letter shapes, sometimes even in the same document. This coexistence is particularly striking on fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, on the narrow strip of the flesh side. At l. \*17, the word *'as'alukum* (surah 26, verse 180) is written in a small round script. The final *mīm* of the word has an elongated downwards tail, while the ending of surah 26, verse 177 (an isolated *nūn* and a marker for the end of the verse) has the style of the early *ḥiḡāzī* Qur'ans.

According to Petra Sijpesteijn, '[a]rchaic and newer letter forms existed side by side, sometimes even in the same document'. The development towards a dominant writing style was not 'a linear development and archaic letter forms appear next to later shapes in earlier texts and continued to be used even when the latter had become dominant'.<sup>40</sup> The coexistence of parallel script styles is not common in Qur'anic manuscripts due to the need for visual identity in these early manuscripts, which were produced as official models to be displayed.<sup>41</sup> Multiple script styles may be the expression of a scribal exercise or a non-official context.

An example of the coexistence of script styles and different letter shapes within one script style can be seen in the papyrus P. Utah inv. 342. Malczycki interprets the fragment as a folio in a codex with a small papyrus cord in the upper middle part of the papyrus. The writing support has visible traces of ink on only one side. According to Malczycki, the papyrus fragment was likely an internal or external

<sup>38</sup> See Sijpesteijn 2020, 451.

<sup>39</sup> See Sijpesteijn 2020, 452. This is the archaic form that also occurs in pre-Islamic Arabic-Nabatean inscriptions and early Islamic Arabic inscriptions.

<sup>40</sup> Sijpesteijn 2020, 442.

<sup>41</sup> On the visual identity and layout, see e.g. George 2010.

folio of a quire. The papyrus contains surahs 112, 113, 114 and part of surah 36, features a personal use of the document, and has four signs of folding on the verso. This suggests that the Qur'anic papyrus was used as an amulet.<sup>42</sup> Palaeographic analysis dates the papyrus to the ninth century. The initial three lines of the text on the right-hand side of the verso attempt to imitate the Kufic script. However, from ll. 4 to 15, the script becomes more curved, and the attempt to imitate the Kufic style is abandoned. Despite this only partial attempt, some letters still show variety in their execution. On the left-hand side of the recto, the script is smaller and the horizontal elongation of letters (*mašq*) disappears, with shorter distances between lines. Malczycki observes that the script style on the left-hand side shares no common features with the early papyri, except for the letter *kāf* at l. 1. However, a variety of executions of letters also seem to appear on the left-hand side. For example, the letter *dāl* appears differently at l. 3 (in *'undīra* in surah 36, verse 6) and l. 6 (in *al-'adqāni* in surah 36, verse 8). The first case displays an archaic Kufic style with parallel horizontal arms, while the latter case features an angular shape with a slight upward bend at the top, which is characteristic of early papyri. At l. 7, the letter *dāl* in *'aydīhim* in surah 36, verse 9 is a vertical line that ends with a small curve sitting on the baseline, without the upward bend, resembling the shape of the letter *lām*. The combination of different styles in the same object suggests its experimental nature and personal use.<sup>43</sup>

The small round script, identified as *scriptio superior* in A. Perg. 2, shows similarities with the script of early Qur'anic fragments on papyrus.<sup>44</sup> It is likely the work of one hand that executes letters in different styles with both archaic and later features. The larger script used in the whole fragment is more challenging to interpret. It is referred to as *scriptio inferior* when covered by the small round script or as *scriptio superior* when there is only one stratum of writing. Some differences exist in the execution of single letters and combinations of letters in the large script (see Fig. 11). For example:

- on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom, the final *lām* does not descend below the baseline, but its tail sits on the baseline. On fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom, the tail of the final *lām* goes downwards below the baseline (see e.g. *q(ā)la* on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, l. 15 and fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 15);

<sup>42</sup> See a similar textual sequence and the same function as an amulet in the papyrus Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Mingana Collection, P. Ming. 107 in Fedeli 2019, 184–190.

<sup>43</sup> Malczycki 2006, 119 mentions papyrus Cairo, Michaélidès Collection, Arabic Papyri, P. Michaélidès 32 (reproduced in Grohmann 1958, pl. I) and A. Perg. 2 as being similar to the papyrus P. Utah inv. 342 and defines both of them as 'fragments of personal Qurans'.

<sup>44</sup> See the script style of the Qur'anic papyri, e.g. the papyrus published in Grohmann 1958 and reproduced in Marx 2019, 30–31.

- on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom, the final *qāf* has a round head sitting on the baseline and its descender goes downwards to the left, ending in a tail with a *dāl* shape (e.g. fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, ll. 4, 11). On fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom, the letter has its sickle-like shape (e.g. fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 12);<sup>45</sup>
- the ligature *lām-alif* has two different executions, but due to the deformed parchment and line structure, it is unclear where it is positioned on the baseline. Both executions produce a triangular base, known as *al-lām alif a-warrāqīyah*, which is associated with professional scribes.<sup>46</sup> On fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom, the left-side ascender is curved and the right-side ascender is a straight line, forming a very large angle, while on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom, the left-side ascender is a straight line and the right-side ascender is curved;
- the initial and medial *hā'* is written with a long vertical extension on the right side, as found in seventh-century papyri,<sup>47</sup> on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom (e.g. fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, ll. 8, 13, 14); on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom, by contrast, it has a rounded shape without a vertical extension (e.g. fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 12);
- the word *all(ā)h* (and *li-ll(ā)h*) has two parallel ascenders joined by the curved bottom of the first *lām* on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom (e.g. ll. 13 and 15); on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom, however, the two parallel ascenders are joined by a straight line sitting on the baseline (e.g. fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, ll. 15, 16, 18);
- letters in the large script are marked by consonantal diacritics. On fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom, diacritics are flattened oval dots, while on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom, they are rounded dots. The use of a different writing instrument, with a much wider cut reed or a more rounded pen, could account for this difference in execution;<sup>48</sup>
- the final word at the end of each verse is marked by one or two columns of three rounded dots on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom. This occurs eight times in double columns and twice in single columns. The bottom of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> has two occurrences at the end of a verse in the shape of an oblique column of three dots.

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<sup>45</sup> The shape of the final *qāf* in the form of a small letter *dāl/dāl* or a sickle-shaped tail is one of the criteria to identify the two main groups (group 1 and group 2) of scripts in early Qur'anic manuscripts established by Estelle Whelan and published in Blair 2006, 114–115. The two groups of scripts are proposed as main categories to classify the enormous variety that characterises the early Qur'anic manuscripts.

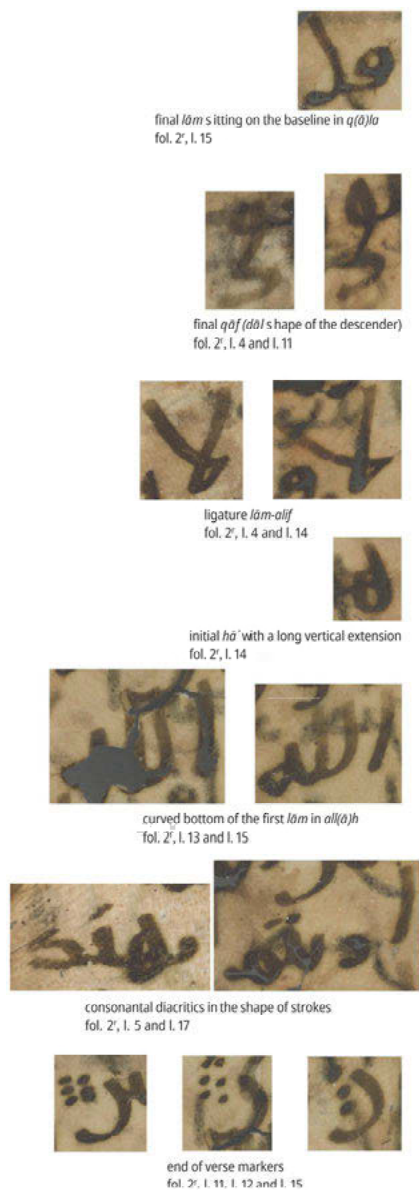
<sup>46</sup> Gacek 2009, 139–140, s.v. *Lām alif*.

<sup>47</sup> Sijpesteijn 2020, 443.

<sup>48</sup> See Grohmann 1954, 83–86 on the writing instruments in Islamic culture and the importance of the cut (*ḡilfah*) of the reed.



Hand A1



Hand A2

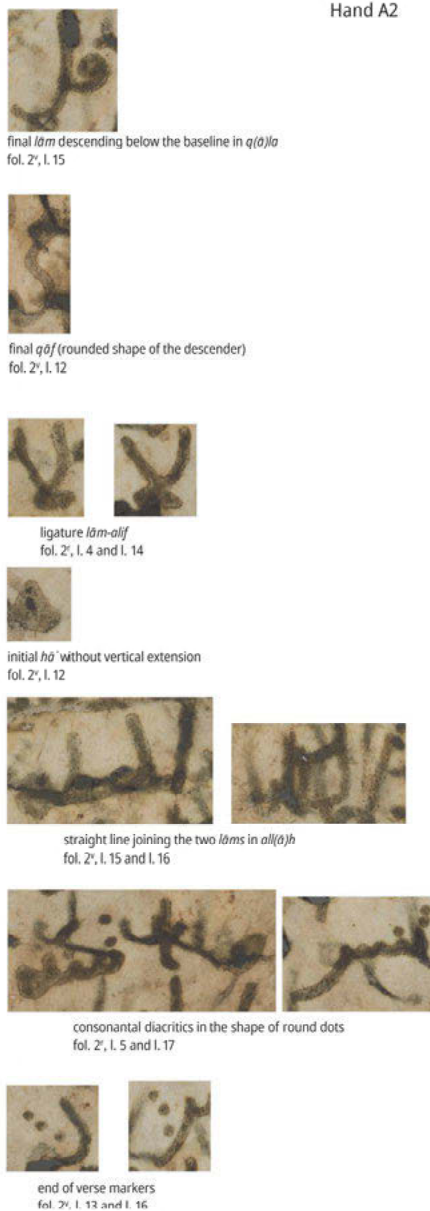


Fig. 11: Letter shapes of the *hiǧāzī* script styles in A. Perg. 2, hand A1 and A2.

The large script of A. Perg. 2 shows similarities with the *ḥiǧāzī* script style. Some letter shapes resemble the execution of hand C and hand E of the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus, specifically Paris, BnF, arabe 328, fols 57<sup>r</sup>–70<sup>v</sup> and fols 25<sup>v</sup>–26<sup>r</sup>. The two hands are in the *ḥiǧāzī* I style of François Déroche's classification. However, the general appearance of the manuscripts in *ḥiǧāzī* I style and A. Perg. 2 is different. In the latter case, the script is less slanting and the letter *alif* does not have a marked return to the right at its bottom.<sup>49</sup>

Some fragments from Seymour de Ricci's collection share similarities with A. Perg. 2, for example, Paris, BnF, arabe 7193 (two items), 7195 (the third of three items), and, particularly, 7191 (one item). The three manuscripts are part of the lot that De Ricci bought in Asyut on 8 February 1909. The manuscript Paris, BnF, arabe 7191 was written by two different hands on the recto (see Fig. 12) and verso (see Fig. 13). Déroche defines the script style of the recto as *ḥiǧāzī* I and the verso as 'influenced by the *ḥijāzī*, clearly less slanting than on the recto'.<sup>50</sup> The script on the verso resembles that of A. Perg. 2, not only in some elements of the letter shapes but also in its general appearance. The common elements in the execution of certain letters are for instance, the vertical bar at the right of the letter *hā'*, the final *mīm* with its upward tail, the rounded S-like shape of the final *yā'*, the crescent-moon shape of the final *nūn*, and the letter *alif*, which is mostly a vertical bar without a return at the bottom. The general appearance is characterised by ascenders that slant less, the round shape of consonantal diacritics, and clusters of six round dots arranged in two columns to mark the end of the verse. The text on the verso and recto of Paris, BnF, arabe 7191 has been written in two completely different hands, but their sequence is continuous. The recto contains surah 5, verse 94, word 3 to verse 97, word 20 (surah 5, verse 94, word 3 to verse 98, word 9 filling the lacuna according to the spaces of the page layout) written in *ḥiǧāzī* I style in nine lines prepared by a dry point. The verso contains surah 5, verse 99, word 7 to verse 107, word 18 (verse 99, word 1 to verse 107, word 24 or 25 filling the lacuna according to spaces of the page layout) in fifteen lines.<sup>51</sup> This alternation of two hands on recto and verso is likely a trace of a training environment where different styles were practised and learnt. This fragment is part of a lot that was acquired with other Coptic papyri. It is likely that these materials were discarded due to their personal and ephemeral nature.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> This was already noted by Malczycki; see n. 28 above.

<sup>50</sup> Déroche 1983, 151.

<sup>51</sup> The catalogue indicates only the extant text on the fragmentary page, i.e. surah 5, verses 94–97 and 99–107. The reconstruction of the layout of the page and the structure of the text into lines suggests there was no gap in the sequence of the text between recto and verso. If so, the hand influenced by the *ḥiǧāzī* style continued on the verso the text written on the recto by the *ḥiǧāzī* I hand.

<sup>52</sup> All the Qur'anic fragments of the lot are likely personal common Qur'ans.



Fig. 12: Paris, BnF, arabe 7191, recto; © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.



Fig. 13: Paris, BnF, arabe 7191, verso; © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

The situation in A. Perg. 2 is more complex, not only because three different script styles share the writing of the Qur'anic text but also because a short passage is repeated three times.

### 3.2 Spatial and temporal sequence of script styles in A. Perg. 2

It is difficult to determine whether the differences in the *hiġāzī* hands of A. Perg. 2 are the result of a varied script style, as seen in the small round script, or the work of two different hands. The personal use of the object as a writing exercise could support both scenarios. To reconstruct the production process of A. Perg. 2, it is useful to identify and visualise the two different large script styles and the small script on the manuscript page (see Figs 14 and 15). The spatial sequence of these styles may indicate a temporal sequence.

If we label the features of the script style on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (ll. 2–23) as hand A1 and on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom as hand A2; the smaller round script in the first lines of the *scriptio superior* on both fols 2<sup>r</sup> and 2<sup>v</sup> as hand B; and, finally, the later addition interpreted by Loebenstein as a gloss as hand C, it is possible to identify the following sequence of hands:

- Hand A1 on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> (one layer only): The script on the narrow strip on the flesh side is closer to hand A1. This can be seen, for example, in the word *[a]ll(ā)h* at l. 17 and in the vertical prolonged line to the right of the letter *hā'* (e.g. ll. 14, 16).
- Hand \*A1 + B on fol. 1<sup>v</sup> (one layer only): There are only a few letters with puzzling shapes. At l. 16, the isolated *nūn* and the oblique cluster of three dots correspond to hand A1. However, at l. 17, the final *mīm* of *'as'alu-kum* has an elongated tail going down below the baseline, which is a feature of the smaller round script style. We can label fol. 1<sup>v</sup> as \*A1 + B, assuming that there is only one layer of writing.
- Hand A1 on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> top (*scriptio inferior*, ll. 1, 2, 4, 6): A few letters are recognisable here, and it is difficult to characterise the hand. The final *nūn* matches that of the rest of the page's script, suggesting it was written close to hand A1. The identity of the writing at ll. 4 and 6 is unclear.
- Hand B on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> top (*scriptio superior*, ll. 1, 2).
- Hand A1 on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom (one layer only, except a few traces at ll. 4, 6, and a few corrections).
- Hand B corrections on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> bottom: A later hand in hand B style corrected hand A1's work at a few points. Specifically, the words *kānū* and *'yyānā* at l. 5 and the word *'annahum* at l. 7 were amended in a different script style with a thinner writing instrument. At l. 19, the letter block denticle + *alif* was added in the margin to restore the word *ya'tikum*. The restoration's script style is hand B.

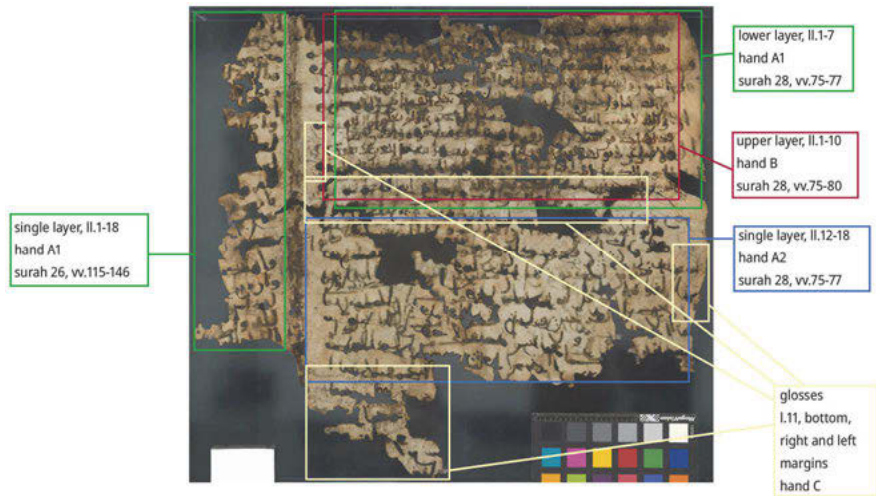
- Hand A1 on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> top (*scriptio inferior*, ll. 1–7, and blank space at l. 8): Hand A1's script style can be identified by the ligature *lām-alif* and the word *all(ā)h*.
- Hand B on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> top (*scriptio superior*, ll. 1–10, which correspond to ll. 1–8 of the *scriptio inferior*).
- Hand C on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> middle (one and a half lines): There is an empty space between fol. 2<sup>v</sup> top and bottom, which was later filled with still undeciphered text in a cursive *nash* script, written by hand C.
- Hand A2 on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom (one layer only, ll. 12–18).
- Hand C on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom margin: A generous bottom margin of about five lines was later filled with still undeciphered text in a cursive *nashī* script, written by hand C.

To understand the object and the possible reallocation of the writing support for a new project, it is necessary to comprehend the layout and position of each script style in its area, as listed above. This helps to connect the layers and facilitate understanding. Assuming that surah 26 was written before surah 28 – and there are no material traces that would support the opposite situation – the scribe(s) who produced A. Perg. 2 wrote down part of surah 26 on fol. 1 (recto/verso) in hand A1 with elements of hand B. There are no traces of a *scriptio inferior* on the narrow strip of parchment of fol. 1. The right-side margin of fol. 1<sup>r</sup> respects the justification, while the left margin of fol. 1<sup>v</sup> does not. Loebenstein has already noted signs of folding on the entire object. The narrow strip and almost complete leaf are likely remnants of a bifolio. Due to the poor condition of the parchment, it is uncertain whether the small holes at the top and bottom of the bifolio's fold are signs of quire sewing.<sup>53</sup>

In terms of the fragment and any missing parts, surah 26 seems likely to have continued on a leaf following fol. 1 (including at least surah 26, verse 189–227 or part of it) and surah 28 would seem to have begun on a preceding leaf before fol. 2 (including at least surah 28, verse 1 up to the beginning of verse 60 or part of it). Based on the average number of characters on a page like fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, it is estimated that the complete textual sequence between surah 26, verse 189 and surah 28, verse 60 would have required approximately six leaves in the script style of hand A1. While it is plausible to reconstruct a quire structure with three additional bifolia and A. Perg. 2 as the outer bifolio, the layout and palaeographic features show that the production process was not as linear, unlike for fol. 2<sup>r</sup>. The repetition of the same text sequence on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> makes it difficult to reconstruct a linear sequence in the writing of the text and a possible quire.

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<sup>53</sup> The original bifolio was something similar to the remains of the bifolio Vienna, ÖNB, A. Perg. 213, part of the same collection acquired by Franz Trau Senior possibly in Egypt. See Loebenstein 1982, 27–30 and Tables 3–6.



**Fig. 14:** Layout, script styles and content of A. Perg. 2, hair side (fols 1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>).



**Fig. 15:** Layout, script styles and content of A. Perg. 2, flesh side (fols 1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>).

Another aspect to consider is the layout, text frames, and margins. Fols 1<sup>r</sup> and 2<sup>r</sup> respect the right-side margin justification and have a continuous sequence of text written by hand A1. Fol. 1<sup>r</sup> is missing the left side of the parchment leaf, while fol. 2<sup>r</sup> has a very narrow margin on the left side, and the scribe does not make special

efforts to respect the left-side justification. Fol. 1<sup>v</sup> does not contain sufficient traces of writing to determine the use of the left margin. Additionally, the right side of the parchment is missing. Fol. 2<sup>v</sup> is divided into two text frames, with hand A1 occupying the top half and hand A2 occupying the bottom half. The text frame on the top half occupies the entire right side of the page, with no margin on the right, while the left margin is justified. The text frame on the bottom half creates margins on both the right and left sides. Between the two text frames, there is one line of empty space. At the bottom of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, which corresponds to ll. 19–23 of fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, there are no traces of hand A1 or A2. The free margins, except for the top-right margin, which does not exist, have all been populated by a later hand. Hand C's script features the cursive style commonly found in documentary Arabic papyri from the first three centuries of Islam.<sup>54</sup> The marginalia are written with a thinner writing instrument in a darker ink. They run horizontally in parallel to the main text area and vertically on the right and left margins. Loebenstein has already noted the *basmala* written at the beginning of the marginalia text at ll. 19–23 and proposes that the text is a gloss to the main text.

Although I did not decipher the marginalia, except for the *basmala* and a few letter blocks, it is likely that the text was written in the areas left empty. If this is the case, hand A2 left a very generous bottom margin, extending for the height of four lines. The visual identity conveyed by early Qur'anic manuscripts tends to use small margins, and the bottom margin is not usually so wide.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that A. Perg. 2 is a personal copy, likely not produced in an official context. The difference in text frame between hand A1 (top half) and hand A2 (bottom half) on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> suggests a break between the two stages. Corrections are visible only on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, while fol. 2<sup>v</sup> (hand A2) appears to have no corrections. The script style of one correction on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> is similar to a small round script. The *scriptio superior* (in hand B) is present only on top of hand A1, at ll. 1–2 of fol. 2<sup>r</sup> and at ll. 1–10 of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, to write the same portion of text of the *scriptio inferior*.

Since the newer, smaller round script does not replicate the whole text and does not reuse the whole writing surface, it is likely that the intention of hand B

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54 See for example Khan 1992. The use of the term *nashī* to classify the cursive script of papyri is discussed in Khan 1992, 44–46. See Rustow 2020, 161 on cursiveness in Arabic script with its abusive ligatures.

55 The oldest manuscripts can have no margins at all or small ones. See e.g. St Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Marcel 17. The original shape and space of its parchment leaves have been used in full and the writing has been adapted to the irregular shape of the leaf (see Fedeli 2015, 60). Alain George compared the layout and format of Qur'ans with Greek and Syriac manuscripts' layout. The examples he proposed have small margins in the *ḥiǧāzī* Qur'ans and wide bottom margins in the Greek and Syriac manuscripts. See George 2010, 44.

was not to reallocate the material and create a new object. On fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, hand A1 serves as the *scriptio inferior* at ll. 1–2 and the *scriptio superior* at ll. 3–23. The most plausible explanation is that this was a scribal writing exercise. The variety of script styles in A. Perg. 2 coincides with the presence of multiple writing and script styles observed in papyri.<sup>56</sup> This situation supports the hypothesis of two or three different scribes working at the same time or a single scribe learning and practising how to write. Distinguishing between different actors behind each script in A. Perg. 2 requires material analysis of the ink composition.<sup>57</sup>

The suggested temporal sequence is as follows: hand A1 wrote the entire text from surah 26 to surah 28 or the two sequences of text from surah 26 and 28, but interrupted the work in the middle of fol. 2<sup>r</sup>. Then, either the same scribe or a master wrote part of the same text using a smaller round script style (hand B), overlapping with the script of hand A1. Finally, the same scribe or master wrote the section surah 28, verse 75–77 for the third time using a script style closer to hand A1 (hand A2). The layout of hand A2 mirrors that of hand B, with a margin on the right-hand side. Any visible corrections were made by hand B, or a later hand, or both using brownish and black inks.

### 3.3 A. Perg. 2 and other examples of writing exercises

A. Perg. 2 is an example of a modest common Qur'an,<sup>58</sup> likely an object produced for personal use as a writing exercise in which different script styles coexist. As such, it represents a unique object with traces of the events that happened on its pages. In the absence of accounts and details about schooling and scribal training in the first two to three centuries of Islam, A. Perg. 2 constitutes a precious source

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<sup>56</sup> Sijpesteijn 2020, 442.

<sup>57</sup> This is part of the current projects carried out at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Universität Hamburg, in the project 'What Is in a Scribe's Mind and Inkwell' as part of the cluster 'Understanding Written Artefacts'.

<sup>58</sup> The main focus of scholarship on early Qur'anic manuscripts has been on the official or model Qur'anic manuscripts that imply a long-term project for writing down a consistent part of – if not all – the text, in a mature codicological structure that requires planning in economic terms for the writing support, ink, and labour. The personal or common Qur'ans are studied as parts of cataloguing works of whole collections. To be noted here is the work in Connolly and Posegay 2020 and 2021 and the work on Qur'anic papyri; see Fedeli 2019 and Malczycki 2006. In the written transmission of the Bible, for example, 'common Bible' is one of the possible typologies of the written text. See e.g. Outhwaite 2021 on the terminology for the Bible's typologies.



regarding the social history of the writing of the Qur'anic text.<sup>59</sup> The study of early Qur'anic manuscripts as material informants involves an investigation of their materials, assembly, and layout planning and a thorough comprehension of their script styles. Not much is known about the manufacturing environment or social dynamics underlying the making of Qur'anic manuscripts in the first two to three centuries of Islam. The organisation of scribe training is unknown. Scholars can reconstruct the characteristics of the commodification of the Qur'an as an object in terms of production and distribution, as well as the relationship between size and costs, the conditions under which the copyists worked and their working pace, the status of copyists and Qur'anic copies' patrons, the organisation of the work in teams, and such copies' use in teaching. The information is derived from medieval treatises and commentaries, manuscript inventories, and the physical and textual elements of the objects. Little is known about the (graphic) schooling and learning context during the spread of Islam and at the beginning of the written transmission of the Qur'anic text.<sup>60</sup>

The training scheme for master and apprentice scribe in a writing exercise could involve the repetition and imitation of a written text line by line. An example is an exercise that survived from the Cairo Genizah, as interpreted by Marina Rustow. In the Fatimid document Cambridge, University Library, T-S Misc. 5.148 + T-S Ar. 30.316 + T-S Ar. 42.196, an apprentice scribe attempted to learn the decree script (*qalam al-tawqī*) by imitating a teacher. The specialised training required to instruct the new administrative class of the Fatimids consisted of imitating the script of a master, line by line. Each line of text was repeated twice.<sup>61</sup> Rustow observes the retraining of an Abbasid-style hand in this writing exercise and notes differences in the execution of certain letters. These differences were rooted in the tradition for the apprentice scribe and opened to the new style forms for the master.<sup>62</sup>

Another pattern in the training process of an apprentice scribe by a master involves writing page by page without duplicating the text. This pattern of training and the coexistence of different writing styles can be seen in the Cairo Genizah documents, although the known examples are from a much later period. A

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<sup>59</sup> See Déroche 2002, 143, although the study refers to a later period. Déroche concludes his article by commenting on the absence of studies on the popular manuscripts, generally but not only Qur'ans.

<sup>60</sup> See Cortese 2013; Déroche 2007; Blair 2006; Déroche 2009; Fedeli 2015; Hilali 2017. See also Sijpesteijn 2020, 435–438 for scholarship on schooling and training in the first centuries of Islam.

<sup>61</sup> Rustow 2020, 221–222, 237–238 and 491, n. 38.

<sup>62</sup> Rustow 2020, 237.

variety of scripts also appear in the Qur'anic fragments from the Cairo Genizah that were produced for personal use. Magdalen M. Connolly and Nick Posegay surveyed common Qur'ans from the tenth to the nineteenth centuries and observed the coexistence of two or three codified ways of executing a single letter or ligature.<sup>63</sup> The Qur'anic fragments in the Taylor-Schechter Arabic collection are explained as being part of personal collections disposed of in the synagogue's Genizah when their owners died. The manuscripts were likely intended for personal study and include passages about non-Muslims and biblical figures.<sup>64</sup> Connolly and Posegay describe two fragments as writing exercises. Of particular interest is the format of the writing exercise, which features the collaborative writing of a student and a master (i.e. T-S Ar. 42.145), likely dated after the sixteenth century.<sup>65</sup> The task was divided between the student and the more experienced master, with each writing one page without duplicating any content.

When describing the palaeographic features of the papyrus Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Or. 8264, Sijpesteijn reports that it appears to be a writing exercise from the ninth century. The scribe may have had little experience in writing or was in the process of learning how to write.<sup>66</sup> The Leiden papyrus has been radiocarbon dated to the year 1324 ± 24 BP (before present, i.e. <sup>14</sup>C years), which corresponds to the span 653–766 CE.<sup>67</sup>

A modern example of some Qur'anic leaves on paper from West Africa reused for writing the introduction of *al-Risāla* by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, preceded on the recto of the first leaf by a talismanic figure, recently has been identified by Darya Ogorodnikova and Khaoula Trad (manuscript Timbuktu, Mamma Haidara Library, 19191). The scholars propose that the same person may have written both layers of the artefact for personal use despite the fact that the *scriptio inferior* is written in small letters while the *scriptio superior* has large and bold letters.<sup>68</sup> The fact that the same scribe wrote both layers with different script sizes and the possible personal use of the object constitute a case to be compared with A. Perg. 2.

In A. Perg. 2, one section of the same text is repeated twice before being written a third time in the larger context of surah 28. The passage from the Qur'an that is repeated twice on the same page and rewritten for a third time on top of the first occurrence of the sequence refers to the biblical Korah (Qārūn in Arabic). Korah be-

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63 Connolly and Posegay 2020.

64 Connolly and Posegay 2020, 348.

65 Connolly and Posegay 2021, 3, 20.

66 Sijpesteijn in Noja Noseda 2003, 316–318, quoted also in Marx 2019, 10–12.

67 See Youssef-Grob 2019, 150–151; Marx and Jocham 2019, 216.

68 See Darya Ogorodnikova and Khaoula Trad's contribution to the present volume.

came insolent after God gave him enormous treasures, and, as a result, God decreed his death. The other characteristic of A. Perg. 2 (i.e. different hands executing the bifolio) exhibits a similar dynamic to that seen in papyrus P. Utah inv. 342. Here the Kufic style of the first lines is abandoned in the subsequent lines, as noted above.

The text, script, and layout of A. Perg. 2 show an unstructured format in the training of the apprentice scribe. The repetition of the same text does not perfectly overlap and the layout of the repeated section is not symmetrical. Then, only a section – the narrative about the biblical Korah in surah 28, verses 75–80 – is repeated twice and then written on top a third time. The rest of the text is not repeated (surah 28, verses 60–75), except for the rewriting on top of ll. 1–2 of fol. 2<sup>r</sup> by hand B (surah 28, verses 60–62, i.e. from the end of surah 28, verse 60 to the beginning of surah 28, verse 62). If the traces in the *scriptio inferior* of fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, l. 4 (*ʿaġjwaynā* in surah 28, verse 63) are the work of hand A, this would explain the work on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> as the writing of the same section by hand A, similar to fol. 2<sup>v</sup>. The training format in A. Perg. 2 differs from the examples mentioned above from the Cairo Genizah. In the latter case, the regular alternation of pupil and mentor writing one line or one page each within a fixed layout reveals a rigid structure applied during the learning process. In the case of A. Perg. 2, the absence of pattern in the layout and repetition of the text suggests the object was intended for personal use in an unstructured and informal setting.

### 3.4 Textual and contextual elements in A. Perg. 2

Some textual elements of A. Perg. 2 can provide clues about the possible sociocultural context in which the object was produced. The fragment shows inconsistencies in spelling practices and morphological features, which is a common situation observed in early Qur'anic manuscripts. On fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, the word *kānū* (surah 28, verse 63, word 16) is spelled with an *alif* to mark the long /a/. At a later stage, the letter *alif* was cancelled and the initial *kāf* was joined to the following *nūn*. Subsequently, a thin *alif* was reinserted in black ink and the joining trait was erased. The following word, *ʿyyānā* (surah 28, verse 63, word 17), is spelled without an initial *alif*. The first two characters were then inverted by overwriting a thin initial *alif* and denticle joined to the original second letter block. This adjustment was made in black ink (see Fig. 16).



Fig. 16: Details of corrections of A. Perg. 2, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

On fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, in the section that has been written three times, the round small script has *fa-bağā* spelled with a final *alif* at l. 2 (surah 28, verse 76, word 7);<sup>69</sup> *ft mā* is spelled with two letter blocks and not as a single word at l. 5 (surah 28, verse 77, word 2); *'atā-ka* is spelled with an *alif* to mark the long /a/ at l. 4 (surah 28, verse 77, word 3);<sup>70</sup> the jussive forms *wa-lā tansā* at l. 4 (surah 28, verse 77, word 8) and *wa-lā tabğī* at l. 5 (surah 28, verse 77, word 18) are spelled with a final *alif* (*wa-lā tansā*) and a final *yā'* (*wa-lā tabğī*);<sup>71</sup> *yā-layta* is spelled with an *alif* at l. 9 (surah 28, verse 79, word 11); and *tawābu* is spelled without an *alif* at l. 10 (surah 28, verse 80, word 6). The larger *hiğāzī*-like style writes *fīmā* as a single letter block (fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 16), as suggested by the visible joining trait, despite the partial lacuna; *'atā-ka* is spelled with a denticle to mark the long /a/ (fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 16); and *wa-lā tansa* is spelled with a final *sīn* (fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 17). The bottom half of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> has a lacuna where we expect *fa-bağā*, and the repeated text does not include the section with *yā-layta* and *tawābu*.

One noteworthy reading is found in surah 28, verse 65, on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, l. 8, where hand A1 wrote *wa-yawma tunādihim fa-taqūlu māđā ağabtumu l-mursa[līna]* ('Upon the day when you will call to them, and you will say, "What answer gave you to the Envoys?")<sup>72</sup> marking the denticle of the verbal forms with two oval dots (*tunādihim* and *taqūlu*). This reading is unique, as the widely known *qir'āt* works only present the reading *wa-yawma yunādihim fa-yaqūlu* ('Upon the day when He shall call to them, and He shall say') and, to my knowledge, the other known manuscripts leave the two denticles unmarked or mark them with two diacritics below the baseline.<sup>73</sup> The verse is part of an intricate narrative structure that Jessica Mutter recently analysed in detail to explore the use of *iltifāt*, that is, the shift

69 *Alif maqşūra* is frequently found spelled with an *alif* as well as with a *yā'* in early papyri; see Hopkins 1984, 14–16, § 12. The spelling with an *alif* is attested in early Qur'anic manuscripts too; see e.g. Fedeli 2015, 157, 211, 269, 272, 283, 331.

70 See other examples in early Qur'anic manuscripts in Fedeli 2015, 302.

71 See other examples in early Qur'anic manuscripts in Fedeli 2015, 159, 213 and in early papyri in Hopkins 1984, 85–86, § 82d.

72 Arberry 1964. Arthur J. Arberry's translation has been adapted to the manuscript text.

73 Nasser 2020; *EVQ*; *VLC*; and Muhtār 'Umar and Makram 1997 do not list a variant reading but have only '*yunādihim fa-yaqūlu*'. Examples of manuscripts leaving the two denticles unmarked are, for example Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Is. 1615, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>; Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum, Saray 50385 (from the Gotthelf Bergsträßer archives), fol. 202<sup>v</sup>; and Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, Ma VI 165, fol. 53<sup>r</sup>. Among the manuscripts that mark the denticles as *yā'* are Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Petermann I 38, fol. 71<sup>v</sup>; Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, W.554, fol. 43<sup>r</sup>; Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, Ma VI 148, fol. 60<sup>r</sup>; and Cambridge, University Library, Add. 1139, fol. 36<sup>r</sup>. These manuscripts have been searched and accessed through the dataset *MC*.

between people in the narration and dialogues. The narrative structure involves multiple layers of dialogue between the Qur'anic voice, an audience addressed in both the singular and plural form, and a future conversation between God and the polytheists.<sup>74</sup> The readings affecting the choice of pronouns in the text reflect the shift in narration as experienced by the scribe, reader, or whoever was involved in the transmission of the text. This phenomenon is known through *qirā'āt* literature and early manuscripts.<sup>75</sup> Papyri offer a unique perspective on this practice because they were often objects for personal use. Papyrus Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Mingana Collection, P. Ming. 107 is an example of this perspective. In surah 3, verse 11, the scribe wrote *bi-āyāti-llāh* instead of *bi-āyāti-nā* ('our signs'); *la-hum* was used instead of *la-kum* in *qad kāna la-kum āyatun* ('there has already been a sign for you') in surah 3, verse 13; and in surah 100, verse 11, *'inna rabba-ka* ('surely your Lord') was written instead of *'inna rabba-hum* ('surely their Lord'). A similar use of pronouns for writing fragmented verses and amalgams has also been observed in Qur'anic graffiti and inscriptions.<sup>76</sup> These artefacts show a personal use of the text. The Qur'anic narration's perspective appears to support the non-official setting in which A. Perg. 2 was created.

## 4 Concluding remarks

The imaging and image processing by Phelps, Easton, Knox, and Kasotakis, combined with palaeographic and philological analysis by the present author, enabled a new reading of A. Perg. 2 and a new hypothesis about its meaning in the context of graphic schooling and scribal training in the first centuries of Islam.

The collaborative efforts led to a reading of almost complete lines of a lower layer of script in the top half of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> that has roughly the same section of text overwritten in the top half, which is then repeated in the bottom half of the same leaf. This confirms Loebenstein's hypothesis that the lower layer of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> (flesh side) was the continuation of fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (hair side). She did not identify the text of the lower layer of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, but the similarity of the script of the two sides (fol. 2<sup>r</sup> and fol. 2<sup>v</sup> top) support her hypothesis. In 2005, I identified one word and a few letters in the lower layer of the right-hand margin of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> that partially agreed with Loebenstein. Multispectral imaging not only confirmed Loebenstein's identification of the content of

74 Mutter 2022, 111–112.

75 Fedeli 2012, 413–419.

76 See Fedeli 2019.

the *scriptio inferior* of fol. 2<sup>v</sup> but also revealed two almost complete lines of a lower layer and a few letters, also in the top half of fol. 2<sup>r</sup>. Who wrote the same sections of text three times, why, and when? Is the object a palimpsest?

As regards the first question, only Loebenstein commented on the presence of two people: a first hand, which wrote fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, the *scriptio inferior* of the top half on fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, and the bottom half of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>; and a later hand which rewrote the *scriptio superior* of the top half of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>. The scholar did not establish the possible connection between the two hands and considered the first hand as the author of a possible correction process. Previous scholarship did not focus on the characteristics of the three different hands, here labelled as A1, A2, and B, not only regarding letter shapes but also layout, text frame, and the use of space to divide word units or letter blocks.<sup>77</sup> The three script styles and the dynamics behind the layout of the text explain the different *scriptiones inferiores* and *superiores* as the work of different hands that performed their Arabic script skills and training at the same time, rather than distinct chronological events. There might be two or more people (master and apprentice scribe) or even the same person (self-taught scribe experimenting with a script style). The repetition of the same portion of text points to a learning environment. If so, old material was not reallocated to create a new object but rather what potentially occurred was a conversation between apprentice and master or an autodidactic experience by one person. If the material was not reallocated, but only used in a learning environment, the term ‘palimpsest’ does not accurately describe what happened, based on the conceptualisation of ‘palimpsest’ by Cavallo. Rather, such a situation entails one single written artefact built in several steps within the same episode. However, a different point of view seems to be applied in Islamic culture, where the object is considered the result of a palimpsesting technique when some text has been erased and rewritten independently from the presence of two distinct objects, one reallocated and partially destroyed and one new project. Following Cavallo’s position, which I find convincing, A. Perg. 2 is not a palimpsest, even though it does meet the definition according to, for example, ‘Awwād’s perspective.

The dating of the object has always been discussed in previous scholarship. The only evidence supporting the proposed dates are the palaeographic features of the object and its similarity to early papyri. A dating of the seventh century or beginning of the eighth century is proposed by Grohmann, as well as by Loebenstein and Gründler, while Malczycki suggests the eighth or ninth century be-

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77 An important feature stressed by Sheila Blair following Estelle Whelan is the split of words between lines, something to be avoided by secretaries but common in early Qur’anic manuscripts; see Blair 2006, 116–117.

cause the script lacks the right-slanting characteristic of the very early Qur'anic fragments. The complexity of the palaeographic argument to date A. Perg. 2 lies in its three hands and two different script styles.

The coexistence of different script styles, including when performed by the same hand, is a common phenomenon in Arabic papyri and in the Arabic fragments from the Cairo Genizah, but it is relatively uncommon in Qur'anic manuscripts. Cases of different hands alternating in the task of copying the Qur'anic text are known in early written transmissions like, for example, the so-called Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus and the Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest.<sup>78</sup> However, in these known cases, the difference concerns various hands' performance of the same script style characterised by great heterogeneity. In A. Perg. 2, hands A and hand B perform two different script styles, while hand A1 and A2 accomplish two different interpretations of the same script style.

This concurrence of two script styles observed in A. Perg. 2 points to a possible non-linear development of Qur'anic script styles, in contrast with the mainstream scholarship on Arabic palaeography and classification of scripts from the first three centuries of Islam. Manuscripts like Paris, BnF, arabe 7191 and the early Qur'anic manuscripts from Seymour de Ricci's collection do not fit this linear development and are defined as unclassified scripts or as showing similarities with other artefacts and established styles.<sup>79</sup> This characteristic places A. Perg. 2 in a unique position in the history of the written transmission of the Qur'anic text. In addition to that, the bifolio – which implies a certain planning of the structure when making the object – makes the repetition of the same text puzzling (top and bottom half of fol. 2<sup>v</sup>). This fact raises interesting questions about the use of writing material and schooling, at least in this case. The three parts repeating the same portion of text are likely three iterations of the same project happening around the page in a single session, rather than chronological layers. The script styles, the possible training context, and the peculiar dynamics of the page suggest that this fragment is an interesting 'common Qur'an' produced for the purposes of learning how to write it. If the object was created as a single-step project, it is likely to date from the time of the more recent palaeographic features of the script, specifically the eighth century, when scribes were still practising the *hiġāzī* style. This would confirm Malczycki's hypothesis that this fragment dates from the eighth or ninth century, although he focused only on the non-slanting characteris-

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<sup>78</sup> See the five scribes who wrote the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus alternating the copying of allocated pages (Déroche 2009, 26–45) and the two scribes who wrote the small leaves of the Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest, one taking up the work started by the other (Fedeli 2015, 105–118).

<sup>79</sup> Déroche 1983, 151–155.

tic of the script. Blair stresses that differences between script styles are commonly accepted as steps of a chronological linear development while, following Estelle Whelan, differences can coexist chronologically and be due to different milieux of religious scholars and secretaries.<sup>80</sup> In A. Perg. 2, two different hands influenced by the *hiḡāzī* style but lacking the main feature of the slanting ascenders, and one round script that divides the sequence of letters into word units coexist chronologically. Because of the presence of the small round script, A. Perg. 2 can be plausibly placed in the eighth century or later. If we accept Whelan's hypothesis about the different social groups and professions behind the different scripts, A. Perg. 2 is not only the product of a learning context but also reveals traces of a conversation between a copyist or scholar and a secretary.

As to the palimpsested nature of written artefacts, the continuous act of erasing and writing is the dynamic in the palimpsesting process. In the given case, the same text has been written (at least) three times, likely in a learning context, in the *scriptio superior* and at the bottom of the page.<sup>81</sup> This repetition and continuity of the act apply not only to the procedure of creating the palimpsested object but also to its interpretation. When scholars read manuscript objects, they are scraping, reading, and providing a new reading, especially in the last two decades thanks to the available technologies and collaboration between scientists and 'manuscript readers'. In the words of Eva Pallesen: 'Movement is the precondition of studying anything at all: All things, to be noticed, must be moving'.<sup>82</sup> If manuscripts are a process 'continuously and relationally under construction',<sup>83</sup> insofar as they are produced and performed, palimpsested manuscripts are processes whereby relationships are shaped and reshaped, and they can be studied because of their movement. And this is what has happened in the manuscript pages of A. Perg. 2 and in the reading of those pages. The shift in reading has been made possible by the latest technology and the productive collaboration between philologist and scientist in an iterative process. We anticipate further new insights from the material analysis of ink composition of this manuscript with the interdisciplinary approach of 'archaeometric philology', despite the challenges due to the overlapping ink layers of the *scriptiones superiores* and *inferiores* as well as from the versos and rectos.

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<sup>80</sup> Blair 2006, 125.

<sup>81</sup> As the possible physical context of the bifolio is unknown, the repetition of the same section three times is one possible scenario, but in principle the same portion could have been copied a fourth time as well.

<sup>82</sup> Pallesen 2017, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Pallesen 2017, 3.



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## Abbreviations

- EVQ = Shady Hekmat Nasser (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the [Variant] Readings of the Qur'an*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Digital Humanities, released in 2022, <<https://erquran.org/>> (accessed on 1 January 2024).  
 MC = Michael Marx (ed.), *Manuscripta Coranica*, Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007–2024, <<https://corpuscoranicum.de/en/manuscripts/>> (accessed on 1 January 2024).  
 VLC = Michael Marx (ed.), *Variae Lectiones Coranicae*, Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007–2024, <<https://corpuscoranicum.de/de/verse-navigator/sura/1/verse/1/variants/>> (accessed on 1 January 2024).

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## Appendix: Edition of A. Perg.2

Symbols used in the edition of A. Perg. 2:

]هو[يـوم	Faded characters between square brackets represent a lacuna in the materiality of the manuscript (loss of parchment or ink) that has been reconstructed. The possible text of the lacunae is from the Tanzil edition, which is based on the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an (the Medina edition). The possible text of the lacunae aims at showing that the reading of the few visible letters is plausible (especially on fol. 1 <sup>v</sup> ) and how the reconstructed text would fit on the manuscript page.
[26:116]	Two faded numbers separated by a colon and enclosed between square brackets represent the numbering of the verses in the Medina edition (i.e. the Kufan system for verse counting). The numbering is inserted to facilitate the mapping of the textual remains in the manuscript although the manuscript displays no traces of a specific system.
: or ::	The signs : and :: represent the markers used by the scribe to indicate the end of the verse and to represent the textual subdivision. The colon symbol imitates the column(s) of oval dots.
(رك)	Characters between round brackets represent uncertain characters where some traces of inks are present but difficult to read.
(...)	An ellipsis in round parentheses represents traces of multiple words present in the text but that are difficult to read and which the editor is unable to interpret.
1	A vertical line preceded by an ordinal number indicates the numbering of lines when the sequence of the structure into lines is clear.
1	A faded vertical line preceded by an ordinal number indicates the numbering of lines when the sequence of the structure into lines is unclear because of the missing material (e.g. on fol. 1 <sup>v</sup> where the numbering is reconstructed on the basis of the lines on fol. 1 <sup>r</sup> ). The aim is to indicate the reading of the mirrored text of the recto due to the overlapping texts as a result of the ink that penetrated through the parchment.
مء/ءءءءءء	Characters between solidus and reverse solidus represent an insertion made by the scribe, likely the first hand.
كءءءءءءءءءءء	Characters between double solidus and reverse solidus represent an insertion made by the scribe, likely a later hand.
كءءءءءءءءءءء	Characters between double square brackets represent an erasure made by the scribe.

The text is not marked by vowel dots or vowel symbols. The edited text includes only consonantal diacritics when they are marked in the manuscript text. The reconstituted text between squared brackets does not represent vowels, as they are not part of the manuscript system. The diacritics are kept as they are in the base text, since we have no clues as to their distribution in this manuscript. A different solution might have been the removal of all consonantal diacritics from the reconstituted text between squared brackets, but it would have conveyed a wrong impression of a possible text without diacritics while the writing system of A. Perg. 2 knows the consonantal diacritics.

fol. 1<sup>r</sup> (the narrow strip on the flesh side): one stratum of script only, featuring part of surah 26, verses 115–146 in hand A1

- 1 | اس [إنا] انذير مبين 26:115 قالوا لن لم تنته بنوح لتكونن من المرجو
- 2 | من [من] [26:116] هل [رب ان قومي كذبون 26:117 فافتح بيني وبينهم فتحا ونجني ومن]
- 3 | معي [من] [المومنين 26:118 فانجيته ومن معه في الفلك المشحون 26:119 ثم اغر]
- 4 | فنا بعد [الباقيين 26:120 ان في ذلك لاية وما كان اكثرهم مومنين 26:121 وان]
- 5 | ربك [هو] [العزیز الرحيم 26:122 كذبت عاد المرسلين 26:123 اذ قال لهم]
- 6 | احدو] [هم هود الا تنتقون 26:124 انى لكم رسول امين 26:125 فاتقوا الله]
- 7 | واطيعون 26:126 وما اسلكم عليه من اجر ان اجرى الا على رب ا]
- 8 | لعل] [مين 26:127 اتينون بكل ريع اية تعيثون 26:128 وتتخذون مصانع]
- 9 | لعل] [لكم تخذلون 26:129 واذا بطشتم بطشتم جبارين 26:130 فاتقوا ا]
- 10 | [له] [و] [اطيعون 26:131 واتقوا الذى امركم بما تعلمون 26:132 امدمكم]
- 11 | بانعم و] [بينين 26:133 وجنت و عيون 26:134 انى اخاف عليكم عذاب]
- 12 | [و] [م عظيم 26:135 قالوا سوا علينا او عظمت ام لم تكن من الو]
- 13 | [ع] [ط] [ين 26:136 ان هذا الا خلق الاولين 26:137 وما نحن بمعنيين 26:138 فكذبوه]
- 14 | فاهلكناهم ان في ذلك لاية وما كان اكثرهم مومنين 26:139]
- 15 | وان [ربك] [لهو العزیز الرحيم 26:140 كذبت ثمود المرسلين 26:141 اذ قال]
- 16 | لهم احول] [هم صلح الا تنتقون 26:142 انى لكم رسول امين 26:143 فاتقوا ا]
- 17 | لله واطيعون 26:144 وما اسلكم عليه من اجر ان اجرى الا على رب]
- 18 | [الرحلم] [ين 26:145 انتركون فى ما ههنا امنين 26:146 فى جنت و عيون 26:147]

[missing parchment]<sup>84</sup>

fol. 1<sup>v</sup> (the narrow strip on the hair side): likely one stratum of script only, featuring part of surah 26, verses 174–180, in hand A1 and hand B<sup>85</sup>

84 Here the writing support is completely absent. Some traces of the folding of the bifolio correspond to the vertical space of about two to three lines. If the leaf contained further text that was structured into lines, similarly to fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (i.e. 23 lines), and calculating the average number of letters and spaces as in the text at ll. 1–18, the lacuna would have the text of surah 26, verses 148–155. This reconstructed situation is only one of the possible situations, as there are no arguments for suggesting how the missing text was structured (or even repeated). What is highly probable is the existence of further text as part of the same object.

- 14 | فسا مطر المنزيرين 26:173 ان في ذلك لاية وما كان اكثر[ر]هم  
 15 | مومنين 26:174 وان ربك لهُو العزيز الرحيم 26:175 كذب ا[صح  
 16 | ليكة المرسلين 26:176 اذ قال لهم شعيب الا تتقون : [26:177] اى  
 17 | لكم رسول امين 26:178 فاتقوا الله واطيعون 26:179 وما [ا]سلكم  
 18 | عليه من اجر ان اجرى الا على رب العلمين 26:180 او فوا الكيل

fol. 2<sup>r</sup> top half (hair side): surah 28, verses 61–63 in the *scriptio inferior*, at ll. 1–2 and a few letters at ll. 4 and 6, in hand A1

- 1 | افلا تعقلون 28:60 افمن وعدناه حسنا فهو لقيه] (ك)مس [متعنه متع  
 2 | [الحياة الدنيا ثم هو] يوم القيمة من المحصرين (: [28:61] ونو  
 3 | م بناديهم فيقول اين شركاى الذين كنتم تزعمون [28:62] قال  
 4 | [الذين حق عليهم القول ربنا هولاء الذين اغربونا  
 5 | اغوينهم كما غويننا تبرانا اليك ما كانوا ايانا يعبد  
 6 | (ون) [28:63] وقيل ادعوا شركاكم فدعوهم فلم يستجيبوا]

fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (hair side): surah 28, verses 61–75 in the *scriptio superior*, at ll. 1–2 in hand B and at ll. 3–23 in hand A1<sup>86</sup>

- 1 | [وابقى افلا تعقلون 28:60 افمن وعدناه حسنا فهو لافه كمن (مربعه)ه مناع  
 2 | اللحيو]ه الدنيا بـم [هو يـ]يوم القيمة من المحصرين [28:61] ويوم بناديهم  
 3 | م [يناد]هم فقول اين [شركاى الذين كنتم تزعمون :: [28:62]  
 4 | فل اللحيو]س حق علىـهم]م ا[لعول ربنا هولاء الذين اغو  
 5 | بنا اعوينهم كما غويننا تبرنا ا[لك ما كـ] [لنا]نو<sup>87</sup> [ا]نا<sup>88</sup> نعبد  
 6 | ون :: [28:63] وهل ادعوا شرككم فدعوهم فلم  
 7 | يستجيبوا لهم وراو العذاب [ـ]و /انهم<sup>89</sup> كانوا بهتد  
 8 | ون :: [28:64] ويوم تندبهم فتقول ماذا اجنتم المرسلين) :: [28:65]  
 9 | فعمـنت) [ع]لهم الا[نبا] بو[مذ]فـهم] (لا) [يتـ]سألون :: [28:66]  
 10 | فاما من تاب وامس وعمل صلحا فعسى ان يكون من  
 11 | الـمفـلحس :: [28:67] وربك بخلو ما بـشـا ويـ]ختـر ما كان لهم ا

85 The reading of the text on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> poses some challenges as the remains of single letters are on the inner margin, close to the fold. It is likely that the scribe did not respect the justification of the text frame on its left side. Some lines have a few remains but others – in the upper half of the leaf – do not exhibit any trace of script. Assuming that the verso continued the text written on the recto, it is plausible that the remains are part of surah 26 from verses 175 to 180. Here, the numbering of the lines duplicates the situation on the recto of the leaf, although there are no traces of ll. 1–13 on fol. 1<sup>v</sup>. The space of the conjectured ll. 1–13 would fit the missing portion of text from the recto to the first readable line (\*1. 14).

86 The text written by hand A1 at l. 3 of the *scriptio superior* continues ll. 1–2 of the *scriptio inferior*.

87 The word was later corrected – likely by a different hand and with a darker ink – into كانوا *ante correctionem*.

88 The word was later corrected – likely by a different hand and with a darker ink – into اننا *ante correctionem*.

89 The letter *alif* seems to be a later addition traced with a different writing instrument.

- 12 | لحره [سبحن] (الله) [هـ] وتعلی عما شركون :: [28:68] وربك تعلم<sup>90</sup> ما  
 13 | مكن صدورهم وما نعلمون :: [28:69] وهو الله لا اله الا  
 14 | هو له الحمد (د) في الاولى والاحره وله الحكم وا  
 15 | لنه ترجعون : [28:70] فل ار يتم ان جعل الله (علكم) اليرل  
 16 | سرمدا الى يوم القيمة من الهه<sup>92</sup> غير الهه (تاتكم)  
 17 | بصا افلا تسمعون : [28:71] فل ارتم ان جعل الله عليكم  
 18 | النهر سرمدا الى يوم القيمة من الهه غير الله يا  
 19 | //||| اتكـ|ـ| 93 بلـ|ـ| يـ|ـ| لـ|ـ| كـ|ـ| نون فيه افلا تبصرون 28:72 ومن رحمته  
 20 | [جمـ|ـ| لـ|ـ| لكم (ليل والنهار لتسكنوا فيه ولتبتغوا  
 21 | [من فـ|ـ| ضله ولـ|ـ| علکم تشكرون 28:73 ويوم يناديهم  
 22 | [فيقول] اس سر|ـ| كاي الذين كنتم تزعمو  
 23 | [ن 28:74 ونز|ـ| عنا [من كل امة شهيدا فقلنا هاتوا]

fol. 2<sup>v</sup> top half (flesh side): surah 28, verse 75, word 3 to verse 77, word 18 in the *scriptio inferior* at ll. 1–8 in hand A1 (corresponding to ll. 1–11 of the *scriptio superior*)

- 1 | (كل ا) [مة شهيدا فقلنا هاتوا برهنكم فعلموا ان الحق لله و  
 2 | (صل) [عنهم ما كانوا يفترون] [ ] [28:75] [ان قرون كان من قوم موسى  
 3 | فعى [عليهم واتينه من الكنوز] (ر ما ا) [معاينه لنوا با  
 4 | لـ|ـ| عصبة] اولى [القهوة اذ] فل له [قومه] لا [تفرح]  
 5 | ان الله لا يحب [الفرح] حس [ ] [28:76] وانتع فيما اتك  
 6 | الله الدار الاخرة ولا تنن [حس] [نصيبيك من]  
 7 | [الدنيا و] [حسان] (كما) [احسن الله اليك] (ولا) [تبغ]  
 8 | [empty line]

fol. 2<sup>v</sup> top half (flesh side): surah 28, verse 75, word 1 to verse 80, word 7 in the *scriptio superior* at ll. 1–10 in hand B (corresponding to ll. 1–8 of the *scriptio inferior*) and hand C at ll. 10–11 (undeciphered)

- 1 | و برعنا من (كل) امه (سـ) هـ|ـ| يدا فقلنا هاتوا برهنكم فعلموا ان الحق لله و صل عنهم ما [كـ] [اتوا]  
 2 | بصرون [28:75] ان فر [و] كان من قوم موسى [فـ] عبا عليهم و (سناه) من الكـ [نوز مـ] [با ا]  
 3 | معا|ـ| احه<sup>94</sup> لنوا بالعصبة اولى القوه اذ فل [لـ] [هـ] [قومه] لا تفرح ان الله لا يحب

90 The two diacritics at the right of the initial denticle are traces of the ink from the flesh side to mark the letter *tā* in *wa-ātaynāhu* (in surah 28, verse 76, word 9).

91 The trait that joins the isolated letter *alif* and the initial *lām* is the ink from the back of the parchment (the hair side). The denticle-like shape between the letter *lām* and the final *hā'* are likely the traces of medial *qāf* with a diacritic above in surah 28, verse 76, word 18 at l. 15 of the back of the parchment (the hair side), rather than a spelling of the word *ūlāh* with a denticle to mark the long /a/.

92 The condition of the parchment does not allow one to identify whether there is a joining trait between the initial *lām* and the final *hā'* or a denticle to mark the long /a/. Both occurrences, at ll. 13 and 16, are unclear.

93 *Supplevit* different hand. The initial letter block لـ was added, written in a light-brown ink in a different script style; see the downstroke of the foot of the *alif*.

- 4 | الفرحين [28:76] وانبع في ما اناك الله الدار (الاحره ولا نسا نصيبك  
 5 | من الدنيا واحسن كما احسن الله) (الديك ولا نعي الفساد في الارض  
 6 | ان الله لا يحب المفسدين 28:77 قال انما اوتيت به على علم عندي اولم يعلم ان الله  
 7 | قد اهلك من قبله من القرون من هو اسد منه فوه واكثر جمعا  
 8 | ولا نسل عن ذريتهم [المحرمون 28:78] فحرح عـ[لـ]ـ(ى) فومه [فى] ريسه فل الدين يربدون  
 9 | الحنوه الدنيا نالت لنا مثل ما اوبى فـ[رو]ـن انه لدر [حـ]ـ(ط) [عظيـ]ـم [28:79] (وقل)  
 10 | الدين او [توا] العـ[لم] و[لكم] نوب الله (...)  
 11 | (...)

fol. 2<sup>v</sup> bottom half (flesh side): surah 28, verse 75, word 7 to verse 77, word 17 at ll. 12–18, one stratum only in hand A2<sup>95</sup>

- 12 | هاتوا برهنكم [م فعلـ]ـوا ان الحق الله و[ضل]ـ (عـ)ـ[هم] ما كانوا  
 13 | دـ[فتـ]ـروون: [28:75] ان فرون كان من فو [م موسى فيغى عـ]ـلـهم  
 14 | واتننه من الكنوز ما ان مفتحه لتتور [بالعـ]ـصبه اولى  
 15 | الفوه اد قل له فـ[و]ـمه لا تفرح ان الله لا  
 16 | يحب الفرحين: [28:76] وانبع [همـ]ـا اتك الله الدار  
 17 | الا [خر]ـه ولا تنس دـ[صـ]ـبك من الدنيا وا  
 18 | [حسن] كما احسن اللـ[يه]ـ ا[لك] ولا

94 *Supplevit* scribe. It seems that the letter *alif* was later supplied by the scribe of hand B.

95 The identification of lines and their numbering is difficult because of the condition of the parchment and the page that does not have a single text frame. The page has been structured to have two empty areas: one is between the top text area (both strata) and the bottom text area, and the second empty area is a generous bottom margin. The bottom margin occupies the area that corresponds to ll. 19–23 on the recto of the leaf (hair side).



Darya Ogorodnikova, Khaoula Trad

# Palimpsesting or Paper Reuse in Islamic Manuscripts of West Africa

**Abstract:** In the Arabic and Islamic manuscript traditions, palimpsests are scarce and confined geographically to the eastern part of the Islamic world, Mashriq; materially to parchment; chronologically to the first centuries of Islamic history; and thematically to Qur’anic content. This paper is the first attempt to describe and examine West African Islamic palimpsests and paper reuse, based on a corpus of seventeen manuscripts from the so-called Timbuktu collections. Through the analysis of the upper and lower text in each case, we explored the reasons for palimpsesting and its methods. A time gap between the upper and lower layers was then estimated, when possible. Several cases offer intriguing insights, and others raise broader questions about whether paper reuse in West Africa could be considered a way of dealing with old and discarded artefacts.

## 1 Introduction

From an etymological point of view, the term ‘palimpsest’ derives from the ancient Greek word *παλίψηστος*, composed of *πάλιν* (‘again’ or ‘another time’) and *ψάω* (‘to scrape’), which describes the phenomenon where ‘the original writing was scraped and washed off, the surface re-smoothed and the literary material written on the salvaged material’.<sup>1</sup> While Georges Declercq uses *codex rescriptus* as a synonym of ‘palimpsest’, identifying it as a manuscript whose primary script has been effaced to make way for fresh writing,<sup>2</sup> Alba Fedeli insists on the ambiguity of *codex rescriptus*, since it does not specify the purpose behind the act of writing a second time, which could be to reuse, to restore, or to correct a text.<sup>3</sup> Generally, the Arabic terminology uses the words *tirs* and *tils* to refer to a text that has been effaced or obliterated.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the words do differentiate between a text that has been erased inefficiently (*tils*) and one that has been effaced efficiently

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1 Metzger and Ehrman 2005, 21.

2 Declercq 2007, 7.

3 Fedeli 2023, 255. See also Agati 2004, 66–67.

4 Gacek 2009, 184.

(*ṭirs*), which accordingly allows the writing material to be used again.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, and in terms of terminological clarity and accuracy, *ṭirs* represents the Arabic word for ‘palimpsest’ and *taṭrīs* is ‘the technique of palimpsesting’. A palimpsest is not necessarily and only composed of a lower text, or *scriptio inferior*, and an upper text, or *scriptio superior*, since particularly in the case of parchment, it can be reused once or twice (*bis rescriptus*, *ter rescriptus*) or even more times.<sup>6</sup> Asma Hilali gives the example of a ‘strategic record’, such as Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery, arab. 514, which contains five layers written in Syriac, Greek, and Arabic.<sup>7</sup> The palimpsesting was mainly done on parchment with some documented cases on papyrus.<sup>8</sup>

Palimpsests in Arabic script are scarce, and although researchers have made continuous efforts and achievements in Arabic and Islamic manuscript history, the available material is mainly limited to the field of Qur’anic studies.<sup>9</sup> In this field, the so-called Mingana-Lewis Palimpsest (Cambridge, University Library, Or. 1287) was the first discovery to generate interest in the scholarly milieu,<sup>10</sup> accordingly making Mount Sinai and its palimpsests the first reference point.<sup>11</sup> Continuing a little bit further south, the second reference point is Ṣan‘ā’ and its Codex 1.<sup>12</sup> Finally, we

5 In Ibn Maẓūr’s *Lisān al-‘Arab* (1993, vol. 6, 121 and 124), the verb *ṭalasa* is associated only with erasure. There is no further action that can be done after that. In addition, this verb correlates with ineffective erasure: *وإذا محوت الكتاب لتفسد خطه قلت طلست فإذا أنعمت محوه قلت طرست* and *wa-idhā maḥawta al-kitāb li-tuḥsida khaṭṭahu qulta ṭalastu fa-idhā an‘amta maḥwahu qulta ṭarastu* (‘And when you erased the book to spoil its handwriting, you would say, *ṭalastu*, [yet] when you erase it smoothly, you say *ṭarastu*). Nevertheless, the verb *ṭarasa* means to ‘erase effectively and to write on the erased material’: الطرس الكتاب الممحو الذي يستطاع أن تعاد عليه الكتابة: *al-ṭirs al-kitāb al-mamhūw al-ladhī yustaṭā‘u an tu‘āda ‘alyhi al-kitāba* (‘*al-ṭirs* [is] the erased book that can be rewritten’).

6 Escobar 2006, 16.

7 Hilali 2017, 5; see also Grigory Kessel’s contribution to this volume, p. 190.

8 Hilali 2017, 5; Tchernetska and Wilson 2011, 243.

9 Alba Fedeli (2023, 256) argues that the limited number of Qur’anic palimpsests is the reason why it has never led to the formation of ‘a proper field of research into Qur’anic palimpsests’.

10 Since 2005, Fedeli has been undertaking extensive research on this palimpsest in an effort to contextualise it, present its story and the story of its *scriptio inferior*, and describe its digitalisation project. See Fedeli 2005, 3–7; Fedeli 2011; Fedeli 2019, 174–198. See also George 2011.

11 In her latest paper about the first results of the Sinai Palimpsests Project, Claudia Rapp (2023) studied the religious preference in the practice of palimpsesting and the circulation of erased parchment according to the religious affiliation. Moreover, she underlined the correlation between the erased language and the overtext language.

12 In 1981, Gerd Rüdiger Puin showed the first academic interest in the Ṣan‘ā’ palimpsest. In 2005, Alba Fedeli traced the ‘lost palimpsest’ in Cambridge and provided initial information about its history. Then, in 2007, Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi produced the first complete edition

come to the palimpsests found in the Genizah of Cairo and those detected in the Qubbat al-khazna in Damascus.<sup>13</sup> All four of these reference points, together with some others, were deeply scrutinised and discussed by Fedeli in her recent paper on Qur'anic palimpsests.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these continuous attempts, a noticeable gap can be perceived on three levels. Firstly, these studies are geographically delimited. The Mashriq is the core of this academic interest, leaving the rest of the Islamic lands on the periphery.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, chronologically speaking, the available studies have focused mainly on palimpsests dating from the first centuries of Islamic history, thus prioritising them over other periods. Finally, regarding the materiality of the palimpsests, the studies so far have been carried out mainly on parchment with some examples on papyrus.

The early adoption and rapid spread of paper in the Islamic world may account for the scarcity of palimpsests.<sup>16</sup> The same logic could explain the absence or even implausibility of palimpsests among West African Islamic manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, paper – the most common writing support in West African manuscripts – is unsuitable for erasing and thus for creating palimpsests.

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of the *scriptio inferior*. From this date on, the Ṣan'ā' palimpsest has been a focus of academic attention, with scholars generating different hypotheses about its codicological nature and many opinions concerning the reconstruction of its *scriptio inferior*. On the one hand, Elisabeth Puin, Behnam Sadeghi, Mohsen Goudarzi, François Déroche and Éléonore Cellard maintain that the fragments of Ṣan'ā' 1 actually form a complete codex that was dispersed over time. On the other hand, Asma Hilali holds that both the *scriptio inferior* and the *scriptio superior* were not intended to be part of a codex, suggesting that the Qur'anic passages were likely written in teaching circles. See Fedeli 2005, 3–7; Sadeghi and Goudarzi 2012, 11; Déroche 2014, 48–56; Déroche 2019, 201–229; Cellard 2021, 1–28; Hilali 2017, 67–70, 141–152; Fedeli 2023, 262.

**13** Ronny Vollandt (2023) scrutinises the palimpsests coming from both places and gives the statistics on the languages present in the upper and lower texts and the genres represented in both layers. For a detailed overview of the history and the documents of the Qubbat al-khazna, consult the edited volume D'Ottone Rambach, Hirschler and Vollandt 2020.

**14** Fedeli 2023 provides a comprehensive overview of the corpus of Qur'anic palimpsests that have been discovered and studied thus far. Fedeli's analysis goes beyond the upper Qur'anic text, as she also delved into the lower texts of Greek Bible and the Sayings of the Fathers of the Desert, contributing to a deeper comprehension of palimpsests.

**15** The Mashriq (the East) is opposed to the Maghrib (the West). Geographically, the Mashriq extends from Egypt and to the region of the Levant (*bilād al-Shām*), comprising modern-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Arabian peninsula (*al-jazīra al-'arabiyya*), Iraq, and some regions in Iran and Central Asia. See Ibn Ḥawqal 1992, 304; al-Jabrānī 2016, 42.

**16** Fedeli 2023, 262.

**17** For example, Murray Last (2008, 156) suggests that no books or texts in West African collections were lost in reuse, paper being an inconvenient material for that.

However, the British explorer Dixon Denham cites an instance of washing paper in nineteenth-century Bornu: a local scholar, needing a blank sheet to write a letter, washed off some talismanic writings from a scrap of paper and dried it in the sun.<sup>18</sup> Yet this anecdote<sup>19</sup> provides insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the extent to which paper manuscripts were washed in this way to accommodate new writings. Rather, this exception might prove the rule that palimpsests are rare finds in West African manuscript collections. In fact, none had been identified or reported until now.<sup>20</sup>

At present, the authors have come across seventeen manuscripts (listed in the Appendix) that may qualify as palimpsests or recycled manuscripts.<sup>21</sup> The manuscripts we discuss fall into the category of palimpsests since they represent new

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**18** Denham, Clapperton and Oudney 1826, 111. We are grateful to Michaëlle Biddle for bringing this source to our attention. Interestingly, Denham continues his description with the scholar drinking the inked water and rubbing it over his neck and head. This procedure of washing the paper thus resembles talisman-making practices using wooden boards, where selected Qur'anic verses are copied onto the wooden board and then washed off with water. This act is believed to impart healing or protective properties and the resulting water is either drunk or applied to one's body (see e.g. Mommersteeg 2012, 86).

**19** There is another anecdote related to paper recycling in nineteenth-century West Africa. It concerns the travel journal of Scottish explorer Alexander Gordon Laing (d. 1826). Laing was the first European to reach Timbuktu but was killed shortly after he departed from the city. His journal detailing his travels is believed to have been lost (see Smith 1985, 20). However, the journal seems to have then been found: it was reused by a local scribe as writing support for a work on Arabic grammar. There is conflicting evidence about the manuscript's current location. According to some sources, it belongs to the Mamma Haïdara Library (Hammer 2016, 4); see also the Robert Goldwater Library's Flickr account, <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/goldwaterlibrary/3533760343/in/photostream/>> (accessed on 30 May 2024). However, we were unable to find the manuscript in the digitised collection on the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library website. According to other sources, Laing's 'recycled' travel journal is among the manuscripts of Fondo Kati, curated by Ismael Diadié Haïdara (Molins Lliteras 2015, 139); see also the image <<https://www.alamy.com/ismal-diadi-kuti-fondo-kati-librarymanuscript-from-alexander-gordon-laing-intimbuktu-mali-africa-image385853252.html>> (accessed on 30 May 2024).

**20** For instance, Michaëlle Biddle and Dmitry Bondarev shared with us that they did not encounter any palimpsest during their extensive work with manuscript collections of present-day Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. One of the authors of this article, Darya Ogorodnikova, observed a similar tendency while researching manuscripts of the Greater Senegambia region. Khaoula Trad, this article's second author, was the first to flag a manuscript with a talisman written over another text barely visible on the page. Saadou Traore discovered a few more examples while researching manuscripts of the al-Āqib private library in Timbuktu.

**21** We discovered at least three more palimpsests after submitting this article: ABS 00979, ABS 02435, and BMH 30524.

objects created using old materials.<sup>22</sup> In most cases, this entails changes in the manuscript's content, format, and function. Yet we are not always able to determine whether the writing surface was deliberately prepared to receive new content by erasing the previous one. In fact, we have come across some cases where the undertexts seem to have disintegrated due to water or moisture damage.<sup>23</sup> One could describe such instances as recycling or reusing paper.

The manuscripts from the current corpus are from the so-called Timbuktu collections: Mamma Haïdara Library (hereafter: BMH), the private libraries of al-Ṭāhir Mu'ādh (hereafter: ATM), Abū Bakr b. Sa'īd (hereafter: ABS), and al-Āqīb (hereafter: AQB).<sup>24</sup> Our list, however, is not exhaustive, and nor did it result from a systematic search for palimpsests; they were encountered while working with manuscript collections for other research projects.

The major limitation of our study is that we had to rely on digital images, not being able to examine the original manuscripts (except for one) for various reasons.<sup>25</sup> Above all, this affects paper analysis and checking for watermarks to establish dating. Nevertheless, in a handful of cases, the dating of manuscripts in our corpus can be at least roughly estimated. The earliest one can be dated, based on a watermark, to the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries (see 'Case study 2' below). A few more manuscripts are written on what looks like wove machine-made paper, which could not predate the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> In two other cases, manuscript content helped to determine the mid to late nineteenth century as a *terminus post quem*. Both manuscripts contain texts by local West African authors: one is a text on the Tijānī Sufī order, *Suyūf al-sa'īd* ('The Swords of the Happy') by 'Umar al-Fūtī (d. 1280 AH / 1864 CE), and the other is a poem in praise of the latter by al-Mukhtār b. Wadī'at Allāh al-Māsinī, known as Yirkoy Talfī (d. c. 1862).<sup>27</sup>

22 See Fedeli 2023, 256 for such an interpretation of the term 'palimpsesting'. See also Halle O'Neal's contribution to this volume for a broader definition.

23 The most conspicuous example is the manuscript ATM 01102, where only the upper part of the text was washed off due to water damage, and its lower part is still clearly visible.

24 The history of this library is available in Haïdara 2011, 242–249; see also Molins Lliteras 2017, 154. There is no information about al-Ṭāhir Mu'ādh or Abū Bakr b. Sa'īd, except that their manuscript collections are part of the thirty-five private libraries formerly situated in Timbuktu, Mali, and currently housed in Bamako under the auspices of the non-governmental organisation Sauvegarde et Valorisation des Manuscrits pour la Défense de la Culture Islamique (hereafter: SAVAMA-DCI). Images of the manuscripts are available on the website of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, <<https://www.vhmmml.org/readingRoom>> (accessed on 22 February 2024).

25 We had a chance to examine the manuscript ATM 01287 in February 2023.

26 See Biddle 2017, 38.

27 Manuscripts BMH 16756 and AQB 02689, respectively; on the authors, see ALA IV, 220 and 233.

In terms of the contents, the majority (ten out of seventeen) are texts on healing and talisman making, in both the upper and the lower layers. However, surprisingly, we also found various texts from the classical Islamic curriculum, ranging from the Qur'an (BMH 19191), legal manuals (ATM 01287), and texts on belief (BMH 17799) to Sufism, prophetic tradition, and even a note recording expenditures or the lending of money (AQB 02153).

The present article is a first attempt to document and analyse palimpsests and paper reuse in West African Islamic manuscripts. Thus, it offers insights into palimpsesting techniques in the Islamic world beyond the boundaries of the Mashriq and the first centuries of Islamic history, as well as on materials other than parchment. Additionally, this article aims to broaden the study of Islamic palimpsests beyond the prevalent realm of Qur'anic studies. In our analysis, we will consider the motivations behind, the methods of text erasure used on, the relation between, and (where possible) the time elapsed between the lower and upper layers.

## 2 Writing support

One motivation typically cited for creating palimpsests is economic considerations linked to a lack or scarcity of writing materials. To evaluate whether this applies to West Africa, the following section provides an overview of various writing supports in the region, focusing on paper supply and availability.

Despite the need for importation, paper served as the primary medium for manuscripts in West Africa. It seems that local writing supports could scarcely substitute it. Animal skins were seldom used as a writing support and only for lavish manuscripts.<sup>28</sup> The limited use of parchment might be explained by its high price: since it involves killing animals, even local manufacturing is expensive.<sup>29</sup> A counter-argument suggests that, at certain times, its fabrication might have been less costly than imported paper.<sup>30</sup>

Another widespread alternative for paper in the West African context, still in use today, are wooden tablets (*lawh*). Washing off the text from their surface

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<sup>28</sup> Parchment manuscripts have been reported in collections in Mauritania (Lydon 2004, 56 and Lydon 2011, 51) and Timbuktu, Mali (Bloom 2008, 48; Haïdara 2011, 247). Neither of the latter two reports specifies whether the parchment manuscripts in Malian collections were produced locally or imported.

<sup>29</sup> Bloom 2008, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Lydon 2011, 51.

allows for multiple reuses, making them an excellent learner's tool. However, given their limited space, thickness, and weight, they are evidently less appropriate repositories for lengthy texts. Thus, wooden tablets served as the primary medium for Qur'anic school pupils and intermediate students, while advanced students and full-fledged scholars preferred paper.<sup>31</sup>

References to wooden tablets intended for elementary learners as a substitute for scarce and costly writing paper abound in the travel accounts of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century European explorers.<sup>32</sup> What stands out even more from these accounts is how much paper was sought and treasured by local scholars: travellers often gave paper as offerings or compensation and even used it as a currency.<sup>33</sup> Remarkably, a nineteenth-century scribe from Fouta Djallon (present-day Guinea) even documented the name of the fellow scholar who offered him paper for the manuscript.<sup>34</sup>

High costs and complicated access to paper resulted from long-distance imports. The region's supply in paper, mainly of European manufacture, was carried out through the trans-Saharan trade routes from northern markets and (by the eighteenth century) through ports of Atlantic trade.<sup>35</sup> Yet, to purchase paper scholars often had to travel to trade hubs – a venture fraught with risk. Two cases

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**31** Classical Islamic education is divided into two stages: elementary, known as Qur'anic school, and intermediate-advanced, known as 'ilm school or else 'study of books'. During the elementary stage, pupils learn the basics of the Islamic faith, memorise the Qur'an, and acquire writing skills. The higher stage includes studying texts on various Islamic disciplines with a teacher. On stages of classical Islamic education in West Africa, see, for example, Tamari and Bondarev 2013, 7–8; Mommersteeg 2012, 48; Tamari 2016, 30; Reichmuth 2011, 215–218. On the usage of different media at various stages of classical Islamic education, see Bondarev 2017; Tamari 2016, 38. See Brigaglia 2017 for a comprehensive analysis of wooden tablets in traditional Qur'anic education.

**32** For instance, Richard Jobson, travelling in the early seventeenth century along the River Gambia, records that no paper was available for local scholars other than imported through trade, and that was of great value (Jobson 1623, 85–86). Durand in the late seventeenth century accounts that, while teachers favoured paper, their pupils wrote on wooden boards, the paper being too scarce and too expensive (Durand 1802, 69 and 260). One finds almost the exact wording in the travel account of the mid-Niger Bend by Mungo Park, according to whom 'scholars wrote their lessons upon thin boards; paper being too expensive for general use' (Park 1864, 119).

**33** See e.g. Michel Jajolet de la Courbe (Cultru 1913, 115 and 169); Hecquard 1855, 135 and 569; Barth 1857; Caillié 1830.

**34** Diallo Lélouma and Salvaing 2017, 77.

**35** For in-depth studies on paper trade in West Africa, see e.g. Bloom 2008; Walz 2011; Lydon 2009; Lydon 2011.

are known – that of Ayuba Diallo and Lamine Kebe – who, while travelling for trade purposes, including to procure paper, were kidnapped and sold into slavery.<sup>36</sup>

However, with the development of paper-manufacturing technologies and centres in Europe and the diversification of trading markets in West Africa, by the second half of the nineteenth century paper became more readily available, stimulating the production of manuscripts.

### 3 Techniques of text deletion

Creating palimpsests involves eliminating previous text from the writing surface. Since paper absorbs ink, it cannot be as easily erased as parchment or papyrus.<sup>37</sup> The following section discusses possible methods used in the broader Islamic tradition and West Africa.

Various methods of cancelling or erasing texts on parchment and paper have been documented in Islamic manuscript production.<sup>38</sup> For instance, writing can be left in place, but covered with another layer of ink by crossing it out or blackening it. Alternatively, it can be eliminated from the writing surface by rubbing it out or washing it off with water or acidic liquids.

West African manuscripts also exhibit some of these techniques. Cancelling or erasing writing is usually associated with correcting scribal errors. However, it also occurs with a change of manuscript ownership to invalidate or obscure previous possession records.<sup>39</sup> Crossing out or blackening the irrelevant or unwanted parts appears to be more common (probably because it required less efforts). Occasionally, the writings seem to have been rubbed out, perhaps with the aid of some liquid, as the ink of the affected writing looks pale and slightly smudged (Figs 1a–b).

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<sup>36</sup> See Diouf 1998, 58, citing these two cases. On the biography of Ayuba Diallo, see Bluett 1734. On Lamine Kebe, see Dwight 1835.

<sup>37</sup> Bloom 2001, 49. Interestingly, he also notes that since paper cannot be erased as easily as parchment or papyrus, officials considered it more advantageous as a medium to prevent document forgeries.

<sup>38</sup> See Hilali 2017, 7–13 and Vollandt 2023, 238–239 for a survey of the principal sources and techniques described therein.

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. Molins Lliteras 2017, 170–172.





**Figs 1a–b:** Scribal correction by erasure of a marginal commentary and a catchword. Left: Dublin, Trinity College, MS 2689, fol. 34<sup>r</sup>; The Board of Trinity College; right: Paris, Bibliothèque universitaire de langues et civilisations, MS.ARA.219bis, fol. 214<sup>v</sup> (excerpts).

These examples of rubbing out or washing off concern primarily a few words or sentences rather than entire texts. Other occurrences exist where manuscript folios (including those discussed further in this article) have been entirely ‘cleared’ of previous writings. However, it is not straightforward to determine whether earlier layers were purposefully destroyed. In some cases, water stains (Fig. 2a) or patches of intact writing (Fig. 2b) may suggest unintentional water damage as opposed to deliberate soaking of pages in water.<sup>40</sup> In manuscripts with barely discernible writing and no traces of moisture damage or erasure, a possible explanation is ink deterioration or fading.<sup>41</sup> It becomes even more plausible that some unintended processes caused text to vanish when only some folios within a manuscript are impacted and no subsequent text has been added to them.

<sup>40</sup> According to our communication with the manuscript conservation specialists Michaëlle Biddle and Maria Luisa Russo, washing or soaking entire sheets allows ink to be removed without water leaving traces or stains on the sheets. However, the paper might get warped after drying and should be placed under a press to flatten out.

<sup>41</sup> For instance, one may think of inks fading over time or when exposed to sunlight. Saadou Traore (unpublished thesis draft) mentions a traditional technique adopted by the manuscript owners in Timbuktu, which consists of spreading the manuscripts out in the sun and in the shade for several days after each rainy season to protect them from humidity and insects. However, according to Biddle and Russo (see n. 40), considering the typical West African ink compositions, washing off the text is more probable than fading ink.



**Figs 2a–b:** Manuscript pages where water damage has caused the writing to wash off. Images courtesy of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Umar Falke Collection (uncatalogued), Northwestern University Libraries.

However, the text disintegrating naturally from the manuscript's pages likely would take considerable time, whereas washing the ink off the paper with water, as seen above from Dixon Denham's account, could yield quick results.

Among the examined manuscripts, we observed surfaces with underlying layers varying from barely visible to highly apparent. While in some cases we can suggest that the surface was deliberately cleaned, in others we can assume that the scribes reused worn-out materials where the first layer of writing disintegrated naturally. The following sections provide detailed case studies, which also seek to estimate the time gap between the lower and upper layers of writing.

## 4 Case studies

### 4.1 Case study 1

Manuscript BMH 19191, from the Mamma Haidara Library, comprises 293 loose-leaf folios.<sup>42</sup> It is a composite manuscript consisting of three (unrelated) units with texts on Mālikī law, none of which are dated.<sup>43</sup> Only the first unit, on fols 1<sup>r</sup>–4<sup>v</sup>, has two overlapping layers of text.<sup>44</sup> The thick light-cream paper was paginated by the archivist in pencil at the middle-bottom of the folios (i.e. pages 1–8). Each folio measures 188 mm high × 140 mm wide, with traces of wear and tear and water stains (mainly in the margins). There is a hole in the lower margin caused by insects, which, however, does not impede the reading.

#### 4.1.1 The *scriptio inferior*

The recto of the first folio bears unclear traces of the previous text, but they remain undecipherable by the naked eye. However, the writing is more visible on the folio's verso side, leading us to recognise Qur'anic verses from several subsequent Qur'anic chapters. At first glance, one can notice a distinctive feature, which is the poor material realisation of the text, keeping in mind its nature as Qur'anic text. The layout is irregular, and the slanted base lines testify that the scribe did not use a ruling board (*mīṣṭara*) to carry out the ruling. The number of lines ranges between fourteen and sixteen. The text is written in a thin, unsteady hand in *sūdānī* script (Masina hand) in brown ink. The absence of the *sūra* headings is notable, yet the *basmala* is present and in all instances separated from the

42 For more details on the notion of loose-leaf manuscripts in West Africa, see Bondarev 2023.

43 The three units are a part of the introduction of *al-Risāla* (fols 1<sup>v</sup>–4<sup>v</sup>) by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386 AH / 996 CE), the entire *al-Risāla* (fols 5<sup>r</sup>–257<sup>v</sup>), and an unknown Mālikī treatise (fols 258<sup>r</sup>–293<sup>v</sup>). Within this unknown treatise, we were able to identify some quotations from *Mawāhib al-jalīl fī sharḥ mukhtaṣar Khalīl* and from *Kitāb al-dhakhīra fī furū' al-mālikīyya*. For further information about Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī and his *al-Risāla*, see Muranyi, 'Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online*, <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_30680](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30680)> (accessed on 28 January 2024).

44 Ángel Escobar (2006, 17) argues that a palimpsest can be the entirety of a codex, a quire or quires, or a folio or folios.

previous Qur'anic chapter by a blank space.<sup>45</sup> The verse dividers are also absent. To accommodate the lines within the writing frame, the scribe used line fillers,<sup>46</sup> the elongation method (*madd*),<sup>47</sup> and word splits.<sup>48</sup> Instances of scribal negligence have been detected where letters,<sup>49</sup> and sometimes single words<sup>50</sup> and sequences of words,<sup>51</sup> were omitted and some words were crossed out.<sup>52</sup>

The four folios examined contain the shorter chapters towards the end of the Qur'an, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Sequence of Qur'anic chapters identified in the four palimpsested folios.

Fol.	Recto	Verso
1	[Illegible]	Q. 80:36–42, Q. 79:1–24
2	Q. 85:10–22, Q. 84:1–12	Q. 86:3–17, Q. 85:1–9
3	Q. 83:17–36, <sup>53</sup> Q. 82:1–9	Q. 84:13–25, <sup>54</sup> Q. 83:1–16
4	Q. 91:13–15, Q. 90:1–12, Q. 89:1–15 <sup>55</sup>	Q. 92:5–21, Q. 91:1–13

45 Like on fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, l. 5; fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, l. 9; fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 8; fol. 3<sup>r</sup>, l. 12; fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, l. 8; fol. 4<sup>r</sup>; ll. 4, 9, and 10; fol. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 9. The blank spaces might have been left to insert the *sura* headings at a later time, in an ink of a different colour.

46 The line fillers appear in various forms: one straight horizontal line in fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, ll. 8 and 9; two straight horizontal parallel lines in fol. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 2; three straight horizontal parallel lines in fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, ll. 7 and 11.

47 Also called *maṭṭ* and *maṣḥq*. It consists in elongating the final letters or words until the end of the line; see Gacek 2009, 146–147. This method can be seen in fol. 3<sup>r</sup>, l. 16 and fol. 4<sup>v</sup>, l. 2.

48 Such as in fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, ll. 9 and 10; fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, ll. 10 and 11; fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, ll. 3 and 4. Notwithstanding, in many instances, the scribe disregarded the word-splitting rule. As per the rule, the first part of the word is written at the end of a line and the remaining part at the beginning of the next one. However, the manuscript's scribe wrote the first part of the split words repeatedly: at the end of one line and again at the beginning of the following line. In fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, *asāṭi-* is written at the end of l. 14 and *asāṭir* at the beginning of l. 15. Another example is in fol. 4<sup>v</sup>, with *wa-sa-* appearing at the end of l. 5 and reappearing again at the beginning of l. 6, in *wa-sayujannabuha*.

49 In fol. 4<sup>r</sup>, l. 14, *الاتاد al-atād* instead of *الاولتاد al-awtād*. The letter *wāw* is missing.

50 In fol. 3<sup>r</sup>, ll. 4 and 5, *ذلك في ذلك misk<sup>mn</sup> fi dhalika* instead of *ذلك في ذلك misk<sup>mn</sup> wa-fi dhalika*. The coordinating conjunction *wāw* is missing.

51 On fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, l. 16 reads as follows: *هذا يكسبون كلا انهم لصالوا الجحيم ثم يقال هذا يكسبون كلا انهم عن ربهم يومئذ لمحجوبون* instead of *هذا يكسبون كلا انهم لصالوا الجحيم ثم يقال هذا يكسبون كلا انهم عن ربهم يومئذ لمحجوبون* *yaksibūn kallā innahum 'an rabbihim yawma'adh<sup>in</sup> la-mahjubūn thumma innahum la-ṣālū al-jaḥīm thumma yuqāl hadhā*.

52 On fol. 4<sup>r</sup>, l. 9 starts with a crossed-out *الل وبسم الل wa-bi-ism all*.

53 The first word of Q. 80:36 is missing.

54 The scribe omitted the last five words of the verse.

As Table 1 demonstrates, the text contains some lacunae.<sup>56</sup> Most are due to missing manuscript folios wherever the text discontinues at the end of the folio.<sup>57</sup> However, it appears the scribe also made some omissions (deliberate or accidental) when copying the Qur'anic chapter only in part and continuing writing another chapter on the same folio. In addition, the arrangement of the Qur'anic text shows that the scribe wrote the chapters in reverse order: from the shortest to the longest ones. Such ordering is a hallmark of the Qur'anic school's elemental educational methods.<sup>58</sup> The original order of the folios containing the lower text can be reconstructed as:

fol. 4<sup>v</sup> → fol. 4<sup>r</sup> → [lacuna] → fol. 2<sup>v</sup> → fol. 2<sup>r</sup> → fol. 3<sup>v</sup> → fol. 3<sup>r</sup> → [lacuna] → fol. 1<sup>v</sup>

Considering that at least two folios are missing and the Qur'anic text on the available folios is fragmentary, the original manuscript might have consisted of more folios.

#### 4.1.2 The *scriptio superior*

The *scriptio superior* comprises varying content. The recto side of the first folio has a talismanic figure and the instructions or formula are written in black ink.<sup>59</sup> The talismanic figure consists of a group of twenty-five perpendicularly intersected repeated expressions – للحس *li-l-hiss* (lit. 'for the sense') – arranged in five horizontal and vertical lines. As for the instructions, three lines explain how this talisman would make the blind see again. The four lower lines of fol. 1<sup>r</sup> are a talismanic formula for getting money (*ṭalab al-māl*) in a *sūdānī* script, in black ink.

Starting from fol. 1<sup>v</sup> until fol. 4<sup>v</sup> is the introduction of *al-Risāla* by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386 AH / 996 CE).<sup>60</sup> The text is written in a bold *sūdānī* (Masina hand) script in dark-brown ink, except for some words written in red ink.<sup>61</sup> De-

55 The last line of fol. 4<sup>r</sup> contains only the beginning words of this verse, while the rest of it is missing.

56 Q. 92:1–4, Q. 90:16–20, Q. 89:14–30, Q. 88, Q. 87, Q. 86:1–3, Q. 82:10–19, Q. 81, and Q. 80:1–35.

57 Based on the layout of the manuscript and the amount of missing text, we estimate that it would account for about two folios.

58 The method involves reading, reciting, memorising, and writing on wooden boards the Qur'anic chapters from the shortest (Q. 1, Q. 114–87) to the longest ones. See Brigaglia 2017, 81; Butler 2016, 290; Fortier 2016, 68; Tamari 2016, 39; Reichmuth 2011, 216.

59 For further information about the composition of talismans, see Rahal 2007, 115–121.

60 See n. 43 above for details.

61 These are *Muḥammad* (fol. 1<sup>r</sup>), the two letters *jīm* and *bā'* of the word *wājib* (fol. 3<sup>r</sup>), and the expressions *wa-ṣallā* (fol. 1<sup>r</sup>) and *ammā ba'd* (fol. 3<sup>r</sup>).

spite the change of ink colour, it seems that this text was penned by the same scribe as penned the talismanic content on fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

The layout of this part of the artefact is regular and consistent. Despite the absence of ruling (*mīṣṭara*), seven lines are written on each page, in a writing frame of more or less steady dimensions.<sup>62</sup> The scribe arranged the body of the text in a way so that the lines appear justified, using line fillers<sup>63</sup> and splitting the words between the end of the line and the beginning of the next one.<sup>64</sup> As for the catchword, it is written horizontally, on the left inferior corner of all the versos, and even though it is traced with less care than the main text it remains accurate.

At the beginning of the text (fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, l. 2), the scribe made a mistake and crossed out the three wrong words (*'alayhi wa-sallam*). In addition, several corrections to the manuscript's main texts have been added by a different hand. This reader-cum-corrector added the diacritics, corrected some errors,<sup>65</sup> and crossed out some unnecessary word splits.<sup>66</sup> Besides, on fol. 1<sup>v</sup> in the left and inferior margins, another hand in black ink inserted two notes, possibly in *'ajamī*<sup>67</sup> (unidentified).<sup>68</sup>

62 Fol. 1<sup>v</sup> superior margin: 27 mm, inferior margin: 36 mm, right margin: 18 mm, left margin: 27 mm; fol. 2<sup>v</sup> superior margin: 36 mm, inferior margin: 54 mm, right margin: 20 mm, left margin: 27 mm; fol. 3<sup>v</sup> superior margin: 36 mm, inferior margin: 54 mm, right margin: 18 mm, left margin: 27 mm; fol. 3<sup>r</sup> superior margin: 36 mm, inferior margin: 54 mm, right margin: 18 mm, left margin: 27 mm; fol. 3<sup>v</sup> superior margin: 27 mm, inferior margin: 58 mm, right margin: 22 mm, left margin: 27 mm; fol. 4<sup>r</sup> superior margin: 27 mm, inferior margin: 58 mm, right margin: 31 mm, left margin: 27 mm; fol. 4<sup>v</sup> superior margin: 27 mm, inferior margin: 58 mm, right margin: 31 mm, left margin: 27 mm. In fol. 4<sup>r</sup>, l. 2, the last word *ta'ālā* was likely forgotten and then inserted outside of the writing frame in the left margin.

63 The scribe used two wavy horizontal parallel lines: fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, ll. 1 and 2, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 1; three wavy horizontal parallel lines: fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 4, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, ll. 1 and 2; an intersection of two wavy horizontal parallel lines with three wavy vertical parallel lines: fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, l. 1; two vertical small circles: fol. 3<sup>v</sup>.

64 For instance fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, end of l. 4 and beginning of l. 5.

65 In fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 2, the reader-cum-corrector added the missing *rā'* in the word *al-arḥām*. Thereafter, in fol. 3<sup>r</sup>, l. 7, he replaced *mīm* and *rā'* in the word *amr* with *mīm*, *wāw*, and *rā'* to get *'umūr* (i.e. the plural of *amr*). In addition, despite the presence of the two dots of the letter *tā'*, apparently the hole prevented the reading of the ending part of the word *al-diyāna*, which made the reader-cum-corrector add the plural suffix *yānāt*. Afterwards, he likely realised that the correct form is *al-diyāna*, so he crossed out his own correction and drew a circle on the missing part in reference to the correct word *al-diyāna*. On fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, he added the letter *rā'* missing in the word *jawāriḥ* (l. 3) and added the *alif madda* in the word *dhalika* (l. 4).

66 Such as crossing out the *'ām* in fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, l. 7 and inserting *'ā* in fol. 3<sup>r</sup>, l. 1. Another example is on the same fol. 3<sup>r</sup>, end of l. 1, the striking out of the letter *qāf*. In addition to these examples, the reader-cum-corrector repeats the first fragment of the split word in the next line in fol. 4<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1 and 2.

67 The term *'ajamī* (derived from *'ajam* 'foreign' or 'non-Arab/Arabic') is applied to sub-Saharan African languages written in Arabic script. For more details, see Bondarev 2021, 708.

### 4.1.3 Some observations

As can be seen in the study of the lower and upper texts, despite the accentuated contrast in the scripts' size,<sup>69</sup> the distinguishing features of the letter shapes and strokes are remarkably similar. The handwriting of both layers is likely of one and the same person, with its typical features shown in Table 2.

Aside from the handwriting, other signs bolster the claim that the same scribe wrote both layers of the palimpsest. These include writing techniques and mistakes such as the word splits,<sup>70</sup> omission of letters, and spelling errors. Given the content, it can also be suggested that the palimpsest was created during the scribe's educational period. Writing the Qur'an on paper marks the end of the elementary phase of the Qur'anic school.<sup>71</sup> Copying and studying *al-Risāla* belongs to the advanced levels of classical Islamic education.<sup>72</sup> This being the case, the time lapse between the creation of the two layers would span between ten and twenty years.<sup>73</sup>

68 This hand used three points in a pyramidal disposition as textual dividers. The annotations read as follows: inferior margin: *ت تنوس .: دوس دوس معوس .: tu tunūsi*, and left margin: *سمكيا نيل .: معوس تنوس .: دوس .: دوس diwisi .: dawusi .: mu'ūsi .: tunūsi samakyā'il*. While it is difficult to figure out the sense of this note, the last word on the left margin is *samakyā'il*, the name of one of the eight angels known as bearers of the throne (*ḥamalat al-'arsh*). The presence of such a term is a strong indication of invoking a spiritual power, which might give a magical or esoteric character to both annotations. In the left margin of the same folio appears a word that we could not decipher due to the damage. Moreover, in fol. 4<sup>r</sup>, two verses in Arabic were written untidily in the superior part of the right margin in black ink and they are likely connected to the phrase *mā ashkala* ('what sounds problematic') in the main text. The verses are: *سبعة و سته و ثانية | فهذه بيان ما أشكله // تسعة و خمسة و واحدة | ثمانية و اربعا و ثالثة*; 'Nine and seven and one | eight and four and three // Seven and six and two | so, this is the explanation of the issue'.

69 The lower text is written in small, slim letters, contrasted with large, bold letters in the upper text.















70 In the lower and upper texts appears the same way of splitting the words by repeating what was already written at the end of the previous line.

71 The elementary stage culminates in reciting and writing the Qur'an from memory without mistakes (on wooden tablets or paper). Students are then introduced to advanced stages and study the religious sciences, grammar, and literature. See Tamari 2002, 92; Reichmuth 2011, 216.

72 Tamari (2016, 41–42) notes that the advanced level is divided into three sublevels: the first is where the student begins to study introductory legal works such as *al-Muqaddima al-qurtubīyya*, *al-Ashmawīyya*, *al-Muqaddima al-'izziyya* and *al-Mukhtaṣar fī-l-ibādāt*. Later on, some students move to advanced works such as *al-Risāla*. Finally, very few students study the most complex texts, e.g. *Tuḥfat al-ḥukkām*, *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*, the *Muwaṭṭa'* and al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

73 According to Tal Tamari (2016, 41), the student does not begin the advanced phase before the age of twenty-five (eighteen for the most precocious cases), and generally study of the advanced books starts for students between twenty-five and forty years old. Based on this, one could suggest that the time lapse between the two layers is between seven and twenty-two years.

**Table 2:** Similarities of the handwriting of the *scriptio inferior* and *scriptio superior*.

Description	<i>Scriptio inferior</i>	<i>Scriptio superior</i>
The major features of the <i>basmala</i> are identical.		
	fol. 3', l. 12	fol. 1', l. 1
The preposition <i>fī</i> looks like the cypher '9'. The 'tail' of the letter <i>yā'</i> is 'returned' ( <i>yā' mardūda</i> ). <sup>74</sup>		
	fol. 3', l. 15	fol. 2', l. 2
		
	fol. 4', l. 13	
The upper stroke of <i>kāf mabsūta</i> is curved. The haste is wavy and connected to the horizontal base stroke.		
	fol. 3', l. 14	fol. 3', l. 6
Medial or initial <i>hā'</i> resembles the cypher '8' bending to the right.		
	fol. 3', l. 9	fol. 3', l. 3
		
	fol. 3', l. 3	
The <i>ṣād</i> has an ovoid form and looks like a rectangle.		
	fol. 3', l. 16	fol. 1' l. 2
The isolated <i>yā'</i> is retroflex.		
	fol. 3', l. 16	fol. 2' l. 1

<sup>74</sup> The letter *yā'* is called *mardūda*, when its horizontal stroke is extended to the right, as opposed to *yā' muḥaqqāqa*, with its tail to the left.



However, assuming that the two texts were produced at different stages of the scribe's studies, it is challenging to explain why the handwriting and errors in the two layers are remarkably similar. Improvement of writing skills is to be expected as students advance in their studies. It is possible, then, that the Qur'anic chapters on the extant four folios was written for reasons other than educational. The manuscript might have been made for personal use, given its plain materiality, the simplicity of the layout, the absence of the text's vocalisation, and its unembellished presentation. It remains unclear why the scribe wrote the Qur'anic chapters in reverse order.

As for palimpsesting techniques, considering the time gap of about twenty years or fewer, it can be argued that the scribe deliberately washed off the lower text. In a less likely scenario, the ink could have faded naturally, for instance, if component proportions of the ink were not respected during preparation.

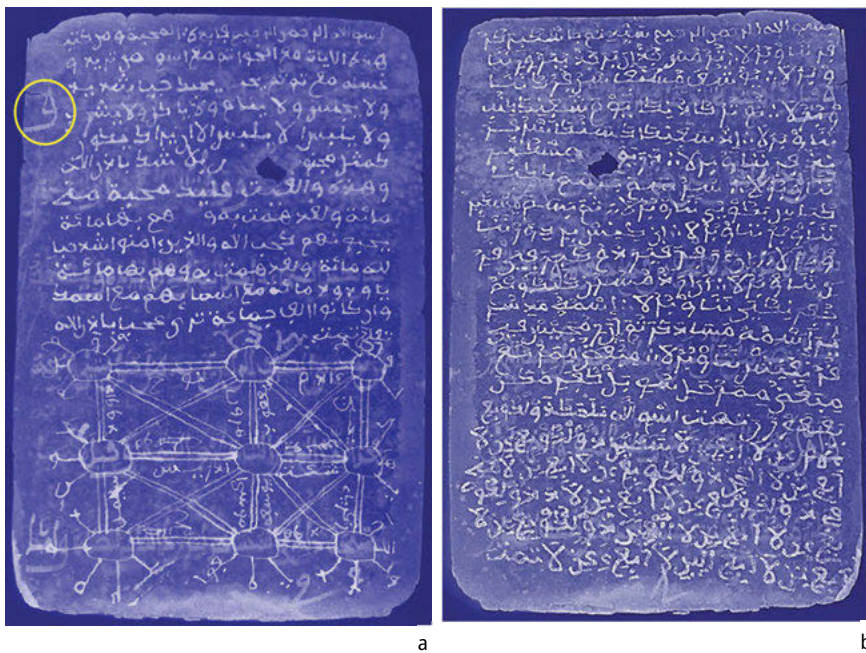
## 4.2 Case study 2

Manuscript ATM 01287 consists of a single folio and belongs to the library of al-Ṭāhir Mu'ādh. Both the recto and the verso of the manuscript were palimpsested (Figs 3a–b) and contain an extract from *al-Risāla* by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386 AH / 996 CE), an incantation, and an esoteric text written in Arabic, with a plant name in Manding *'ajamī*. The manuscript is small, but, as will be shown later, its original size was larger. The folio measures 128 mm high × 85 mm wide. During our examination of the manuscript *in situ* in February 2023, its physical condition was worse than expected, as was its appearance in digital images.<sup>75</sup> The foxed, yellowish paper was very fragile, thin, and brittle. In addition to moisture and water stains, the upper part of the folio is damaged and has a hole. The page numbers were marked in pencil at the bottom of the recto and the verso.

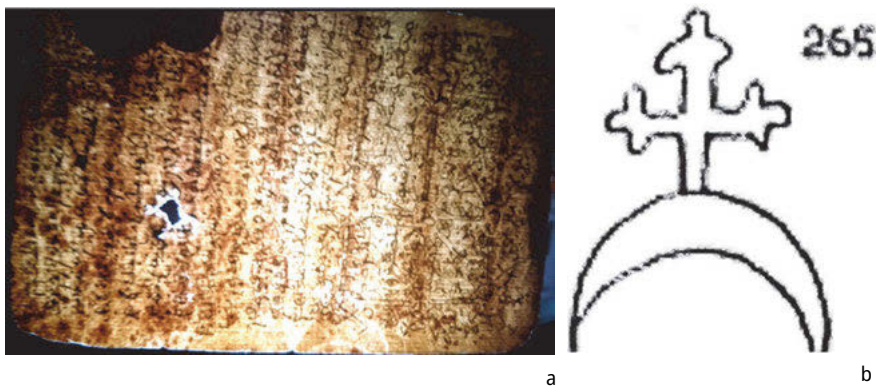
Despite the small size, the page contains a watermark. It is only partially visible and represents a circle with a cross on top. This fragment corresponds to the so-called Circles watermark type (Figs 4a–b); however, the visible portion is insufficient for precise identification. The samples presented in Edward Heawood's catalogue (1950) are dated between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This time period could be retained as a *terminus post quem* to tentatively date the writing support for *al-Risāla*, and later the talismanic text.

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<sup>75</sup> This manuscript was digitised on 17 January 2017, according to the HMML Reading Room website data <<https://www.vhmml.org/>>.



**Figs 3a–b:** Two overlapping layers of text. Bamako, SAVAMA-DCI, ATM 01287, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. Ultraviolet photo by the authors.



**Figs 4a–b:** Partial watermark 'Circle'. Bamako, SAVAMA-DCI, ATM 01287, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. Photo by the authors.

#### 4.2.1 The *scriptio inferior*

Although no ruling traces are discernible, the writing frame is uniformly sized, with six sparse lines visible on each side.<sup>76</sup> Despite the generous interlinear intervals, the margins (except the upper one) are relatively narrow, at least in the folio's current state. The undertext is written in an expert hand, in large characters of the *sūdānī* script, which remains neat and consistent in all the lines. The text and vocalic diacritics are in brown ink with some highlights in red.<sup>77</sup> The examined fragment is part of the chapter on prayer times and denominations (*Bāb fi awqāt al-ṣalāt wa-asmā'ihā*) from *al-Risāla*.

Fol. 1<sup>r</sup> starts with the line *و قيل أما في شدة الحر فالأفضل له أن يبرد بها و أن* ('Another opinion is that in the intensity of the heat, it is preferable to do the *ṣalāt* [prayer] when it is cooler') and ends with l. 6 *أن يصير ظل كل شيء مثليه بعد ظل* ('when everything's shadow is twice as long as itself, exclusive of the [north-south] shadow of midday').<sup>78</sup> On the folio's verso side, the first line states *منها بدأ حاجب الشمس و ما بين هذين وقت واسع* ('to the appearance of the aureole of the sun. The time between these terms is long and') and the sixth line follows with *يستحب ذلك في المساجد ليذكر الناس الصلاة و أما* ('this delay is desirable only for mosques, so that people can get there on time for the *ṣalāt*, but'). Cross-checking the manuscript text with the published *al-Risāla*<sup>79</sup> revealed that the current arrangement of folios is in reverse, and the original sequence should be fol. 1<sup>v</sup> → fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. It also showed that a portion of the text between l. 6 on fol. 1<sup>v</sup> to l. 1 on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> is missing. It can be reconstructed as *الرجل في خاصة نفسه فأول الوقت أفضل له* ('for a man by himself the beginning of the time is preferable'). Given the script size and page layout, the missing portion would have fit on exactly one line.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, it is quite likely that there were originally seven lines per page, and the last line and inferior margin were either trimmed or deteriorated. That the margins were once wider follows from looking at the end of the first line on fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, where the tail of the *wāw* is cut (Fig. 3a, encircled in yellow).

<sup>76</sup> In West African Islamic manuscripts, one often finds the text of *al-Risāla* written in spaced lines with wide margins, which was planned space to accommodate explanatory commentaries and glosses; see Bondarev 2017.

<sup>77</sup> For instance in fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, l. 1, *wa*; l. 2, *wa-waqt*; l. 5, *wa-qīla*; l. 6, *wa-ammā*. In fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, l. 1, *wa*; l. 3, *wa*; l. 5, *wa-awwalu*.

<sup>78</sup> The translation is from Kenny 1992.

<sup>79</sup> See al-Qayrawānī 2001, 23.

<sup>80</sup> At the bottom of fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, we could discern some shapes that could be the remains of the diacritic marks and letter dots of the missing seventh line. Unfortunately, the inferior margin is stained, so it is difficult to draw clear-cut conclusions.

Other ‘missing’ elements of the undertext are the *lām* strokes in the words *awwaluhu* and *‘alayhi* (fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, l. 2 and fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, l. 2), consumed by the hole in the folio’s upper part. This means that the text was laid on the page before damage occurred and a hole developed.

#### 4.2.2 The *scriptio superior*

The upper text is organised in two parts. The first one on fol. 1<sup>v</sup> is a talismanic formula consisting of thirteen lines of text in Arabic with one *‘ajamī* word and a talismanic figure, referred to as *khātīm* (Fig. 5). The text is written in informal handwriting<sup>81</sup> in black ink. It explains the talisman’s use, that is, attracting love (*al-mahabbā*), and the *khātīm* involves the mediation of the spiritual entities concerned to intervene and compel them to carry out the request.<sup>82</sup> The only *‘ajamī* word is the name of the plant in Manding to be used for washing oneself; it is *timitimi* (spelt as *tmtm*), ‘liquorice weed’ (*Scoparia dulcis*).<sup>83</sup>

The second part of the upper text on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> contains twenty-one lines and seems to be an incantation in the form of tail-rhymed sentences (without any clear meaning),<sup>84</sup> separated by three points in the shape of a triangle: ∴. The incantation is possibly meant to complement the talisman. Thus, it appears that the page numbers, added during digitisation, do not correspond to the sequence of the upper text’s parts, and the implied order should be fol. 1<sup>v</sup> → fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. The examination of both the recto and the verso of our artefact shows regular textual features which corroborate that they were written by the same scribe.

81 This informal handwriting is a peculiarity not only in the West African talismanic tradition but also in the Arabic one.

82 The *khātīm* is in the form of a square that is divided into four squares (with small circles in the edges) with a diagonal subdivision of the whole. This produces sixteen triangular sections, each with a prophet’s name. The structure is made through the process of *tarbi’* (squaring) of Q. 112: *‘qul; huwwa; allāh; aḥad; allāh; al-ṣamd: lam yalid; wa-lam; yūlad; wa-lam; yakun; lahu; fukfu<sup>wn</sup>; aḥad*. These fourteen Qur’anic verses are arranged in lines: starting with the horizontals, then the verticals, and finishing with the diagonals (from right to left).

83 Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, l. 3.

84 The sentences end in *نَنَا وَ بُر لَ nanā w buru lā*.

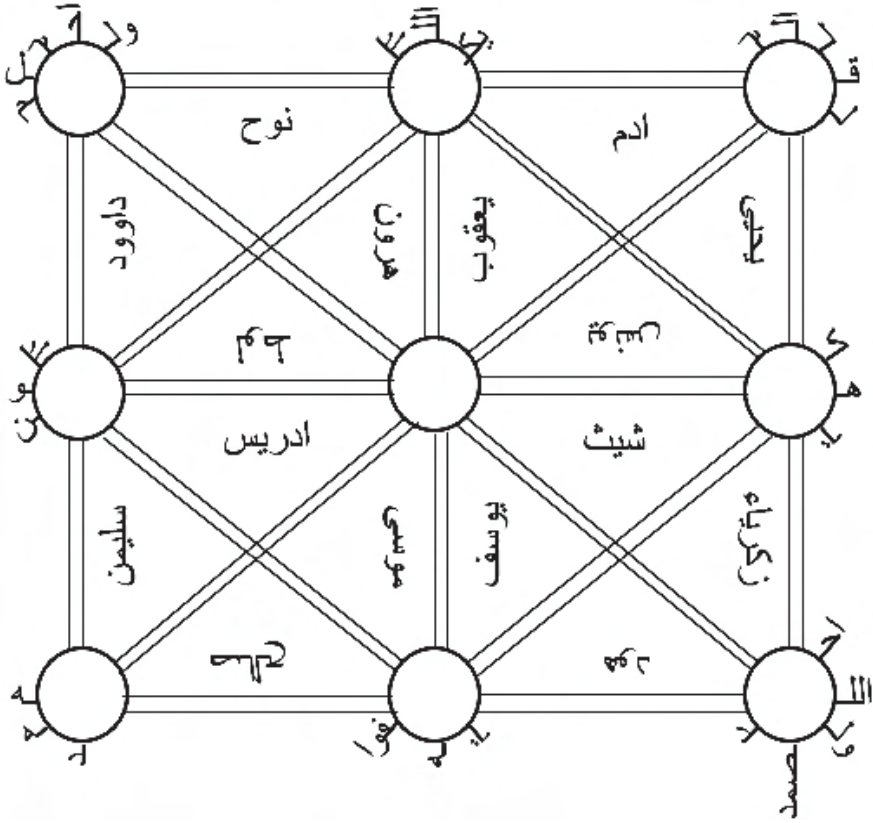


Fig. 5: *Khātim* for attracting love. Bamako, SAVAMA-DCI, ATM 01287, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

Interestingly, the scribe wrote this talisman on already damaged paper, since he avoided the hole. Thus, he wrote two ‘words’ of the incantation, *miskubari* مسكبر and *darayama* دريم on both sides of the hole (fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, l. 6) and split the word *majnun* (‘madman’) (fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, l. 6), putting *majnu-* مجنو before the hole and the *-n* ن after (Fig. 3a).

### 4.2.3 Some observations

As mentioned above, the size of the original folio, accommodating the *al-Risāla*, was larger. Its current dimensions correspond to the regular small size of amulets, known as *ḥamā'il*.<sup>85</sup> Hence, it is possible that the format was adjusted by trimming the margins to correspond to the upper layer's contents. Yet, given the hole in the top part of the page, which the scribe notably avoided, he might have been working with already damaged paper, resulting in the margins being cut. It is left to guess whether the barely visible undertext was erased or disappeared as a result of damage or the manuscript's ageing.

## 4.3 Case study 3

Manuscript ABS 03046 is a single leaf of laid paper measuring 140 × 87 mm. The paper seems to be in good condition, except for some ink corrosion. The *scriptio inferior* in brown ink is easily readable. It is an unidentified text discussing miracles of the prophets, which appears on both sides of the folio. Although the text fits the folio's width, it is incomplete along its length, which suggests that the original folio was bigger and that the surviving fragment once formed part of a larger unit. Additionally, the text lacks a few words, with gaps in the middle of some sentences. However, one may still notice diacritic marks (in brown ink) hovering over blank spaces, hinting that something was written there.<sup>86</sup> A close inspection reveals barely discernible traces of words in red ink.

It is possible that the red ink dissolved when the paper was washed or soaked in water, either in an attempt to erase the text or as a result of water damage.<sup>87</sup> Even if deliberate, the attempt to erase the text did not seem to be effective. As mentioned above, the undertext remains readily visible and likely was also visible to the scribe of the new layer. The scribe used ink of saturated black colour to

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<sup>85</sup> The term *ḥamā'il* designates a magical object carried by a person, an animal, or even a thing; see Hamès 2007. In this case, we do not see any traces of folding, which means that the amulet was carried as it is, likely in a small bag or sewed into a cloth or a turban or just hanging on the wall of a house. Alternatively, one could suggest that it was not an amulet per se but a manual for making one and was stored with other manuscripts of that type in a leather binding holder.

<sup>86</sup> Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, ll. 2 and 3; fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, ll. 3, 5, and 7.

<sup>87</sup> As Maria Luisa Russo pointed out to us, red ink is generally much more water soluble than brown or dark ink. Interestingly, in other cases (ATM 01287, BMH 17799), we observed the reverse tendency: the writings in red ink persisted on the page, while those in brown ink were barely visible.

make the upper text more prominent. Rotating the sheet 90° might have been another strategy to distinguish between the two layers.<sup>88</sup>

The *scriptio superior* is a recipe against leprosy, mentioning a local plant in Manding (*báransan*, spelt as *brsn*; ‘*Acacia albida*’ or ‘*Faidherbia albida*’).<sup>89</sup> The text fits on one side of the folio and its layout matches the page’s format. This could indicate that the scribe deliberately used only part of the ‘original’ folio for his short text. However, it is also possible that he only had the ‘remaining’ scrap of paper. Furthermore, it appears that the paper probably would have been rather old when the *scriptio superior* was applied since there are traces of its black ink bleeding through the ink-corroded areas.

#### 4.4 Case study 4

BMH 16587 is another single-leaf manuscript on laid paper, measuring 232 × 140 mm. The paper shows signs of wear and tear and moisture damage. Only one side of this folio (fol. 1<sup>r</sup>) has overlapping layers of writing. Both layers in brown ink are of esoteric content: the *scriptio superior* is a formula for overcoming enemies, and the *scriptio inferior* is an invocation (*du‘ā*). The ink of the undertext, although faint, is still apparent.

Interestingly, the writings (also in brown ink) on this folio’s other side (fol. 1<sup>v</sup>) remain perfectly legible, but with some uneven traces of water damage, excluding the possibility that someone tried to soak the page in water to wash it off. This side contains the closing lines of a poem and a colophon. Thus, the now single folio once was part of a larger manuscript.

This manuscript seems to have changed hands several times: the last two lines of the initial colophon are crossed out with dark-brown ink. According to the visual impression, the ownership mark was added with the same ink to the left of the colophon but was subsequently crossed out with black ink. The black-ink scribe, a certain Imām Tanapo (*Tanfū*), penned his possession mark to the right of the colophon.

The hands of the upper text and undertext on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> and the fragment of the poem on fol. 1<sup>v</sup> are different, although all are in brown ink. It may be speculated that Scribe A penned the poem ending on the recto side of the last folio (current fol. 1<sup>v</sup>). Scribe B then used the blank verso side (which is now fol. 1<sup>r</sup>) to write a

<sup>88</sup> The scribe could have rotated the page for a more convenient format, however.

<sup>89</sup> Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, l. 5.

prayer (*du'ā*).<sup>90</sup> Yet another scribe, Scribe C, at some point overwrote this (water damaged? Or faded?) text, either when the last folio was still a part of a manuscript or when it began circulating as an independent entity.

## 4.5 Case study 5

Manuscript BMH 32670 consists of five folios of blue laid paper measuring 210 × 150 mm. The original paper colour can be guessed from fol. 5, while other folios show mild to severe discoloration. Overall, the paper appears to be in poor condition, bearing traces of moisture damage and ink corrosion. However, the margins of fols 2–4 were repaired by gluing on strips of white or cream and blue paper, some of which bear traces of writing.

The *scriptio inferior* is a religious poem, written in a calligraphic hand in (apparently) dark-brown ink with some words highlighted in red. The ink colour intensity ranges from faint to saturated (especially on fol. 5). The text is laid out in seven lines per page with wide interlinear spaces and generous margins, which accommodate annotations. The five available folios contain only a fragment of the poem in disorder in the current folio arrangement.

In contrast, the upper text, entitled *al-Sab' al-mathānī* ('Seven oft-repeated verses') is complete. It finishes with a colophon, but without mentioning the scribe's name or the date of copying. The text is written in dense lines, ranging from eighteen to twenty-one per page, and narrow margins. Several lines overlap the previous text, while others are written in blank spaces. Thus it appears that the scribe made no specific effort to avoid the underlying text. It is possible, however, that his ink was so intense as to outweigh the previous layer of writing. Although at present degraded due to moisture damage, it appears intensely dark brown on unaffected areas.

The manuscript likely suffered water damage more than once, and some folios were affected prior to the application of the *scriptio superior*. This would explain the uneven discoloration of the pages and ink within the manuscript. Another hint that the scribe dealt with damaged material is his attempts to repair the tears of the margins by gluing over patches of paper. The patches were clearly

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<sup>90</sup> The handwriting of the undertext shows strong similarities with the possession note in brown ink of the manuscript's 'intermediary' owner. However, this suggestion remains tentative, lacking comprehensive and clearly visible material for comparison.



added before the new text was applied, as it wraps around the contours of the added material (otherwise, some text would have been lost beneath it).<sup>91</sup>

Some of the paper patches bear traces of previous writing, suggesting they were taken from an older manuscript. Because several patches are blue – the same colour as the writing support – the same paper source for both can be assumed. Thus, one could surmise that pages of a discarded manuscript with the religious poem were repurposed by another scribe as writing support and repair materials.

## 5 Concluding remarks

In this article, we presented our analysis based on the corpus of seventeen manuscripts with overlapping layers of writing added by the same or different individuals. This may appear a significant number, given that since the early nineteenth century, when Dixon Denham mentioned an instance of paper washing in Bornu, nothing had been reported of palimpsests in West Africa until now. On the other hand, is this number significant considering the thousands of manuscripts that are *not* palimpsests? Is this evidence enough to call it a palimpsesting tradition? And, if so, should it be considered a regional one, since all manuscripts in our corpus come from the Timbuktu collections?

Another question that may arise is whether the discussed artefacts are palimpsests in the restrictive meaning of the term. For many of our examples, it is impossible to determine whether the previous layers were intentionally destroyed. The evidence is limited to what we can say about techniques of eliminating written marks from the surface. However, one can observe some scribal ways of dealing with materials where previous texts are still discernible. These include rotating the page, using spaces that are less covered with the previous writings, and using intensely coloured inks to make the *scriptio posterior* stand out on the page.

There is some doubt as to whether paper reuse was linked to scarcity or difficulty accessing paper. It has been shown that the writing support of the upper layers is from the nineteenth century, when paper was readily available in West Africa. Regarding the samples of earlier papers, it seems that the upper texts were added after the paper was worn out or damaged. Furthermore, most manuscripts consist of a single or only a few folios.

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91 Fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, ll. 3 and 4; fol. 4<sup>r</sup>, l. 9; fol. 4<sup>v</sup>, ll. 8 and 9.

It is unlikely that the undertexts were obliterated due to their obsolete nature: they include texts such as the Qur'an and didactic manuals of the scholarly curriculum that persisted over time and are still relevant today.

From our corpus, we can see that paper was often recycled into talismanic writing. It cannot remain unnoticed that there is a striking similarity to talisman-making practices using wooden boards and washing sacred verses off them. Could this serve as an explanation as to why talismans appear on the palimpsested folios? Or it is rather because healing and talismanic recipes are usually short texts, apt for fitting on small pieces or even scraps of paper? Could the reuse of single folios be linked to the loose-leaf formats of West African manuscripts, where the pages are easily detached, go astray, and then find another life as talismans? Given that some manuscripts in our corpus display wear and tear prior to reuse, could this reuse be regarded as a way of dealing with old and discarded manuscripts?

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This article grew out of the presentation 'Where to Look for Palimpsests in the Islamic Manuscript Culture of West Africa?' by Dmitry Bondarev, Darya Ogorodnikova, and Khaoula Trad, held at the workshop 'Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-cultural Perspective II' on 10 July 2023, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at the University of Hamburg. We are grateful to Maria Luisa Russo, Michaëlle Biddle, Saadou Traore, Alba Fedeli, and Mauro Nobili for their expert advice during various stages of writing this article. In addition, we would like to thank the reviewers for their valuable comments and constructive suggestions.

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### Abbreviations

ALA IV = John O. Hunwick (ed.), *Arabic Literature of Africa: The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, vol. 4, Leiden: Brill, 2003.

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## Appendix: List of the seventeen examined manuscripts

### ABS 00657

**Material:** 1 fol. Laid paper with traces of moisture damage, 145 × 100 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a talisman for love (*al-maḥabba*). The recto and verso are written by the same scribe in brown ink. However, on fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, the text is less visible or more damaged and overwritten by another text.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: the text starts towards the middle of the page, where the previous layer is less visible. It is a talisman for livestock written in black ink in Arabic, including the name of a plant in Bamana 'ajamī. The writing direction of this layer is the same as the lower one.

### ABS 01251

**Material:** 1 fol. Laid paper, 135 × 100 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: a text about *qiyām al-layl* (voluntary night prayer) in brown ink.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a talisman known as *ḥirz al-ḥadīd* (talisman protecting from iron weapons), together with a *khātīm* written in brown ink in Arabic with some plant names in 'ajamī.

### ABS 03046

**Material:** 1 fol. Laid paper, traces of ink corrosion in several places, 140 × 87 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a text on some prophets' miracles written in brown ink. Some words in red (?) ink are discoloured.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a recipe against leprosy; plant name in Manding 'ajamī. Text written in black ink, which bled through the places of ink corrosion.

## ATM 01102

**Material:** 1 fol. Laid paper, traces of water damage, 140 × 100 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: texts on habits of the Prophet written in brown ink. Water damage has erased the text at the top of the folio, but the lower part is intact.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a talisman related to the female body is written on the recto in black ink. A talisman for the *jihād* with a *khātim* is written with brown ink on the verso. Two different scribes.

## ATM 01287

**Material:** 1 fol. Laid paper, 128 × 85 mm. Original page was bigger. Partial watermark: 'Circles' (Italian); *terminus post quem*: late seventeenth–early eighteenth centuries.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: legal manual *al-Risāla* by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386 AH / 996 CE) in brown and red inks.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: talismanic content written in black ink.

## ATM 02277

**Material:** 1 fol. Laid blue paper, with traces of discoloration on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> and a small hole in the lower part of the folio, 130 × 70 mm. Original page was bigger.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: a *taṣliya* (invocation of God's blessing on the Prophet) in brown ink.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a talisman for separating a couple (unfinished?). Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: a talisman that prevents alcohol consumption. Rotated by 90°. Both texts seem to have been written by the same person, in brown ink. The scribe wrote the text avoiding the hole in the folio.

## ATM 02357

**Material:** 3 fols. Wove paper, 160 × 110 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: magic squares and talismanic content in brown ink.

**Scriptio superior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–3<sup>v</sup>: a collection of *fawā'id* (pl. of *fā'ida* ('useful information')) with some (unvocalised) *'ajamī* words in brown and red ink. Possibly the same scribe as that of the undertext.

## ATM 12544

**Material:** 1 fol. Wove paper, 160 × 100 mm. Original page was bigger.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a jurisprudential text. The available part concerns the testimony (*al-shahāda*). It is written in calligraphic hand, small script, and tight lines, with some annotations in the margins. The writing in brown ink appears unevenly on the page (some parts are more visible than others), as if damaged by humidity or water.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup> and fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–6: a *du'ā'* (invocation) in black ink. Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, ll. 7–10: an unfinished recipe against albinism (*al-baras*) in dark-brown ink by another scribe. Rotated by 90°.

## AQB 02153

**Material:** 1 fol. Wove paper, 175 × 115 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–6: an esoteric text in brown ink. Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, ll. 7–10: a note recording expenditures or the lending of money in brown ink.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, ll. 1–4: a talismanic formula for getting pregnant in brown ink. Fol. 1<sup>v</sup> and fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, ll. 4–8: a talisman for healing an insane person in black ink. Fol. 1<sup>v</sup> lower part: testing of the *qalam* (black ink). Two different scribes.

## AQB 02689

**Material:** 1 fol. Wove paper, 170 × 110 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a short text of esoteric content in black ink.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: a poem by Mukhtār b. Wadī'at Allāh al-Māsinī (d. 1279 AH / 1864 CE) in praise of 'Umar b. Sa'īd al-Fūṭī, written in black ink. *Terminus post quem:* mid nineteenth century.

## BMH 16587

**Material:** 1 fol. Laid paper, with traces of insect damage and stains, 232 × 140 mm.



Fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: closing lines of a versified treaty ending with a colophon (crossed out). Two possession notes in brown and black ink.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: an invocation (*du'ā*) written in brown ink.

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: talismanic content, a *fā'ida* against enemies written in Arabic including passages of *'ajamī*.

## BMH 16756

**Material:** 9 fols. Wove paper, with traces of water damage, 215 × 150 mm. Original pages seem to have been larger.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–9<sup>v</sup>: a Sufi manual on the Tijāniyya order (*al-Ṭarīqa al-tijāniyya*) entitled *Suyūf al-sa'īd al-mu'taqid fī ahl Allāh ka-al-Tijānī 'alā raqabat al-shaqī al-ṭarīd al-muntaqid al-jānī* by 'Umar b. Sa'īd al-Fūṭī (d. 1280 AH /1864 CE). *Terminus post quem:* mid nineteenth century.

**Scriptio superior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–9<sup>v</sup>: the first fourteen chapters of *Kitāb Zabūr Dāwūd* (the Holy Book of David). Written in dark-brown and red ink.

## BMH 17799

**Material:** 6 fols. Laid paper, damaged margins, 204 × 142 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–6<sup>v</sup>: a text on faith (*fī šifāt Allāh*) written in brown and red ink. Some interlinear and marginal annotations in brown ink.

**Scriptio superior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–6<sup>v</sup>: a collection of *ḥadīth* (on intercession, the Day of Judgement, *al-ṣirāt*, Heaven and hell) in black ink. The text's layout sometimes adjusts to the margin damage's shape. Complete with a decorated colophon on fol. 6<sup>v</sup>. The owner is Baba Yaro b. al-Faqīh al-Sanūsī Yaro.

## BMH 18220

**Material:** 3 fols. Wove thick paper, 172 × 110 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: medicinal content written in Arabic with some *'ajamī* Manding plant names.

**Scriptio superior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–3<sup>v</sup>: magic squares in black and red ink.

## BMH 19191

**Material:** 4 (out of 293) fols. Wove paper, 202 × 145 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–4<sup>v</sup>: Qur’an (fragment).

**Scriptio superior:** Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: talismans written in black ink. Fols 1<sup>v</sup>–4<sup>v</sup>: *al-Risāla* written in brown and red ink by the same scribe as the *scriptio inferior*.

## BMH 19649

**Material:** 5 fols. Laid paper, 215× 160 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>v</sup>: manual on conduct entitled *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* by Naṣr b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Samarqandī (d. 373 AH / 983 CE) written in brown ink and clearly visible on the pages.

**Scriptio superior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>v</sup>: *Malḥamat* attributed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH / 661 CE) written in black and red ink. The text ends with a colophon by al-Fatḥa Siyabana. The colophon is crossed out, and another ownership note by a certain Maḥmūd appears in brown ink.

## BMH 32670

**Material:** 5 fols. Blue (discoloured) laid paper, with traces of severe water damage, and patches of paper glued to repair the torn margins, 210 × 150 mm.

**Scriptio inferior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>v</sup>: a poem with marginal annotations; dark brown and red inks.

**Scriptio superior:** Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>v</sup>: an exegesis of the seven verses of the first Qur’anic chapter *al-Fātiḥa* entitled *Mas’alat al-sab’ al-mathānī*. Written in dark-brown and red inks. The text ends with a colophon with no name of the scribe.

Halle O’Neal

# Palimpsests on Purpose: Rethinking Intentional Erasure and Layers in Manuscript Culture

**Abstract:** This contribution prioritises the visuality and materiality of Japanese layered manuscripts known as ‘letter sutras’ to explore the meaningful implications of deliberately crafted palimpsests from a transcultural perspective. These letter sutras are palimpsests on purpose. Their investigation encourages new and different questions about the intentionality of this format with the potential to augment and extend the wider study of palimpsests. This contribution argues that by paying careful attention to the layering itself and the new texts that are created during this generative process, the written strata blanketing the original lower layers are not just something to be seen through. Instead, the very interaction of these scripts – materially, visually, and haptically – and their emplacement together are significant, creating new meanings and experiences that each alone could not.

## 1 Introduction

In a volume dedicated to palimpsests, this contribution explores examples known as letter sutras or epistolary scriptures (*shōsokukyō* 消息經), whose inclusion in the field of manuscript studies might be fruitfully embraced as inventive and illuminating counterpoints alongside the rich array of ancient and medieval palimpsests of Europe and the Middle East. Letter sutras offer something new and different because the premeditation of their creation as visual and material palimpsests augments our understandings of deliberate textual interactions and the resultant haptic dimensions of textually layered compositions.

Epistolary scriptures were memorial manuscripts produced in Buddhist death rituals during medieval Japan. Mourners made these textually layered compositions by reusing and even recycling the dead’s handwritten traces as paper for the transcription of sacred Buddhist texts (sutras). The outcome of this ritual practice – often done privately and in the grips of grief – was a handscroll refashioned from the dead’s papers that materially mingled the personal, calligraphic brush of the deceased with the classical script of sacred texts from the Buddhist canon. Fujiwara no Tamiko 藤原多美子 (d. 886) was the first recorded person to make a letter

sutra. She was a consort of Emperor Seiwa 清和天皇 (850–881), who harnessed her grief and creativity to produce Japan's first Buddhist memorial palimpsest. After the emperor's death, later historical chronicles tell us that she remade his letters into sutra copying paper for use in his memorial ceremony.<sup>1</sup> Copying oneself or commissioning the transcription and chanting of sutras was a ubiquitous response to death, earning both the practitioner and the dead karmic merit that impacted their rebirths. From this innovative point forward, mourners made and commissioned letter sutras as a particular and poignant subcategory of scripture copying. The form of reuse at the heart of letter sutras was distinctive – due to the intrinsic mourning and intentional transformation of embodied traces – and yet, it was rooted in the larger culture of medieval reuse and recycling not only of paper,<sup>2</sup> but also the reclamation of such things as architecture, textiles, agricultural by-products, and objects for their material components like metal, amongst many other instances.<sup>3</sup>

The deliberate and meaningful requisition of handwritten sheets as paper distinguishes these types of projects from the standard sutra transcriptions which generally used fresh mulberry sheets.<sup>4</sup> Based on my field research in Japanese museums, archives, libraries, and temples, I estimate that there are approximately 150 extant examples, including scrolls, codices, fragments mounted as hanging scrolls, and the related category of stamped letters (*inbutsu* 印仏).<sup>5</sup> Primary source texts like diaries and historical chronicles described the making of many more projects that have not survived to present day. By and large, women and men of the aristocratic, monastic, and imperial classes were the primary producers of these memorial palimpsests for their deceased loved ones. An analysis of the makers' networks reveals a complex web of familial and socio-political associations, such as mothers for sons, brothers for sisters, lovers for each other, disciples for abbots and rectors, courtiers for emperors and *shōgun*, along with several other iterations.<sup>6</sup> The twelfth through fourteenth centuries was the most fertile period of production. After the fifteenth century, the making of these memorial objects began to wane but sporadic examples can be found into the modern times.

1 See for example, *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 日本三代実録, Ninna 仁和 2/10/29 (886), SZKT, vol. 4, 620.

2 Handwritten papers of all types were regularly reused for non-memorial purposes. See, for example, Nezu Bijutsukan 2014 and Kanazawa 1994.

3 For instance, see O'Neal 2023b for a broader discussion of reuse and recycling practice in Japan.

4 For a thorough study of early sutra copying practices in Japan, see Lowe 2017.

5 For more on *inbutsu* letters and a community practice of letter sutra making as opposed to the individual maker, see O'Neal 2023a.

6 I gathered this evidence from the colophons of extant examples and diary entries over the course of writing my current book project on the subject.

Most likely because letter sutras sit at the crossroads of several disciplines without finding an easy home in a single domain, they have been neglected in the literature. No single study in any language has attempted to locate and critically examine all recorded and surviving letter sutras. Moreover, scholarship has not yet treated letter sutras to sustained theoretical analysis. However, Japanese scholars such as Akamatsu Toshihide,<sup>7</sup> Komatsu Shigemi,<sup>8</sup> and Hada Satoshi,<sup>9</sup> have made brief but crucial and fruitful interventions in the palaeographic examination of the original letters.

By using as a case study the eight scroll *Lotus Sutra* set<sup>10</sup> commissioned and printed in 1338 by the Buddhist priest Sonritsu 存律 (*s.a.*) on the backs of letters from his late teacher Dōgetsu 道月 (d. c. 1325), this chapter explores the differences and commonalities of textually layered manuscripts from a transcultural perspective to offer thoughts on the nature and conceptual capacities of a palimpsest. This particular example was selected for its well-preserved status and the epigraphic evidence illuminating the production context. The study was sparked by several questions: Given the deliberate creation and visuality of Japanese letter sutras, what does it mean to be a premediated palimpsest? And following on from this intentionality, why was the visuality of the palimpsest's layered composition significant in this specific context? Moreover, how was the making process itself meaningful? By exploring Japanese Buddhist examples, this chapter argues that the composition and making of palimpsests manifest meanings that elude our perception if the crucial facets of visuality and overt materiality are ignored.<sup>11</sup> The example of the recto/verso<sup>12</sup> letter sutra made for Dōgetsu on his thirteenth death anniversary demonstrates that the visual effects and material components of a palimpsest's complex textual interactions generate meaning in and of themselves; they are not merely side effects and rudiments of the production process.

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7 Akamatsu 1972, 389–416.

8 Komatsu 1976, vol. 1, 93–101.

9 See catalogue entries and essays in Hada 2005 and Hada 2012.

10 The twenty-eight chapters of *Lotus Sutra* were typically grouped into eight volume sets of scrolls or fascicles. When the opening and closing scriptures which often bookended the scripture were included, the set was then made of ten volumes.

11 By visuality, I mean the diverse visible appearances of the recto/verso dynamics and complex surfaces, whose interlaced brushwork embodied meaningful salvific, somatic, and haptic qualities. By materiality, I mean the components themselves (brushwork, stamped images, paper, ink, etc.), their physical persistence, their sensory properties, the objecthood of the scrolls, and how these qualities embedded meaning in finalised but also perpetually evolving private ritual objects through their material construction and the interactivity of objects and mourners.

12 Letter sutras come in several formats. The most commonly produced letter sutras were made using the recto/verso, recto, and recycled techniques.

By virtue of these characteristics, letter sutras admittedly defy some of the commonly-held assumptions traditionally defining palimpsests. Beyond deliberately seeking the visual and material form of a palimpsest to commemorate the dead, letter sutras operated on an initial process of destructive addition rather than of erasure, although this binary is complicated below. As palimpsests were not universal nor monolithic, fundamental divergences and intriguing variations exist across all categories and cultures, and letter sutras as deliberate creations can offer manuscript studies a new perspective on the significance of the palimpsest format. Relatedly, Imre Galambos has pointed out that in the context of Dunhuang manuscripts, the reuse of Tang dynasty Buddhist scrolls ‘for the production of new codices must have been a deliberate procedure whereby the original scroll not only retained part of its efficacy but may have acquired new significance.’<sup>13</sup> It is therefore conceivable that the study of the intentional and meaningful layering of texts and their palimpsestuous visuality within the broader category of palimpsests would unearth new understandings.

## 2 The merit of making

Attending to the making practice is one of the most fecund sources of information revealing both the complicated construction of a memorial palimpsest but also proving that the process of making was a wellspring of meaning in and of itself. This stems from the very nature of a Buddhist palimpsest because its visuality and materiality were intentionally sought by its makers and patrons. In other words, the visible and material dimensions of these multilayered compositions were deliberate outcomes. The production process for memorial palimpsests was diverse, demonstrating creative ingenuity, individual tastes and preferences, and a fluidity made possible by less formalised rituals, for letter sutras were a vibrant and poignant practice that was nevertheless an offshoot of the more standardised sutra transcriptions produced in similar moments of bereavement.

Among the first steps taken to make a letter sutra scroll was the practical step of gathering the papers bearing the handwriting of the dead. Evidence from the scrolls themselves reveal that the material most frequently came from the collection of the mourner, demonstrating the safe preservation of letters over years of correspondence between friends and family members. For instance, the transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* by Emperor Fushimi (1265–1317) for his father Emperor

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<sup>13</sup> Galambos 2020, 44.

GoFukakusa (1243–1304) contained approximately 171 missives from father to son, signalling that Fushimi's private cache of letters were reused to make GoFukakusa's memorial scrolls.<sup>14</sup> Medieval diaries also revealed that sometimes a variety of papers in the dead's possession were collected upon their passing to be reused as the ground for sutras. And so whilst *letter sutra* is the English transliteration I have chosen to deploy in my analysis of these manuscripts attributable to the typical selection of epistles as the ritual paper as well as the Japanese term *shōsoku* 消息 which more commonly denoted a personal letter, makers of epistolary scriptures also repurposed other types of handwritten documents, such as poetic compositions (*waka* 和歌), diaries, governmental records, as well as other types of handwritten traces identified in primary sources as waste paper but perhaps more appropriately translated as repurposable used paper (*hogo* 反古/反故). Amongst these varieties, the key ingredient to memorial palimpsests was the inclusion of the dead's handwriting, even if it was only a signature.

These gathered letters must then be transformed from a sheaf of single-sided sheets into a scroll ready for the copying of sacred scripture. Whilst there were no official standards for the paper size of missives, they tended to be slightly wider than the dimensions of a sutra roll. This size discrepancy required the trimming of the sheets to the desired width of approximately 28 cm. This alteration frequently excised portions of the original writing. Thus, even before the letters were ever brushed or printed with sutras, they had already begun their material transformation from missive to memorial artefact wherein the de-prioritisation of the letter's original purpose was materially signalled by the destructive adaption of its size to accommodate the standard sutra roll combined with the displacement of rows of characters from a letter no longer meant to be read. One of the most common palimpsest patterns was the recto/verso, which necessitated an additional preparatory step. Because mulberry letters were originally made as single-surface sheets, this meant that only the recto was prepared to receive brushwork. This left the fibres of the verso rough, unpolished, and ill-equipped for the smooth application of ink. Therefore, smoothing techniques were often employed before scripture was transcribed on the reverse of the missives, such as a procedure called *uchigami* 打紙 in which a moistening stack of papers were hammered with wooden mallet, thereby pressing the fibres flat.

The repurposed papers were now ready to be pasted together to craft a handscroll. But rather than preserve the temporality of the correspondence and align the missives in sequence, extant scrolls reveal that little attention was paid to the narrative chronology. The maker pasted the letters completely out of order and

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14 O'Neal 2019.

without regard for their dating. Furthermore, the cohesion of multi-sheet correspondences was broken when semantically connected sheets were dispersed across the roll(s). Moreover, inky shadows transferred from one epistle to the adjacent – but unaffiliated and chronologically different – paper during the application of *uchigami* indicates that even at this early stage the letters were jumbled together. By paying attention to these material transformations enacted on the papers through the making process, we witness the resolution of letters whose original purpose was to be read into memorialised letters of the dead.

In cases where the mourner was wealthy, such as members of the imperial family, these preparatory steps were most likely undertaken by skilled workers. The prepared scrolls would have been returned to the copyist, ready for the transcription of the second text. The bereaved selected from a vast variety of scriptures, and frequently the selection reveals the religious preferences and even gender of the recipient. However, the most commonly chosen scripture was the *Lotus Sutra*. The scripture is full of promises and praise for itself and for those who devote themselves to its veneration and truths. Copying scripture was understood to be exceptionally meritorious, explaining that, in Leon Hurvitz' translation:

if, having written down this scriptural roll, he makes offerings with floral scent, necklaces, burned incense, powdered incense, perfumed paint, banners and parasols, garments, and sundry torches [...] the merit he gains shall also be incalculable.<sup>15</sup>

It promised the Buddha's protection<sup>16</sup> as well as such gifts and honours as befitted the Buddha.<sup>17</sup> It guaranteed escape from disease and death: 'If a man has an illness and can hear this scripture, the illness shall immediately vanish. He shall neither grow old nor die.'<sup>18</sup> It is no wonder then that the colophons appended to sutras copied for the dead routinely offered prayers for their loved ones' salvation and rebirth in the paradisaical lands of the Buddhas, trusting to the meritorious weight of the scripture to protect and provide for the recipient. The *Lotus Sutra* also paired such grand assurances with more earthly promises like beauty and physical excellence.<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, the colophons that accompanied scriptures demonstrate the lived reality of medieval Buddhists, that their prayers ranged from wishes for salvation to socio-political advantage. For instance, in 1088 the courtier Fujiwara no Moromichi 藤原師通 (1062–1099) dedicated numerous memorial sutras for the benefit of himself and his family, writing in one of the dedicatory colophons,

<sup>15</sup> Hurvitz 2009, 274–275; *Taishō canon* (hereafter: *T.*) no. 262: vol. 9, page 54b, lines 21–26.

<sup>16</sup> See Hurvitz 2009, 163; *T.* 262: 9, 31b21–b23.

<sup>17</sup> Hurvitz 2009, 160; *T.* 262: 9, 30c17–21.

<sup>18</sup> Hurvitz 2009, 276; *T.* 262: 9, 54c23–26.

<sup>19</sup> Hurvitz 2009, 239; *T.* 262: 9, 47a8–20.



I have copied out the *Three-fold Lotus Sutra*, the *Heart Sutra*, and the *Diamond Life Span Sutra* by hand in gold letters and buried them at Kinpusen in a bronze vessel in order to advance the noble teachings of the One Vehicle of Shaka and to establish the karmic bond to be present at Jison's three assemblies. With faith that these offerings will surely enjoy the longevity of metal and stone, I present them to the mountain god with reverence for his miraculous powers, and to the fertility deities of the Thirty Eight Sites.<sup>20</sup>

However lofty these aspirations were, this colophon also concluded with a prayer for political advantage, wishing 'for those born into this hereditary house to quickly rise to the Third Rank, for the past karma of its deceased fathers and grandfathers, and for the prosperity of its descendants.'<sup>21</sup> Medieval Buddhists clearly transcribed scripture for both soteriological and terrestrial rewards, and it is within this fertile intertextual community of praxis that letter sutras developed and flourished.

### 3 A case study: A letter sutra set in the British Library

Within the collection of the British Library is a set of eight handscrolls of the *Lotus Sutra* printed on the reverse of handwritten letters (London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3).<sup>22</sup> These fourteenth-century objects have been restored: tears and rips patched with tiny slips of paper and a modern frontispiece of light cream paper sprinkled with gold flecks attached (Fig. 1). Each of the eight scrolls opens with the same line of text in the lower right-hand corner. This handwritten inscription reads Tōdaiji Shinzen-in 東大寺新禪院 of Nara, the temple where this project originated (Fig. 2). Shinzen-in was a subtemple within the larger Tōdaiji monastic complex that is sadly no longer extant. The small seal stamped in red ink just to the left marks the acquisition of the set by the British Museum. Sir Ernest Mason Satow (1843–1929), a British diplomat stationed in East Asia with strong professional, scholarly, and personal ties within Japan, sold the scrolls to the museum in 1884. After the establishment of the British Library in 1973, the set made its way into the library's collection where it remains today.

<sup>20</sup> Moerman 2007, 265.

<sup>21</sup> Moerman 2007, 265.

<sup>22</sup> The article's illustrations are photographs taken by the author for the purposes of study. Due to the cyber-attack at the British Library, images within their databases were not available.



Fig. 1: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3: *Lotus Sutra* printed on the backs of handwritten letters by Dōgetsu, recto of scroll 8, ink on paper, c. 1338.

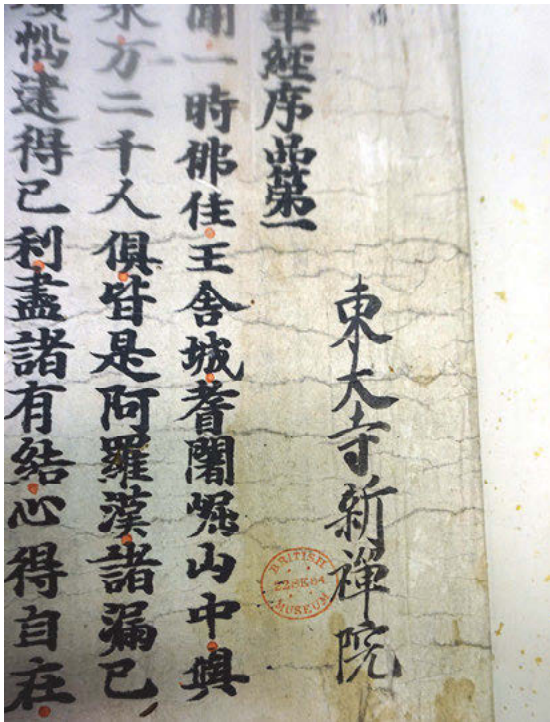


Fig. 2: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, recto of scroll 1.

According to an inscription at the end of the recto of the eighth scroll signed by the priest Sonritsu, he explained that

on the fifth year of Kenmu [i.e. 1338 CE], fourth month, fourteenth day, in order to commemorate the thirteenth anniversary of the death of my former teacher Dōgetsu Shōnin [道月上人], I have caused this sutra to be printed on the back of his posthumous writings (Fig. 3).<sup>23</sup>

Temple records corroborate that Dōgetsu was appointed the head priest of Shinzen-in in 1282, but remain silent on the identity of Sonritsu.<sup>24</sup> However, his own words confirm him as a disciple of Dōgetsu and given the inscribed temple name at the start of each scroll, Sonritsu seems to have been a priest in the early fourteenth century at Shinzen-in studying under Dōgetsu. This inscription is followed by another, much later one that articulates the sojourn of this *Lotus Sutra* set.<sup>25</sup> The priest Shōshū 聖秀 (s.a.) wrote in 1514 that this set of sutra scrolls had been lost when the role of head priest had undergone successive changes. But through fate, the set had returned to Shinzen-in where he restored it to the temple library. As such, the prayers of the donor (Sonritsu) and the original intentions of the teacher (Dōgetsu) were fulfilled.

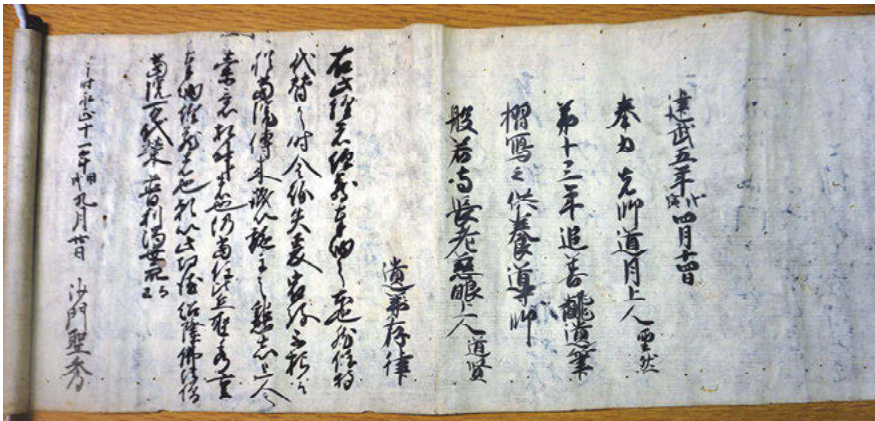


Fig. 3: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 8: inscriptions by Sonritsu (right) and Shōshū (left).

<sup>23</sup> Gardner 1963, 16. A nearly identical set of colophons were written onto the recto at the end of scroll one. Kenneth Gardner's study is brief but offered important insights into the commission and dedication context.

<sup>24</sup> Gardner 1963, 17, n. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Gardner 1963, 17.

A further inscription brushed and signed by a priest using the name Fukai 普海 on the verso at the end of the eighth scroll confirms much the same origin story, writing that

in order to repay the great debt which I owe to my revered former teacher, who instructed me in the ways of the Law, I have recited this sutra many times since it was printed. I now offer it as a gift to the temple in perpetuity, to be recited on the anniversary of the Master's death (Fig. 4).<sup>26</sup>

It seems likely that Sonritsu and Fukai were one and the same, especially as it was common to go by different names depending on the situation and over the course of one's life.

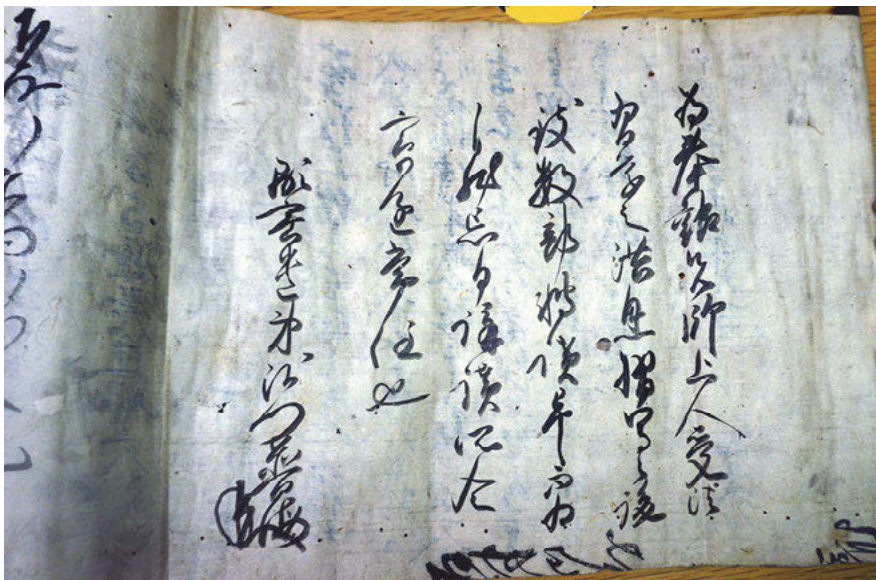


Fig. 4: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 8: inscription by Fukai/Sonritsu.

One further inscription about the production of these scrolls connects them to a much larger printing project instigated by the priest Shinjō 心性 (*s.a.*) that lasted

<sup>26</sup> Gardner 1963, 17.

close to a century.<sup>27</sup> According to the dedicatory colophon printed at the end of the eighth volume of the scripture, Shinjō vowed to disseminate printed copies of the *Lotus Sutra* throughout the provinces so that all sentient beings might together attain Buddhahood (Fig. 5).

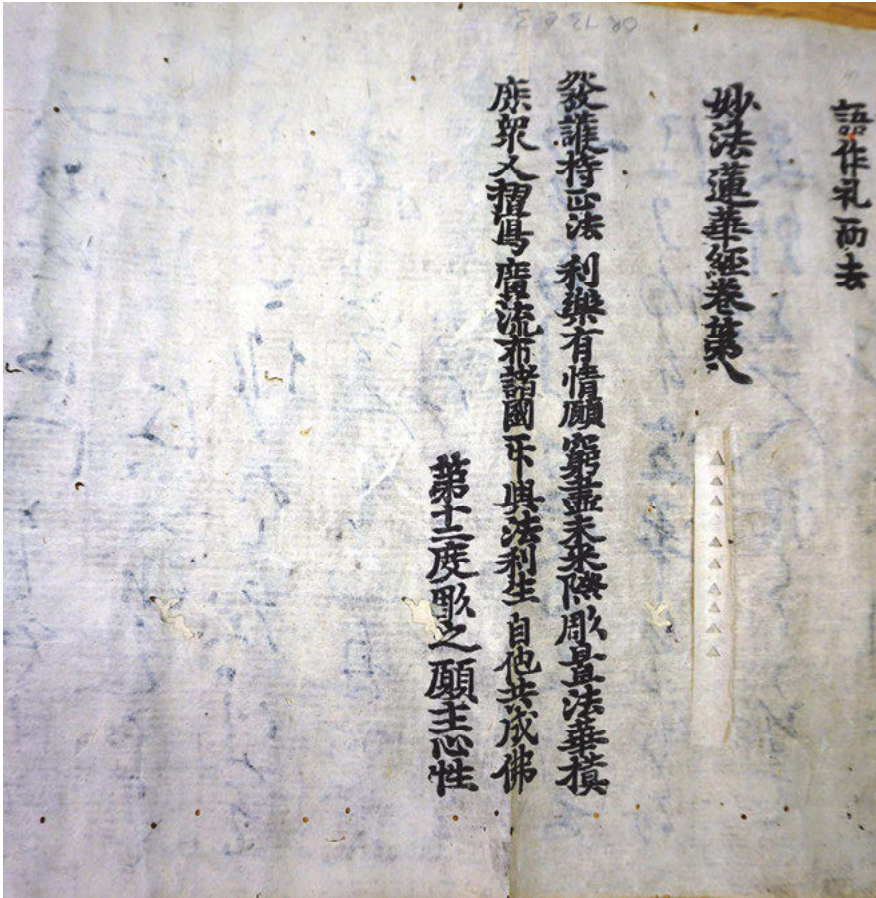


Fig. 5: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 8: Shinjō's printed inscription.

<sup>27</sup> According to the dedicatory vows on the fourteenth and fifteenth printed versions, Shinjō is described as a priest of Shion-in 四恩院, a subtemple of Kōfukuji 興福寺 (Kabutogi 1954, 30–35).

The final line of the colophon confirms this set to be the twelfth edition of Shinjō's vow. The Buddhist print specialist Kabutogi Shōkō has analysed the outputs of this extensive project in his volume, *Hokke hangyō no kenkyū* ('Research on Printed Lotus Sutras').<sup>28</sup> As the twelfth edition was presumed lost, Gardner's discovery is of great significance to the history of sutra printing and reveals the personal and private spin later patrons of Shinjō's editions put to their copies, including the memorial reuse of the dead's letters.

We are fortunate that the priests Sonritsu/Fukai and Shōshū inscribed colophons, because countless sutra copies are without such direct provenancial evidence. In Sonritsu's own words, he revealed a personal, ritual function for the memorial palimpsests. He declared by his instruction that Dōgetsu's handwritten letters should be transformed and reused as paper for the printing of the scripture for *tsuizen* 追善, meaning the transfer of merit to the dead attained by copying or printing sutras. Thus, he began this project with the explicit intention of creating memorial palimpsests that bound together the dead's letters with the dharma of the Buddha as one textually stratified object. After commissioning the printing of the *Lotus Sutra* on the verso of his beloved teacher's handwritten sheets, he used the scrolls to recite its sacred and efficacious text, once again directing the merit to the dead. Moreover, he explained that his intention in donating the set to Shinzen-in was for the temple to use this letter sutra for memorial rituals each year on the anniversary of his teacher's death. The thickly-inked and blocky characters of the printed sutra also bear evidence of later interlineated script confirming the oral use of the scrolls (Fig. 6).

These small interjections written alongside the standard sutra text are tiny phonetic script, written in red and black, that illustrate the Japanese pronunciation of the Classical Chinese. Combined with the small red dots known as *shōten* 声点 that indicate the tonal pronunciation of the Chinese characters, we can determine that at points these scrolls were intended for oral recitation, just as Sonritsu divulged of his private practice and instructed of later monastics. These testimonies of meaningful intentions and the varieties of ritual afterlives for the epistolary scriptures directly demonstrate the purposes of letter sutras.

Making up the substrate of these eight scrolls are handwritten letters by Dōgetsu, some filled with flowing lines of calligraphy and others only sparsely covered (Fig. 7). By and large, Dōgetsu's writing is large, legible, and tidy with ample room between the lines of script, which was sometimes used as additional space to continue a particularly long letter.

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28 At the time of the publication of this volume in 1954, Kabutogi believed the twelfth edition to be lost. He offered a study of the British Library's printed *Lotus Sutra* in his expanded and revised volume, Kabutogi 1982, 376–390.

是諸所說皆為化善產故然舍利弗今當復  
 以摩畜更明此義諸有智者以摩畜得解舍  
 利弗若國邑聚落有大長者其年衰邁財富  
 無量多有田宅及諸僮僕其家廣大唯有一  
 門多諸入衆一百二百乃至五百人止住其  
 中堂閣初故牆壁頹落柱根腐敗梁棟傾危  
 周而俱時欹然火起焚燒舍宅長者諸子若  
 十二十或至三十在此宅中長者見是大火  
 從四面起即大驚怖而作是念我雖能於此  
 所燒之門安穩得出而者

Fig. 6: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 2.



Fig. 7: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 8.

Dotted along the bottom left of myriad letters across the eight scrolls is his distinctive signature (Fig. 8). Many of Dōgetsu's letters were explicitly addressed to Sonritsu. His missives express normal monastic dealings regarding scheduling concerns and fellow priests' plans for visits to the temple as well as discussion of his own travel. He discussed with his disciple a range of events at the temple, such as the attendance of officials at ceremonies, as well as conversations regarding numerous petitions and the wait for their outcomes. Some of Dōgetsu's letters also shared his commiserations at the death of mutuals as well as reports of illnesses, while others betray a sense of anxiety during periods of instability, including a concern that the monks under his care would not have adequate provisions. In all, Dōgetsu's letters reveal the mundane aspects of life and work at the temple tinged with normal human experiences and concerns.



**Fig. 8:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 8.

Whilst a recto/verso transcription might conjure ideas of rigid binaries that prevented the different layers of text from interacting, the actual objecthood of the scrolls reveal just the opposite. The brushwork of the dead is always visible on the outside of the rolls and indeed always in tactile connection with the user of the scroll (Fig. 9). The verso makes physical contact with the hands of the person holding and manipulating the roll, for their fingers brush against the handwriting of the dead with each rotation of the object held in their palms. This is a particularly poignant point of contact for a mourner such as Sonritsu who held this letter sutra whilst chanting its scriptural text.





**Fig. 9:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 1.



**Fig. 10:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 2.

The paper itself is extraordinarily porous and thin, further breaking down the rigidity of the recto/verso dynamic (Figs 10–11). Inverted visions of the blocky text of the Buddha's dharma emerge through the fibres of the dead's letters, creating a palimpsest of imbricated scripts on the surface of the deceased's brushwork (Fig. 12). And although the calligraphic epistle is composed of finer, elongated brushstrokes, the thinness of the shared paper also conjures visions of the letter as it penetrates the front of the scroll.



**Fig. 11:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 2.



**Fig. 12:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 1.

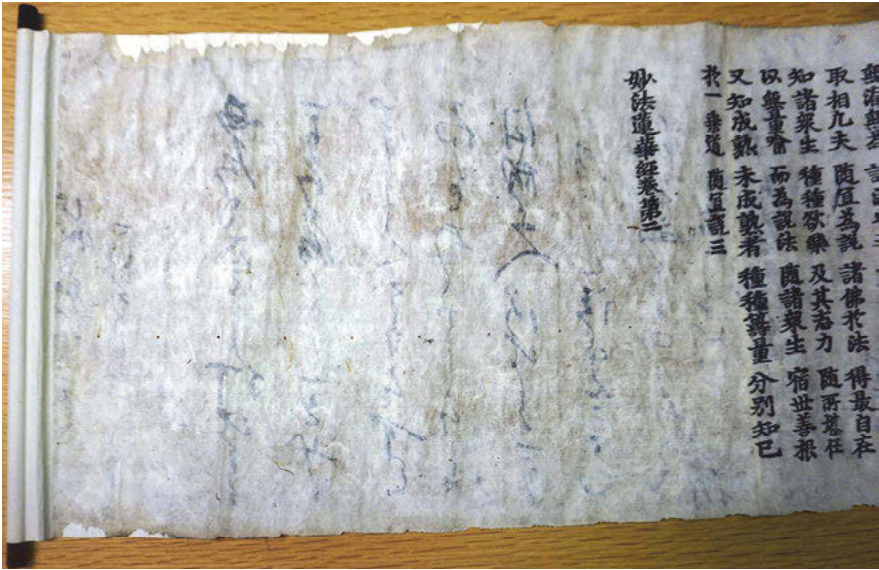


Fig. 13: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 2.



Fig. 14: London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 8.

Therefore, the dead’s writing exists alongside the word of the Buddha, in effect creating a new text interspersing sacred script with the shadow of Dōgetsu’s brush (Fig. 13). There are very literal shadows on the surface as well. Ghost text, born of the making of the memorial palimpsest, lurks just out of legible reach (Fig. 14). When the

rough and unpolished fibres of the letters' backs were smoothed, likely through the *uchigami* technique, the ink from some epistles transferred to the surface of unconnected sheets. Fig. 14 shows a sheet bearing only the closing line of the original letter along with Dōgetsu's signature written in vivid dark ink. Filling the majority of the page is an inverse ghost missive, produced when two damp sheets were pressed together before being pasted into the handscroll format. In effect, this ghost text creates another palimpsestic layer of the manuscript.

## 4 What makes a palimpsest?

Having delved into a fourteenth-century example of epistolary scripture making, let us telescope out to consider the application of the term 'palimpsest' to these scrolls and others like it within this category of medieval Japanese manuscripts. By establishing the constituent components of a palimpsest, we can determine the suitability of this concept to Japanese examples. Broadly speaking, palimpsests are what they are by virtue of two fundamental qualities: the making process and the eventual visual outcome.

The field of palimpsest studies is a vibrant area of manuscript history with rich examples from the ancient and medieval world revealing a diversity of methods and visible consequences as one would expect of a practice dating back at least to the third century BCE. For example, the Ṣan'ā' palimpsest is an intriguing fragment of great textual significance in the history of Qur'anic manuscripts. Discovered in the Ṣan'ā' mosque in Yemen in c. 1973, the Codex Ṣan'ā' 1 was first investigated by a team at Hamburg University, preserved on microfilm, and then stored in the Dār al-maḥṭūṭāt or House of Manuscripts built by Qāḍī al-Akwa' (1920–2008) next to the Great Mosque of Ṣan'ā'.<sup>29</sup> This particular palimpsest is notable for several reasons. Amongst them, the *scriptio inferior* which is visible beneath the upper layer of Qur'anic transcription in the canonical or Uṭmānic tradition, is perhaps most significant because it remains one of the few extant versions of a markedly altered Qur'an in terms of 'substantial variants in consonants and sequences of the *sūras* [chapters]' and the only one of its specific formulation.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cellard 2021, 1–2 and Regourd 2022, 193–195.

<sup>30</sup> Cellard 2021, 3; George 2010, 31–40. Given its fragmentary and damaged state, scholars disagree about the nature of this singular *scriptio inferior*, and whether it indeed represents a manuscript distinct from the Uṭmānic text (Sadeghi and Goudarzi 2012). Others argue that it is a version

Taking the Codex Şan'ā' 1 as a quintessential palimpsest manifesting the intriguing potential to change dominant understandings of the Qur'an's development allows us to consider what is it about this codex that makes its classification as a palimpsest indisputable, and in doing so, we can consider how these proposed Japanese variants fit under the rubric of palimpsests. The parchment sheets of the Codex Şan'ā' 1 appear somewhat more organised and tidier than other palimpsests of a similar age. This is because both the original and later texts share the same orientation, whereas other examples frequently reoriented the paper causing perpendicular, diagonal, and counter flows. The immediacy of the Şan'ā' palimpsestic composition is apprehensible because whilst the parchment was scraped of its subscript and a new Qur'anic text written on the same surface, the *scriptio inferior* is still faintly visible beneath the new layer. Thus, the incomplete removal of the first text created a pattern of imbricated shadows just below the surface of the later, vivid script.

These typical techniques of scraping and washing the text from the parchment, whether fully complete or not, is characteristic of the destructive and yet generative process of palimpsest making, the visual outcome of which was a layered composition, even if only properly visible under multispectral lighting. The manufacturing of these manuscripts interlaced hidden and emerging texts. In broader terms, it also created a surface whose recto/verso dynamic was destabilised by the continual making, unmaking, and remaking.

In sum, the defining qualities of a palimpsest appear to be a making process which to varying extents damaged, erased, and obscured the original script by its attempted removal and the subsequent reinscription of new text(s) combined with the visual outcome of interwoven hands and writing, perceivable by the naked eye or through technological intervention. One of the dominant scholarly approaches to these multifarious manuscripts is the recovery and study of the original writings, often culminating in the discovery of completely new or lost texts.

## 5 A Buddhist palimpsest

Having explored the definitional boundaries of established palimpsests, I would argue that Buddhist epistolary scriptures of medieval Japan adhere to the palaeographical understanding of palimpsest. Moreover, they augment the current discourse by virtue of the deliberateness of their palimpsestuous composition. Re-

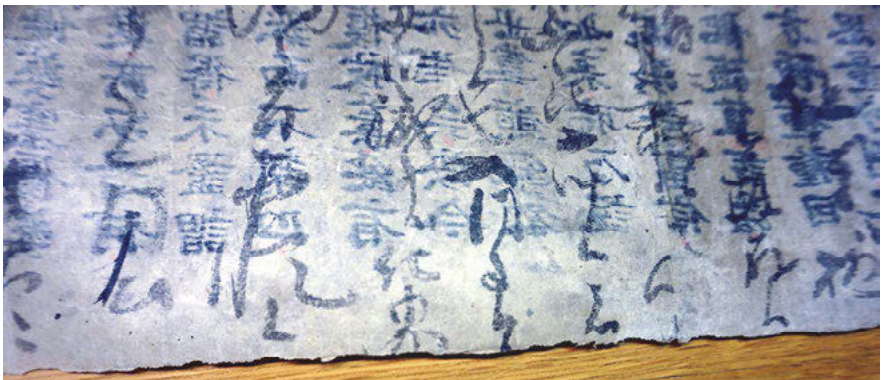
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of the canonical Qur'an rearranged for use within a teaching and learning community (Hilali 2017; Cellard 2021, 4).

turning to the fundamental qualities of a palimpsest, namely their making and the eventual visual outcome, letter sutras manifestly evince the physical markers of their destructive birth. Firstly, the trimming of the papers permanently cleaved written sections from the missive. Figs 15 and 16 demonstrate the excising of Dōgetsu's original writing across the tops and bottoms of sheets within scroll one, truncating and forestalling the legibility of the dead's message. Also visible in Fig. 15 is the swallowing of the ur-text by the papers' joint, making it clear that when pasting together the sheets, the makers were not concerned that the seam preserve the whole of the original text.



**Fig. 15:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 1.



**Fig. 16:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 1.

Secondly, smoothing techniques like *uchigami* moistened the papers, and thereby blurred and transferred the brushwork (Fig. 17 and see Fig. 14). This ghost text sometimes overlaid the other scripts present within the palimpsest, interrupting and obscuring their legibility. Thirdly, multi-sheet letters were separated and dispersed across the scrolls, and the random sequencing of missives broke any chronological narrative. Reading these letters for comprehension was clearly no longer their function. Fourthly, in the case of recto transcriptions, the new layer of scripture blanketed the original writing, curtailing its legibility and visibility. Finally, in the case of recto/verso transcriptions, the letter was deprioritised and forced to forgo its recto status to become the backs of the sacred transcription. These material effects resulting from the process of production profoundly altered and damaged the ur-text, betraying any fidelity to the paper's previous life as a letter exchanged between compatriots and carefully read for its semantic message. Thus, the making of the epistolary scripture transformed the ur-text from legible missive into 'somatic signature' – a final embodied trace of a loved one. But despite the damage dealt to the ur-text, like other palimpsests, its recovery can also lead to the discovery of significant historical insights, revealing networks of medieval actors and their socio-political and familial dynamics.



**Fig. 17:** London, British Library, Or. 73.e.3, verso of scroll 1.

If letter sutras abide by the general principles of a palimpsest's making, they also accord most emphatically with the visuality of a palimpsest whose ghost text has been resurrected either by technological intervention or by the effects of time, such as hidden scripts brought once again to the surface through the oxidation of

the ink. The elaborate patterns of layered texts are the quintessential visual feature of palimpsests, and in the case of the letter sutras, this is also abundantly true. But for epistolary scriptures, the choice of the palimpsest was intentional, and that decision spoke to innate qualities of the format. There was something powerful in the nature of the palimpsest – so much so that it was a favoured method of the memorialisation for the imperial lineage starting with Emperor GoFukakusa. The possibility of reconnecting with the dead through their written traces and layering their somatic signatures with the mourner's brush was a potent reconnection that challenged absence in death. To overlap the original writing and fill the interlineated spaces of the dead's letter with the salvific text of the Buddha was a compelling visual goal that had salvific ramifications as well as implications for the grief of the copyist. Even when the format is recto/verso like our particular case study, the barrier of the paper proves no match for the ink soaking in from both sides of the page (see Figs 10–13).

But of course, the scripture was not always written by hand. Sutras were also commonly printed in the making of these memorial palimpsests. Again and again, as both extant sutra copies and textual records reveal, memorial sutras were often printed rather than handwritten, providing clear indications that both methods were seen as soteriologically potent. They also evince the firm belief that printed sutras were capable of generating merit and establishing a connection between the dead and the Buddha, much like handwritten transcriptions were argued to do. Sonritsu's dedication declares his goal of generating merit for his late teacher, thus merit it must generate.

Ultimately, some might protest that letter sutras stretch the concept of palimpsest too far, into unrecognisable spaces where its meaning begins to tatter and fray. The significant difference between readily accepted palimpsests and epistolary scriptures appears to be the deliberateness of letter sutra's immediately discernible composition of interposed textual layers. But to such a challenge, I would again argue that even documents conventionally accepted as palimpsests do not evince full erasure. Scholars have shown that there was a great variety of palimpsestic methods and outcomes.<sup>31</sup> The letter sutra's intentionality of visible texts should not be reason for exclusion; rather, it should be embraced as a creative variation within the accepted range of palimpsestic processes. Because to do so

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<sup>31</sup> The extensive project at Mt Sinai declares that 'the erased layer of writing is normally faintly visible under the new writing, but not legible' (<<http://sinaipalimpsests.org/about-project/index.html>>). And before the Walters Museum of Art analysed the Archimedes palimpsest with multispectral light, the erased texts were nevertheless 'faintly and tantalizing seen through the overlying layers' (Newman 2017, 103).



opens avenues for further investigation regarding the nature of a palimpsest's visuality that prioritises the meaning inherent in the interlaced scripts.

## 6 The promise and potential of palimpsests

Transculturally speaking, palimpsests inherently share several fundamental and theoretical characteristics to do with temporality, memory, and embodiment, even if only accidentally and involutedly crafted. Through their materiality and assemblage, palimpsests manifest the past, sometimes offering us glimpses otherwise lost to history. They are both a literal and metaphorical aperture onto simultaneously creative and destructive moments in history, made visible and present by virtue of their making process. But how clearly one can see and understand those histories comes down to the degree of damage suffered by the surfaces. The texts of a palimpsest manifest an imbricated and intertextual web of stories and ideas, very often denoting complicated histories of place and pasts, complex narratives, and the assemblage and refashioning of objects, architecture, and spaces, both physically and figuratively.

They are also visible time: the procedures that made, unmade, and fashioned anew different, intersecting layers are encoded in the scratches, washes, and reversal of orientations scarring the surface by agents of change, each one emanating from an alteration in trajectory of the object. Palimpsests have the potential to reinforce the individual against the gaping chasm of death, though often unnamed, unknown, or now forgotten. Such a record is especially poignant when history so frequently obscured individual actors apart from the great and glorious, wealthy and male, or nefarious and devious. Moreover, palimpsests argue against stable, unwavering meaning. The very nature of the palimpsest tells us that what we have before us today is transitory. When reinscribed both literally or within new contexts and with new actors, the meaning is unfixed and continually developing. The making, the process of becoming, and the palimpsestuous format are perpetually visible. Palimpsests are both the thing and technique at all times, which is one of their more fascinating qualities.

For Buddhist memorial palimpsests, the process of production involving the letters of the dead had salvific consequence, but it also provided the mourner with 'occupation in mourning'. For losses deeply experienced, the yawning chasm of death felt overwhelming and in the face of this new reality, mourners were unmoored. The desire to do something significant and beneficial could give the bereft a sense of purpose and meaningful activity. The making of letter sutras physically and intimately required the writing of the dead, and the handling and

repurposing of those papers brought the mourners into direct contact with the last traces of their friend, mentor, or loved one. Because in Japanese culture, handwriting was considered and treated as a somatic extension of oneself, the papers very literally contained the final vestiges of the dead, what I have termed their somatic signature. Therefore, this physical engagement with the dead's writing in making epistolary scriptures frequently resulted in extraordinary lamentations. And because of this embodied understanding of writing, letter sutras offered something traditional copies could not: an augmented and tailored scroll that directly and somatically bonded the dead with the sacred text of the Buddha, ensuring a potent karmic link known as *kechien* 結縁.<sup>32</sup>

In particular, letter sutras encoded memory, very literally in the words and writing of the dead, but also as instantiations of a historical ritual practice. As such, they acted as repositories of presence and the material manifestations of socio-political, familial, and religious networks. Palimpsests, and more specifically Buddhist memorial palimpsests, are a fecund node in the entanglement of humans and things.<sup>33</sup> Memorial palimpsests reveal through their complex materiality the things that people cherished. Through their survival, reuse, and transformation, that which was intentionally preserved reveals the economy of value, both sentimental and soteriological. Buddhist palimpsests underscore the fine line between reuseable waste and embodied paper. With the extinguishing of the body, mourners sought the dead's trace in their intimate possessions. Letters – personal and private in nature and humble and modest in terms of their materiality – were utilised in moments of cataclysmic change for individuals and families. They reveal a microcosm of ritual practice, epistolary culture, and private laments.

## 7 Conclusion

This contribution has explored the intentional visuality and materiality of Buddhist palimpsests of Japan and advocated for letter sutras' place amongst the category of palimpsests as a whole. It is only through the visible conflation of different writings – through either the revival of the *scriptio inferior* of non-Buddhist examples or its deliberate presence in the case of many letter sutras – that the man-

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<sup>32</sup> For more on *kechien*, see Aoki 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Bruno Latour's actor network theory (Latour 2005) and later interventions such as Ian Hodder's contribution to entanglement theory (Hodder 2012) and Bill Brown's thing theory (Brown 2001) gave us ways of conceptualising the relationship between individuals, objects, and agency. From the perspective of nonanthropocentrism, see the exhibition catalogue, Behar and Mikelson 2016.

uscript comes to be classified as a palimpsest. Therefore, the visual (sometimes made clear only through technological intervention) layering of texts is a key factor embedded within the broader definition of a palimpsest. This stratified format was so singular that medieval Buddhist mourners in their most dire moments looked to the palimpsest as their path through the pain and the generator of karmic merit for their dead. Therefore, the deliberateness of the materiality and visuality of Japanese Buddhist letter sutras and their haptic capabilities augment and extend the wider field of palimpsests. The contribution argued that by paying careful attention to the layering itself and the new texts that are created during this generative process, the written strata blanketing the lower layers are not just something to be seen through. Instead, the very interaction of these scripts – materially, visually, and haptically – and their emplacement together is significant, creating new meanings that each alone could not.

## Abbreviations

SZKT = Kuroita Katsumi 黑板勝美 (ed.), *Shintei zōho kokushi taikai* 新訂増補國史大系, 60 vols, Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1929–1964.

*Taishō canon* = Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 (eds), *Taishō daizōkyō* 大正大藏經, Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.

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Hussein Mohammed, Mahdi Jampour, Jost Gippert

# Inpainting with Generative AI: A Significant Step towards Automatically Deciphering Palimpsests

**Abstract:** Palimpsests are manuscripts that have been scraped or washed for reuse, typically as another document. Recovering the undertext of these manuscripts is of significant interest to scholars in the humanities. Therefore, scholars often employ multispectral imaging (MSI) techniques to render the undertext of palimpsests visible. Nevertheless, this approach may not be sufficient in many cases, given that the undertext in the resulting images remains obscured by the overtext. Recent advances in the field of generative artificial intelligence present unprecedented opportunities to discern patterns in highly complex visual data and reconstruct them accordingly. Hence, we propose framing this challenge as an inpainting task in computer vision, aiming to enhance the readability of the undertext through generative image inpainting. To achieve this objective, we have devised a novel approach for generating a synthetic multispectral image dataset of palimpsests, thereby providing a substantial number of training examples without requiring manual annotation. Furthermore, we employed this dataset in fine-tuning a generative inpainting model to improve the legibility of palimpsested undertext. The efficacy of this methodology is demonstrated using coloured and MSI images of Georgian palimpsests with Caucasian Albanian undertexts from Mount Sinai.

## 1 The need for enhancing the readability of palimpsests

There is a general need to reconstruct missing or damaged portions of text or other visual elements within the field of manuscript studies to enhance our comprehension of these historical artefacts. These components are often compromised due to the degradation of the artefacts themselves or the inferior quality of their digitisation. In the instance of a palimpsest, part or the entirety of the textual content has been deliberately removed, thereby impeding efforts to fully understand these artefacts.

Scholars often employ the technique of multispectral imaging (MSI), which renders the undertext of a palimpsest visible by capturing light within a specific range of wavelengths, dependent upon the optical properties of the ink used in inscribing this undertext. Nevertheless, the visibility of the undertext does not inherently equate to its readability, as both layers can overlap. Significant parts of the undertext might remain unreadable as a result. Frequently, even when using MSI, the undertext remains a formidable challenge to decipher. In certain instances, it may remain entirely indecipherable. This challenge arises from various factors, encompassing portions of the undertext being obscured by the overtext and other visual elements. Nonetheless, tackling these challenges paves the way for innovative solutions, one of which is the image inpainting technique.

## 2 Inpainting approaches and reconstructing the undertext

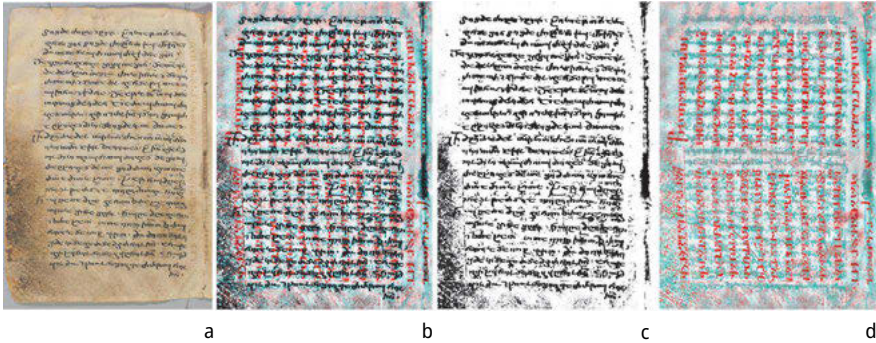
Image inpainting, a technique used in computer vision, holds the potential to reconstruct missing regions in an image.<sup>1</sup> This versatile tool finds application in various tasks, including object removal and image restoration. A mask is defined as an image with the same size as the target image, where the pixels within the parts of the image that we intend to ‘inpaint’ (remove and regenerate) are labelled as ‘zeros’, while the pixels we want to preserve in the original image are labelled as ‘ones’.

Indeed, by viewing the overtext as an undesired visual element, we can effectively frame the task as an object removal problem. In this context, the focus shifts towards eliminating the overtext – as an unwanted entity – while simultaneously reconstructing the hidden undertext and the very surface on which it is written. This amalgamation of techniques and goals underscores the intricate nature of reviving palimpsested manuscripts and uncovering their obscured narratives.

In the experimentations of our work, we defined the pixel labels in the mask so that each pixel belonging to the upper text was to be inpainted, and new pixel values were to be generated so that we could reconstruct the undertext. Figs 1a–d shows an illustrative example of this approach, where (a) is a palimpsest page, (b) shows a processed MSI image of this page, (c) is the mask automatically created for this image, and (d) is the generated results of our image inpainting approach.

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<sup>1</sup> See Xiang et al. 2023.



**Figs 1a–d:** Illustration of the proposed approach applied to a palimpsest image: (a) original palimpsest (Sinai, St Catherine’s Monastery, georg. NF 13, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>); (b) the outcome of MSI techniques; (c) mask image; and (d) the enhanced undertext using generative image inpainting.

In certain palimpsest specimens, no ink traces remain from the undertext that can be recovered by imaging techniques, such as X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and transmissive light. This means that some parts of the undertext will not be readable, despite not being obscured by any overtext. To reconstruct regions other than those covered by the overtext, it would be necessary to employ other techniques including natural language processing and image registration.

### 3 The Caucasian Albanian palimpsests

The palimpsests chosen for developing our approach are peculiar, given that they represent, in their undertexts, the only manuscripts preserved in the language and script of the so-called Caucasian ‘Albanians’, an ethnic group of the southern Caucasus whose literacy emerged with the Christianisation of the region in about the fifth century CE.<sup>2</sup> After being erased, the manuscripts were overwritten in Georgian, probably in the tenth century; they are part of the so-called New Finds of St Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai, stored in the monastery’s library under the shelf numbers georg. NF 13 and NF 55. A first edition of their contents, based upon ultraviolet and multispectral images, was published in 2008,<sup>3</sup> including a rendering of the (preserved or reconstructed) undertexts in the original

<sup>2</sup> See Gippert and Dum-Tragut 2023 for general information on the Caucasian ‘Albanians’.

<sup>3</sup> Gippert et al. 2008.

script, for which a special typeface was developed using images of the characters as they appear in the palimpsests themselves.<sup>4</sup>

The Albanian materials revealed in the palimpsests stem from two original manuscripts, one containing the Gospel of John<sup>5</sup> and one representing a collection of other passages from biblical texts, mostly of the New Testament, which were read as lections in divine services.<sup>6</sup> The readability of the two originals was extremely divergent: while the lection passages were discernible up to nearly 100%, the text of the Gospel of John remained uncertain for about two-thirds. This discrepancy meanwhile was overcome, at least to a certain extent, by new imaging methods developed in the course of the Sinai Palimpsests Project,<sup>7</sup> especially with the method of transmissive light imaging, which increased the readability rate to approximately 75%.<sup>8</sup> As a result of this project, we now have access to a large amount of MSI data for the palimpsests, consisting of false-colour and transmissive light images;<sup>9</sup> these were used as the input for our present AI-based approach.

## 4 The proposed approach

We conceptualised the task of enhancing the readability of undertexts as an image inpainting challenge and implemented this approach using a generative artificial intelligence (AI) technique. To this end, we introduced a novel method for generating synthetic multispectral images of palimpsests and used this dataset to fine-tune a generative inpainting model, aiming to improve the readability of palimpsest undertexts. The refined model is subsequently employed in an automated

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4 A draft of the font was designed in 2005 by Jost Gippert on the basis of ultraviolet and multispectral images taken on Mount Sinai in 1999–2004 for the first edition of the palimpsests. The final version of the typeface, also used for the Unicode Code Chart of Caucasian Albanian, was developed by Andreas Stötzner in 2007; see <<https://unicode.org/charts/PDF/U10530.pdf>>.

5 See Gippert 2023a, 105–119 for this part of the palimpsests.

6 See Gippert 2023a, 119–141 as to the ‘lectionary’ part of the palimpsests.

7 The project (see <<http://sinaipalimpsests.org/>>) was directed by Michael Phelps and Claudia Rapp and supported by Arcadia Foundation from 2012–2017.

8 See Gippert 2023b for an account of the progress made. A new edition of the Albanian palimpsests is presently underway.

9 The images, available via the Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library at the University of California, Los Angeles (see <<https://sinaimanuscripts.library.ucla.edu/>>) were produced by Keith T. Knox and kindly provided by the Sinai Palimpsests Project (<<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/>>, a publication of St Catherine’s Monastery of the Sinai in cooperation with the UCLA Library and the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL).



pipeline and applied to actual palimpsest samples, thereby generating images with enhanced undertext visibility.

Several state-of-the-art models have been proposed in recent years for the task of image inpainting. Among these, the mask-aware transformer (MAT) has outperformed other models in several critical benchmarks. This model has proven to be exceptionally well-suited for our problem for multiple reasons, including its high performance, the availability of pretrained models, and its capability to learn from the global context of the image. We encourage readers to explore more technical details about this model in a recent article.<sup>10</sup> In the following subsections, we provide further details on the key components of this approach.

## 4.1 The selection of a pretrained model

The MAT model is a novel approach designed for the complex task of image inpainting, combining the advantages of transformers and convolutional techniques to efficiently handle high-resolution images. It excels in modelling long-range interactions, utilising a dynamic mask to focus on valid image portions for high-quality reconstruction. The MAT model's initial training was on a widely accessible dataset, specifically the Places365 dataset. This dataset is designed for scene recognition and encompasses an impressive collection of 10 million images spanning 434 distinct scene categories.<sup>11</sup> Training a model entirely from scratch on such an extensive dataset can be a laborious and computationally demanding endeavour. Therefore, the prevailing approach is to use pretrained models as a foundation and then fine-tune them for particular tasks. Our comprehensive evaluations, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative assessments, have convincingly established that a MAT model, pretrained on the Places365 dataset, consistently delivers the most promising results.

## 4.2 Creating a synthetic dataset

Generative inpainting methods have demonstrated cutting-edge performance,<sup>12</sup> but they require a substantial corpus of training data, comprising authentic images and meticulously annotated pixel-level masks. The generation of such training

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<sup>10</sup> Jampour, Mohammed and Gippert 2024.

<sup>11</sup> See Zhou et al. 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Li et al. 2022; Guo et al. 2021

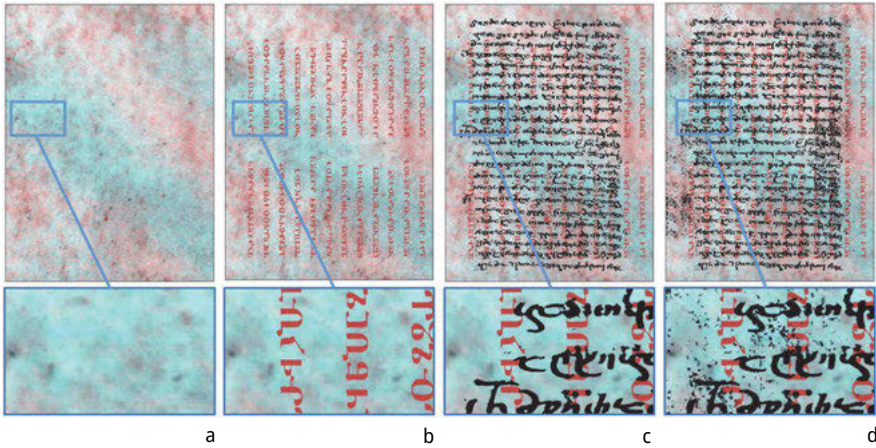
data is a labour-intensive task and, in many instances, infeasible owing to the unavailability of such information. To address these challenges, we propose the creation of synthetic MSI images of palimpsests. This innovative approach involves a four-step process. Firstly, we initiate the synthesis with a background texture reminiscent of the processed MSI images. Then, we incorporate undertext, using a font design that resonates with the original text and merging it with the background texture. Following this, we introduce random overtext and amalgamate it with the image produced in the preceding stage. Finally, to replicate the customary texture found in MSI images, we add random noise patterns.

To develop a background texture similar to MSI in the training images, we selected portions of processed MSI images of our palimpsests where no text was present. We then applied well-established post-processing techniques, including stitching, scaling, and refining. The undertext is rendered using the font derived from the palimpsest images themselves, as explained in Section 3. To this end, we automatically generated text using the Caucasian Albanian typeface to be overlaid on the automatically generated background, enabling the model to learn the letters' shapes. As a result, the generative part of the process is guided by the characteristics of this typeface.

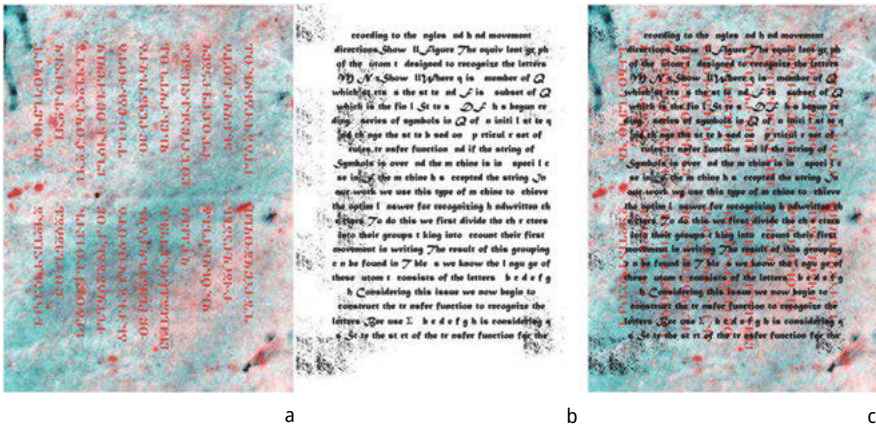
Following this step, we introduce automatically generated overtext, which is then incorporated into the synthetic images. Within these images, the textual content of the overtext is selected at random. However, efforts are made to align the orientation, line spacing, and proportions with those observed in the genuine palimpsest images. In the final step, we introduce additional visual elements to mimic the unpredictable anomalies commonly found in MSI images of palimpsests. It is important to emphasise that the quantity, distribution, and placement of these anomalies are entirely arbitrary. The aforementioned process of generating synthetic samples is demonstrated in Figs 2a–d.

Through this process, we compiled a dataset containing 1000 synthetic MSI images of the Georgian Albanian palimpsests. Each sample in the dataset is paired with both a mask and a ground-truth image. The ground-truth image serves as the benchmark for evaluating the quality of the generated image using the inpainting model. The mask image outlines the areas requiring inpainting, including the overtext and other noise-related anomalies. For visual reference, Figs 3a–c provides an example of a synthetic sample along with its corresponding mask and ground-truth images. It is worth noting that all images within the dataset adhere to uniform dimensions, measuring  $2800 \times 2100$  pixels, and are stored in full-colour PNG format. In

support of academic research and collaboration, this dataset is publicly available for research purposes and can be accessed at our Research Data Repository (RDR).<sup>13</sup>



**Figs 2a–d:** Synthesising MSI images of palimpsests: (a) generated background; (b) rendered under-text using the Caucasian Albanian typeface on generated background; (c) randomly generated over-text added on top; (d) randomly generated noise added to mimic the typical texture in our MSI images. The second row shows zoomed-in regions in the images.



**Figs 3a–c:** A synthesised sample from the proposed dataset. Left to right: (a) ground-truth; (b) mask; and (c) synthesised MSI image.

<sup>13</sup> See the dataset in Jampour, Mohammed and Gippert 2023.

### 4.3 Fine-tuning the pretrained model

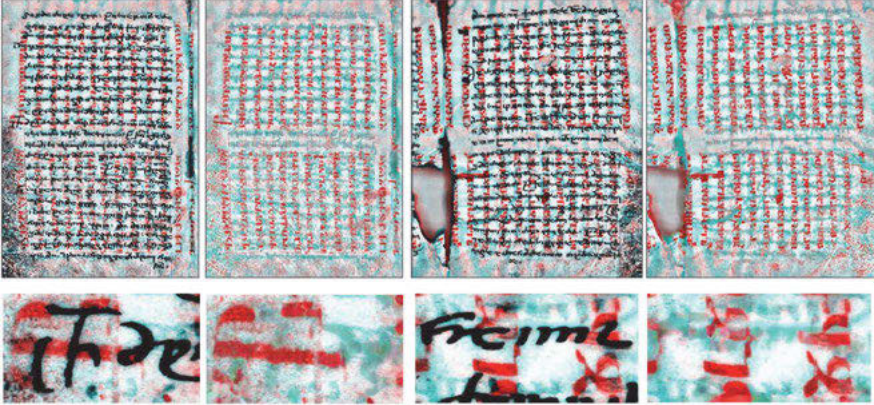
The MAT model, pretrained on the Places365 dataset, underwent additional fine-tuning using the above-described synthetic dataset. This fine-tuning process aimed at enhancing the model's performance and achieving superior quality when reconstructing the underlying text. The dataset, comprising 1000 samples, was partitioned into subgroups – 800 for training, 100 for validation, and 100 for testing – to facilitate this refinement. During fine-tuning, the model learned to inpaint regions specified by the mask image, and the resulting inpainted images were compared with the corresponding ground-truth. Over time, we expect the model to acquire knowledge of letter shapes through this process. Consequently, when applied to the test dataset, the model, having already internalised the letter shapes, is anticipated to provide accurate predictions for the pixel values specified in a given mask image. Further technical details and evaluation results can be found in our 2024 article.<sup>14</sup>

### 4.4 Reconstructing the undertext

Following the fine-tuning process, the inpainting model is deployed to effectively eliminate the superimposed text and analogous visual elements present in MSI images of palimpsests. Subsequently, it generates the concealed portions of the image lying beneath, which could pertain to either the undertext or the writing support. The identification of overtext and noise areas within the image is performed automatically, relying on the numerical characteristics of their pixel values. A band-pass filter is implemented by defining a minimum and maximum threshold in order to automatically select pixels belonging to the masked regions. Fig. 4 shows an example of the generated results from the proposed generative image inpainting approach.

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<sup>14</sup> Jampour, Mohammed and Gippert 2024.



**Fig. 4:** Results of generative inpainting on two MSI images of palimpsests (Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, georg. NF 13, fols 4' and 78').

## 5 Discussion and conclusions

Generative AI holds significant potential for various facets of manuscript studies, notably in reconstructing textual and visual information. In this article, we have demonstrated the capacity of the presented techniques to enhance the readability of undertext in palimpsest manuscripts. The broader application of similar methods to other restoration challenges seems to be promising and offers intriguing scientific challenges for interdisciplinary research.

The effectiveness of the proposed approach is evident in reconstructing the undertext and enhancing its readability, thereby helping to reveal more about its history. However, the quality of this performance relies partially on the quality of the MSI images of the palimpsest. This image quality may not necessarily align with what human vision considers 'better' or more visible, as computer vision systems process images based on various visual features encapsulated within the pixel values. Therefore, working with raw MSI data might improve inpainting performance and further enhance the readability of the undertext – a prospect we are eagerly pursuing.

While the model used has been trained on a typeface of the Caucasian Albanian language, the data preparation, image pre-processing, and results post-processing are generic approaches applicable to any palimpsest. Moreover, the image inpainting model can be fine-tuned for any typeface in any other language. Additionally, this approach can serve as a pre-processing step for further pro-

cessing in other computer vision systems, such as handwriting style analysis or handwritten text recognition (HTR) systems.

In many cases, the undertext is damaged and fragmented, regardless of whether it is occluded by overtext. Such cases require extensive restoration beyond inpainting only the regions covered by overtext. Such restoration can be achieved through combining approaches from computer vision (CV) and natural language processing (NLP). One possibility is to use image registration techniques for every letter, guided by an NLP model, which must be trained on the same script used in a given palimpsest.

Furthermore, the typefaces used to train the model understandably only generally approximate the visual appearance of the actual letters in the undertext. Both the handwriting style and the scale of letters can vary in each palimpsest sample. This variation can negatively affect the performance of this approach, to a degree influenced by the extent of deviation from the used typeface. More advanced training strategies could mitigate this influence, which can be explored in future work.

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# Contributors

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sest manuscripts in Aramaic and various other epigraphic materials, such as metal (amulets), earthenware bowls, and stone in Northwest Semitic languages. Apart from her philological interests, she deals with religious concepts and interchanges between late antique cults of Iranian and Mesopotamian deities.

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**Khaoula Trad** is a postdoctoral research associate in the Ajami Lab project 'African voices in the Islamic manuscripts from Mali: documenting and exploring African languages written in Arabic script (Ajami)', at the CSMC (Universität Hamburg). She was a research associate within the ERC project 'Contemporary Bioethics and the History of the Unborn' and wrote her PhD on the imagination of the unborn in the Islamic West: al-Maghrib and al-Andalus between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries from 2016 to 2021. She obtained her MA in Arabic and Hebrew cultures from the Universidad de Granada in 2014, after receiving an Erasmus Mundus Al-Idrissi scholarship. She also holds a MA and a BA in Spanish literature and linguistics from the Université de la Manouba, where she worked as a teacher of Spanish as a foreign language between 2014 and 2016.

**Emanuel Zingg** is a researcher at Sorbonne Université in Paris and *Privatdozent* in classical philology and ancient history at Universität Zürich. He is currently working on several projects on unedited classical texts in Greek and Latin which are transmitted only in palimpsests. He co-edited a new fragment of Hipparchus's *Star Catalogue* from Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai and is preparing, in collaboration with colleagues, the first editions of a treatise by Ptolemy found in Milan and of the fragments of a summary of the Platonic dialogues he identified in Veronensis XL.

# Indexes

To provide easy access to the materials dealt with in this volume, the editors have compiled two types of indexes: (1) an index of the manuscripts thematised or mentioned, arranged first by their present (and, partially, former) locations in depositories world-wide and second by their peculiar designations (such as ‘Archimedes Palimpsest’); pages marked with an asterisk contain images of the respective manuscripts. Added is an index of Greek manuscripts according to Diktyon numbers; (2) an index of works and texts that are quoted in the volume, referenced first by their authors (if applicable) and second by their genres and designations, with authors cross-referenced in brackets wherever known; individual text passages are only indicated for the Bible, the Qur’an and the Taishō canon. Added is an index according to identifiers from major reference works such as the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (CPG) or the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* (BHL). Cross-references are given wherever possible; the duplication of information under different entries is intentional.

## 1 Manuscripts

### a by hosting institutions

- Arkhaltsikhe, სამცხე-ჯავახეთის ისტორიული მუზეუმი (Samtskhe-Javakheti History Museum)
- 3483: 289
- Athens, Εθνική Βιβλιοθήκη της Ελλάδος (National Library of Greece)
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