

# Sinaiticus



The bulletin of the Saint Catherine Foundation  
London \* New York \* Geneva  
2008

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## SOUTH WING PROJECT REACHES PLANNING APPROVAL STAGE

Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities is reviewing the plans for the renovation of the South Wing and the reconfiguration and expansion of the Saint Catherine's library, situated on the second floor. The works to the second floor involve the creation of a library for manuscripts and early books, with an adjacent reading room, a library for modern books, a conservation workshop and digital photography studio. The monastery submitted an application for planning permission in September 2007, supported by the required drawings. The Egyptian authorities requested a number of changes to the plans, and the application remains under consideration. Representatives of the monastery and foundation are engaged in discussions with the Supreme Council's Technical Committee. Once planning approval is granted, bids for the construction work will be solicited and a contractor will be selected.

Substantial funds were raised towards the South Wing project in 2007. The foundation benefited from the generosity of donors and the proceeds of Christmas card sales, membership subscriptions and events like the popular Library Grand Tour.



The existing library at the Monastery of Saint Catherine. The manuscripts are remarkably well preserved, in spite of the lack of space and inadequate storage. These problems will be rectified in the expanded, reconfigured and renovated library planned for Saint Catherine's.

## CONSERVATORS SUSPEND SURVEY VISITS, MAKE PLANS TO PACK UP BOOKS

The project team suspended work in the Saint Catherine's library at the end of the October 2007 survey visit. They are now formulating plans for the safe packing and transfer of the contents of the library in anticipation of the start of construction work. The Library conservator Caroline Bendix, a specialist in the moving of libraries, will coordinate this challenging, time-consuming and costly task. The books and manuscripts will be moved to a secure location within the South Wing. They will be wrapped individually and assigned a computerised tracking number. Athanasios Velios is developing a system to label and track each of the manuscripts and books, based on supermarket bar code technology.



Printed book survey, 2007: George Boudalis editing digital images of one of the printed books on screen, after they have been transmitted wirelessly from the camera to the server.

Nicholas Pickwoad reports that the printed book survey progressed satisfactorily in 2007, with 957 of the earliest printed books assessed. Although the target number of 1500 was not reached, the team also documented an additional 70 manuscripts which they had not been shown during the manuscript survey. Prof. Pickwoad observed that the all-electronic survey tool developed for the Saint Catherine's Library project worked extremely well, and that they are now receiving enquiries from other libraries interested in using it. The survey tool is clearly visible in the photograph reproduced above.

## BOXING PROJECT RESPONDS TO DESIGN CHALLENGES

The addition of a hygroscopic material to the library walls has reduced the space available within the library for manuscript storage. The depth of the storage cupboards must be reduced and, in turn, the length of the boxes. The conservators have responded to this change with their design for a new hinged drop-handle (see illustration, page 20), which will reduce the length of the box when stored by the small amount required, some three centimetres.

A further design change has been agreed for aesthetic reasons. The substitution of a bronze finish on the metalwork at the lower level of the library for the original stainless steel led to a request for the box-fronts to match the new colour. This will be achieved by adding a copper plate with an 'antique penny' finish to the front of the box. The shelfmark of each manuscript and perhaps the Saint Catherine monogram can be etched into the copper.

Andrew Honey and Stuart Welch have completed their work on the detailed finish of the interior of the box. The boxing project is now waiting on one last measurement: the exact distance between the cupboard doors when they are open. The boxes will go into production once confirmation of this measurement is received.

The delay in manufacturing the boxes has in fact been fortunate, as the most recent design changes necessitated by the changes to the design of the library would have required any boxes already made to be retro-fitted at additional cost.

## SAINT CATHERINE'S LIBRARY CONSERVATION PROJECT TO BE ADMINISTERED BY LIGATUS

The name may be unfamiliar—Ligatus is Latin for 'bound or tied'—but the offices and staff of the new research unit at the University of the Arts London are well known to many at the foundation. Ligatus occupies the Wilson Road offices of the Saint Catherine's Library conservation project. Prof. Nicholas Pickwoad, Leader of the Library conservation project, serves as Director, with Dr Athanasios Velios as Assistant Director and Ewelina Warner as Administrator.

Launched in May 2008, the Ligatus Research Unit is now home to the Library project and the English-Greek bookbinding glossary under development at the University of the Arts. Ligatus is also the repository of an important new digital archive of bookbinding that incorporates material from the Saint Catherine's Condition Assessment surveys. At Ligatus, the study of the history of bookbinding and conservation is combined with research into modern digital data analysis and collection management tools—an approach pioneered at the monastery by the Camberwell conservation team.



The Great Hall of Lambeth Palace was the venue for the launch of the Ligatus Research Unit. Prof. Nicholas Pickwoad, his back to the camera, welcomes the guests to the reception.

Ligatus benefits from the relationships forged in the early days of the Library conservation project. The research unit has formed a partnership with the School of Advanced Study at the University of London and the Centre for the Study of the Book at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

Ligatus also collaborates with the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, the Institute of Byzantine Research in Athens and the Instituto Centrale di Patalogia del Libro in Rome—institutions closely involved in the conservation effort at Sinai.

More information about the Ligatus Research Unit is available at: [www.ligatus.org.uk](http://www.ligatus.org.uk).

### FOUNDATION SUPPORTS ROYAL ACADEMY'S 'BYZANTIUM 330-1453' EXHIBITION

The Saint Catherine Foundation has been instrumental in securing the Sinai loan for the forthcoming 'Byzantium 330-1453' exhibition, opening on 25 October 2008. The Royal Academy expressed particular thanks to Dimitris Dondos, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, for the important role he played in the negotiations and has accorded the foundation the privilege of a private view for members. The foundation will also be associated with the exhibition as a sponsor, acting on behalf of a member who wishes to remain anonymous.

Curated by Professors Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki, the exhibition is a collaboration of the Royal Academy and Benaki Museum in Athens. Some 300 items will be on view, including icons, detached wall painting, micro-mosaics, ivories, enamels and gold, silver and other metalwork. Works will be presented chronologically in nine themed rooms: The Beginning of Christian Art; Constantine the Great, Justinian the Great and their Legacy; At Court; At Home; At Church; Byzantium and the West; The Icon; Byzantium and its Neighbours; Byzantium Today. The themes contrast the royal and the everyday, the sacred and the secular, the liturgical and the domestic.

'Byzantium 330-1453' will explore the issue of iconoclasm and the return to iconophilia, as well as the

convergence of Eastern and Western art during the Italian Renaissance. The exhibition will also reveal the continuity of Christian Orthodoxy and the Byzantine style in the religious objects made today along traditional lines.

### DR ISMAIL SERAGELDIN JOINS NEW YORK BOARD

The American Associates appointed Dr Ismail Serageldin to the Board of Directors of the US foundation at their Annual General Meeting in March 2008. An Egyptian citizen with close personal and professional ties to the United States, Dr Serageldin is Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, Egypt, and a member of the Egyptian Senate.

Dr Serageldin was educated at Cairo University and at Harvard, where he was awarded MRP (1968) and PhD (1972) degrees. He joined the World Bank in 1972 and worked in a number of capacities there, serving latterly as Vice President for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development (1993-98) and Co-Chairman of the NGO-Bank Committee (1997-99).

Dr Serageldin provided the Saint Catherine Foundation with valuable support and assistance during the planning stages of the 2007 Library Grand Tour. A genial host in Alexandria, he invited the guests to a gala dinner at his beloved library and personally showed them around. Dr Serageldin speaks fondly of his years in Washington, and he is well known to the Swiss Friends of the Saint Catherine Foundation, with whom he converses in faultless 'vaudoise' French.

### Andreas Beroutsos steps down after eleven years of service

The heightened demands of work for an active professional, as well as a young family, have obliged Andreas Beroutsos to step down from the Board of Directors of the American Associates after eleven years of service. Andreas made a significant contribution to Board deliberations, and his participation will be greatly missed. He will continue to support the foundation as a member.



## OBITUARIES

### **Panayiotis K. Lambropoulos** (11 February 1929 - 20 May 2007)



The death last year of Takis Lambropoulos deprives the Saint Catherine Foundation of a good and generous friend. A lifelong resident of Athens, Takis supported the foundation from afar, but no less wholeheartedly for that. He followed the progress of the Library project closely, responding liberally to each new appeal for help.

Takis Lambropoulos was known within the Greek business community for his integrity and good judgement. A member of the Board of Directors of the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he was Vice President of Ergobank SA, Managing Director and Vice President of Ergoinvest SA and President and Managing Director of Lambropoulos Bros SA. He also served as a member of the Board of Directors of EFG Eurobank Ergasias.

With the death of Takis Lambropoulos, the world of banking and business has lost a leading member and the Saint Catherine Foundation, one of its most committed supporters.

### **Linda de Picciotto** (died 19 December 2006)



Linda de Picciotto will be remembered by her many friends at the Saint Catherine Foundation for the support she gave to foundation initiatives and, above all, for her lively

presence at foundation events in Switzerland, London and New York.

A passionate philanthropist, Linda dedicated her considerable talents and energies to a number of causes. She was involved with the high-level co-ordination of Swiss charities like Foyer Handicap, and she travelled to South America and Africa for World Links, personally overseeing the village projects she supported there. Her charity work aside, Linda was a woman of broad culture and many interests. She promoted the advancement of science and the arts through her engagement with the Institute for Applied Biosciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the Israel Museum, Geneva Opera House and Royal Opera House in London.

Linda bravely battled the cancer that led to her death. She appeared, elegant and animated as ever, at one last Saint Catherine's event: the 'Evening in the Library' gala at the British Library in June 2006. The photograph of her reproduced here was taken at the dinner.

### **Pia Zombanakis** (died 28 October 2007)



*The Saint Catherine Foundation regrets the passing of Pia Zombankis, founding member and loyal supporter. Michael Hamilton delivered the eulogy at her funeral service, reprinted in a slightly shortened form here.*

I first met Pia in the late sixties when she and Minos had come to London from Rome for Minos to establish Manufacturers Hanover Limited. Working for Minos and understanding the way he worked, I soon realized how great a support Pia was to the development of Minos's career. By his side, establishing a loving home, raising their two sons who have grown up to be such fine men, graciously entertaining business clients and associates and being a sounding board to him, Pia was an essential helpmate. Minos always maintained that he was 'just a peasant boy from Crete who wanted nothing more than to tend his olive groves' and so, it was Pia who provided the natural dignity that made them so welcome and at ease when meeting world leaders, heads of state and the chairmen of the major international financial institutions.

Although publicly perhaps in Minos's shadow in the early days in London, Pia was always very much her own woman. She was a well read, intelligent woman with a strong character who actively pursued her interest in music, theatre, art and literature. History was of great importance to her, particularly medieval and Russian history.

I don't think I have known anyone who felt so passionately about so many things, particularly her beloved Greece, the Orthodox Church and Byzantium. Compassion was another abiding characteristic of Pia. She had great compassion, in particular for the underprivileged. The plight of the street children of Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Empire was very close to her heart, and she was actively involved in helping them.

As time passed and the boys grew into young men going off to university and finally leaving home, Pia began to develop her own interests and to find those fields in the wider community where she could herself make a contribution. Her interest in the Hellenic community, Russian charities and Byzantium are examples of this, as was her great love of Russia and things Russian. She became an intrepid traveller, and my wife recalls their various trips, including through the depths of the Soviet Union, looking at outstanding icons. Pia, as you might expect, always managed to emerge in the morning beautifully turned out, even though the facilities were basic at best.

She was a great travelling companion who had a wonderful sense of humour and a most infectious laugh. I recall once, when travelling with Minos and Pia in Japan, I asked them how they first met. Minos replied that, while in America, a mutual friend had arranged for them to meet for a date. Pia took up the story to say that not only was she thrilled to be with such a dashing young man from Crete but also how moved she was that he had sent her a beautiful single rose. Laughingly, she went on to say that it was only some time later when she found out that it wasn't Minos who sent the rose but the friend, as he wanted their relationship to get off to a good start.

Throughout her life Pia had a strong Christian belief with a deep sense of spirituality which helped her face the vicissitudes of life. Moral correctness ran through her being and if Pia thought that something was immoral or false she certainly never hesitated to make her views known. Her family, her children and in recent years her adored grandchildren provided the focus which gave her the equilibrium for her daily life.

Three years ago, while lying on the beach in Greece, an extraordinary thing happened. The tide was coming in and a couple of tourists from Scotland noticed that Pia was not moving. They went to rouse her and found her unconscious. Dr Fiona Douglas, Chaplin to the University of Dundee, was the one who applied artificial respiration and, with her husband, arranged for Pia to be taken to hospital. The emergency doctor in the ambulance diagnosed that Pia's heart had stopped, and yet she recovered after a few days. Pia on several occasions maintained that she had died and passed through to the other side before coming

back to life. She wondered why she had been brought back; was there a purpose? Was it to see Costi's children, who at that time had not yet been born? We shall never know, but it gave her three more years of pleasure in being with her family and friends, and it gave her family and friends three more happy years of being with Pia.

Her experience on the other side, she said, was one of great serenity and so, having experienced it, she had no anxiety or fear of death. Her fear was of the pain and loss of dignity that would come from a debilitating illness. How fitting that Pia should pass on to the next world peacefully in her bed, reading a book.

*Pia Zombankis was born in Gytheion, Greece. She is survived by her husband Minos Zombanakis, and by her sons Andreas and Costi.*

### IN MEMORY OF TERPSICHORI DIMITRIADIS

The American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation acknowledges the gift of Andre C Dimitriadis of Malibu, California, who has made a generous donation in memory of his mother, Terpsichori Dimitriadis (died 1967).

Terpsichori, as she was known, was born near Alexandroupolis in 1894. She was educated in Constantinople, where she studied accounting, and she later worked as an accountant in the local water company. Terpsichori married Constantinos Dimitriadis and went to live with her husband in Kadikoy, the ancient Chalcedon.

Terpsichori had a life-long devotion to St Catherine, whom she considered her protector saint. For many years, she dreamed of visiting the Monastery of Saint Catherine. She eventually planned a trip to Sinai, only to become too ill to make the journey.

Andre Dimitriadis shares his mother's love of Saint Catherine's, and through his gift pays tribute to her memory. He recalls her 'sacrifices and efforts' on his behalf, her 'charity and love for all'. 'In helping the monastery', he writes, 'I know I am fulfilling one of her great wishes, and this makes me feel her presence'.

**AASCF TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
**MORGAN LIBRARY, NEW YORK CITY**  
**29 MARCH 2007**



The American Associates celebrated their tenth anniversary at the Morgan Library in New York. The evening began with a cocktail reception in Pierpont Morgan's belle époque private library and continued with a dinner for 160 in the new Renzo Piano annex, where displays highlighting the conservation of the Saint Catherine's library were on view.

The guests were welcomed by Costas Kondylis, who chaired the event. A member of the AASCF Board of Directors, Mr Kondylis was joined by fellow board members and co-chairs Robert Shaw and Peter Vlachos, AASCF Vice-President. Following remarks by HRH Crown Princess Katherine of Yugoslavia, AASCF President, and Dimitris Dondos, Chairman of the London foundation, Dr Helen Evans, Curator of the Department of Mediaeval Art at the Metropolitan Museum and member of the US board, introduced the keynote speaker. Prof. Nicholas Pickwoad, leader of the library project, summed up a decade of achievement in his talk, 'Where We Are, How We Got There and Where We Go Next'.

*Top*

The former US Ambassador to Greece Thomas Niles (left) with members of the Board of Directors: Mary Jaharis, The Very Rev Father John and Vaggelis Chronis.

*Centre*

Andrew Honey of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, with HE Archbishop Demetrios of America and guests.

*Bottom*

HE Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, Patron of the American Associates, brings the evening to a close with words conveying his affection for the monastery and respect for the foundation.



RECEPTION AND PRIVATE VIEW  
 'SACRED: DISCOVER WHAT WE SHARE'  
 BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON, 3 MAY 2007



Members enjoyed privileged access to this exhibition of important Jewish, Christian and Muslim holy books, the most popular ever mounted by the British Library. Sir Colin Lucas, Chairman of the British Library's Board of Trustees, welcomed the guests to the reception, and Graham Shaw of the British Library, Lead Curator of 'Sacred' and Head of Asia, Pacific and African Collections, introduced the exhibition.

Mr Shaw's talk greatly aided our understanding of the sacred texts of the three traditions, with their particular calligraphy, some illuminated with gold ink. Among the exhibits were manuscripts originally from the Monastery of Saint Catherine, including the famous Codex Sinaiticus. Both convivial and instructive, the evening provided an overview of works from many continents, produced over centuries.



*Top*  
 The guests listen attentively to Graham Shaw's interesting talk.

*Centre*  
 Prof. Oriana Baddeley, Dr Eugenie Richardson and Prof. John Barron at the private view.

*Bottom*  
 Graham Shaw, the Lead Curator of 'Sacred', introduces the exhibition.

## LIBRARY GRAND TOUR 1 - 10 OCTOBER 2007

This fundraising cruise aboard the *M/V Turama* featured visits to Alexandria and Sinai. Highlights included dinner in the Reading Room of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and a private visit to the Library, the Suez Canal crossing and stay at the monastery as privileged guests of the Fathers. Substantial funds were raised towards the Library Conservation project, thanks to the participation of new and longstanding supporters and sponsors. The owners of *M/V Turama* very generously covered the costs of the cruise in full, including local transportation and other arrangements. PrivatAir donated the Sharm el-Sheikh-Athens flight. PrivatSea offered lunch at the Greek Club in Alexandria and gifts for the participants. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina hosted the gala dinner in the Reading Room and the private tour of the Library, as well as supplying guides and a photographer in Alexandria. The Suez Canal Authority granted a substantial rebate on the cost of the Suez Canal crossing. The Monastery of Saint Catherine contributed the accommodation and arrangements in Sinai, including dinner in the old refectory and other meals. Professors John Barron and Nicholas Pickwoad provided expert commentary. They also waived lecture fees, as did Professor Caroline Barron and Engineer Manadkhli of the Suez Canal Authority.



Pompey's pillar is one of Alexandria's famous sights. Shown here are John Bilimatsis (left), Gillian Dondos, Heather Ravenberg, Carmen Constantacopoulou, James Screech, Béatrice Power, Véronique Walter, Rory MacLeod, Marie-Christine Angelopoulou, Diana MacLeod, Jan Sanz, Nicolas Tsavlis, Cathy Kinley, George Marcus, Marianthi Tsavlis and Dimitris Dondos.

### 1 October

A congenial and cosmopolitan group gathered aboard the *M/V Turama*, including new friends and old from across Europe and the Americas. Even the best-laid plans can go awry, and so it was with the Library Grand Tour: adverse weather conditions in the form of strong winds and high seas delayed the ship's departure by a day and forced a change of plans.

### 2 October

The visit to Ephesus and the Library of Celsus was regrettably abandoned, the ship remained in port and the group set out for Cape Sounion and the Temple of Poseidon, guided by the resourceful Professor Barron. The Mexicans quickly bonded with the New Yorkers; the Swiss with the Greeks, the English with the Germans and so on. Within 24 hours the winds had abated and the programme was resumed—happily without further incident.





*Above*

Dinner at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was a highlight of the visit to Alexandria. The Library Grand Tour group and members of the Bibliotheca, monastery and foundation assemble at the entrance to the Reading Room.

*Below*

Marianthi and Nicolas Tsavlis (centre foreground) enter the ruins of Alexandria's old acropolis, followed by Judy and George Marcus and Heather Ravenberg.

**3 October**

We enjoyed a relaxed day at sea and the first of a series of lectures by Professors Barron and Pickwood on the Library Grand Tour theme. The spa, gym and cinema beckoned some, while others spent time on deck in the sea air and sunshine. A buffet dinner brought the evening to a pleasant close, followed by after-dinner drinks and conversation in the Salon for the night owls.

**4 October**

Our arrival in Alexandria coincided with Ramadan, a busy time here. We drove through streets choked with cars and teeming with people. The sights we visited were as varied as the city itself: the catacombs and Cavafy's house, Pompey's pillar and the old royal yacht, still seaworthy after almost 150 years. Dinner at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina did not disappoint, and we were received with great warmth by Dr Serageldin.

**5 October**

The morning flew by as we toured the library and museums that make up the Bibliotheca Alexandrina complex. From modern Alexandria's most important cultural institution we made our way to a landmark of the old Alexandria, the Greek Yacht Club. We had lunch on the terrace and paid homage to the Greeks of Alexandria, the dominant community here for so many years.

**6 October**

The keen museum-goers amongst us set off before nine in the morning to visit the new National Museum of Alexandria, with artefacts from every era of the city's past on display. By noon, the Turama was on its way again, heading for Port Said and the exciting prospect of the trip through the Suez Canal the following day.

**7 October**

Our progress from Port Said to Suez proved slower than anticipated, but no less interesting for that. The working day is shorter during Ramadan, we discovered. After lunch we went out on deck and watched the flat, sandy terrain of the canal zone slip past. Later in the day we busied ourselves with preparations for the stay in Sinai.

**8 October**

Archbishop Damianos and Father John greeted us in El Tur and escorted us to Saint Catherine's. We were shown to our rooms in the Guest House and treated to a picnic lunch. After Vespers, the Sacristy Museum was opened just for us, and we felt privileged to join the Archbishop for dinner in the Old Refectory. Some of us attempted to sleep unnaturally early, hoping to rest before heading up Mount Sinai at 2 o'clock in the morning. Others arranged a very early wake-up call, so as not to miss the start of the Liturgy two and a half hours later.

**9 October**

We had a very busy morning meeting the conservators at work in the library and viewing the apse mosaics undergoing conservation treatment from a platform under the dome. After lunch, Father Justin and Nicholas Pickwood invited us to inspect selected manuscripts and early printed books which had been laid out in the library especially for us. We returned to the *Turama* for a celebratory dinner on board, invigorated by a day—and a trip—like no other.

**10 October**

We returned to Athens today, most of us by air on the special PrivatAir flight from Sharm el-Sheikh. An indomitable few made the return journey by sea, enjoying the comforts of the *Turama* for a while longer.



*Top*  
Smiles in Suez: pictured on deck are Jorge Pereira (left), Nadine Kalachnikoff, Claudine Pereira, Dino Goulandris, Jan Sanz, Lars Bolander and Véronique Walter.

*Bottom left*  
Angelo Tsakopoulos, Carmen Constantacopoulou and a Bedouin guide begin the trek down Mount Sinai. They are descending the stony path that leads from the summit.

*Bottom right*  
John Jackson, Peter Vlachos and Zoe Moshovitis enjoy their visit to the library at Saint Catherine's.





## ST CATHERINE'S DAY 25 NOVEMBER 2007

On the Feast Day of St Catherine, Sunday 25 November, the choir of London's Cathedral of St Sophia sang hymns of St Catherine during the matins service. His Grace Bishop Theodoritos of Nazianzos, Dean of the Greek Cathedral, welcomed friends of the Saint Catherine Foundation to the service and for coffee afterwards in the crypt.

Later in the day, members of the foundation joined a special National Gallery tour to view some of the paintings of St Catherine of Alexandria in the collection. The visit was led by Dana Brenan and Keith Cavers, Information Officers of the National Gallery, who share a common fascination with St Catherine. Dana and Keith presented seven paintings of St Catherine, dating from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The visit culminated with the well known Raphael St Catherine of 1507, which portrays the saint in an extraordinarily modern fashion for the time.

## LES ACTIVITÉS DE L'ASSOCIATION SUISSE EN 2007

**Le 26 avril:** la tenue de l'assemblée générale a été suivie d'une conférence d'Yves Christe, professeur honoraire de l'Université de Genève, historien de l'art du monde paléochrétien et du Moyen Age sur «Les peintures murales de la crypte Sainte-Catherine en la cathédrale Notre-Dame de Montmorillon». Un dîner a ensuite pris place avec la présence du conférencier.

**Le 15 mai:** un apéritif au Four Seasons Hôtel des Bergues, à Genève, a été offert par Christie's, suivi d'un dîner au cours duquel Monsieur Konstantinos Staikos, auteur d'une série de livres sur l'histoire des Bibliothèques en Occident (trois sont déjà parus sur les cinq prévus), a présenté son dernier ouvrage sur les Bibliothèques Byzantines de Constantin le Grand au Cardinal Bessarion.

**Le 31 octobre:** Le professeur Nicholas Pickwoad et son équipe ont présenté, dans le cadre d'une soirée conviviale au prestigieux Cercle de la Terrasse à Genève, les résultats de leurs recherches sur la conservation des manuscrits du monastère Sainte-Catherine ainsi que l'organisation de la nouvelle bibliothèque. Les explications se sont faites autour d'une exposition comportant panneaux, photographies des documents et modèles déjà réalisés.

**Le 4 décembre:** Une visite guidée par Madame Valentina Calzolari, professeur d'arménologie à l'Université de Genève a été organisée pour l'exposition «Illuminations d'Arménie» à la Fondation Martin Bodmer, qui réunissait des manuscrits exceptionnels prêtés par le Maténadaran de Erevan. Un dîner a ensuite pris place au café de l'Auberge du Lion d'Or à Cognoy en présence de Monsieur Régis Labourdette, professeur à l'Institut des carrières artistiques (ICART) à Paris et chargé de cours à l'Université de Paris I, auteur des photographies originales des églises arméniennes du VIIe siècle, qui a développé le thème «D'un infini à l'autre».

Signalons enfin, en mai, l'acquisition précieuse à titre privé d'un ensemble de plus de 300 photographies en plaques sous verre du voyage au Sinaï de Boissonnas, qui étaient la propriété de M. Gad Borel, responsable de la conservation des Archives Boissonnas.



Monsieur Régis Labourdette, professeur à l'Institut des carrières artistiques (ICART) à Paris et Madame Bonny Vassiltchikov lors de la visite guidée de l'exposition «Illuminations d'Arménie» à la Fondation Martin Bodmer.



## THE DISCOVERY OF ORIGINAL BOOKBINDING FINISHING TOOLS AT THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CATHERINE

NIKOLAS SARRIS



The tools discovered at Saint Catherine's include rolls, corner-pieces, centre-pieces, small stamps, fillets and creasers.

In July 2007, as part of the research for my doctoral thesis<sup>1</sup>, I examined a number of bindings in the library at Saint Catherine's. I also had the good fortune to participate in a discovery which has proved unique of its kind and which has added greatly to our understanding of the craft of bookbinding, both in Greek monastic communities and elsewhere. With the kind assistance of Father Daniel and Father Porphyrios, the previous and current treasure-keepers of the monastery, I was able to identify 37 decorative finishing tools discovered in a storeroom at the monastery. This exceptional find grew out of discussions with Father Daniel and Father Porphyrios during several afternoons of my visit. Speculating about the existence of finishing tools at Saint Catherine's aroused the fathers'



The name of Archbishop Laurentios is inscribed inside the lid of the tool-box

curiosity and led to an extensive search of the monastery's many storerooms. Eventually, we came across a dusty wooden box of tools, which Father Porphyrios handed to me for closer inspection. The oval box was inscribed inside the lid with the name of Laurentios, archbishop of Saint Catherine's from 1592 to 1617. It contained old and disused files, gouges, chisels and needles, together with the finishing tools we had been seeking. The box and its contents had been forgotten over time, probably over a period of centuries.

Two more finishing tools were identified in a box of ink stamps I was shown from the treasury museum. A third finishing tool was uncovered a few weeks later by Father Daniel, who was kind enough to share his discovery with me, bringing the total number of finishing tools found at Saint Catherine's to 40. They comprise 13 rolls, four corner-pieces, two centre-pieces, 17 small hand tools, two fillets and two creasers. The tools were cast and/or engraved on iron, low carbon steel or copper alloy. It was with a growing sense of excitement that I realised the majority of the motifs engraved on them were already familiar to me from the impressions on numerous bindings in the library.



A small stamp tool and its impressions on the mid-18th century binding of Greek MS 1338.

Judging from the bindings themselves, the tools can be assigned an approximate date. A group of seven tools, the earliest in the collection, can safely be dated to the end of the fifteenth or the very beginning of the sixteenth century, while the remainder date mainly from the mid-eighteenth century. The finishing tools were documented during my stay at the monastery, when I had the opportunity to record them with smoke and ink proofs on paper and digital photographs.

This extraordinary discovery owes its importance to the negligible number of pre-industrial finishing tools that

survive worldwide. Old tools were considered of little value: they were often recycled and then discarded, or melted down for their metal content. Moreover, with the exception of a handful of isolated examples, finishing tools linked to specific bindings are virtually unknown. The discovery of such a substantial collection of finishing tools is truly unprecedented. Few monastic libraries can claim a continuous and centuries-long relationship with an attached workshop that produced and repaired bindings for its shelves. Evidence of bookbinding activity (other than the books themselves) and archival information is scant or non-existent. Our knowledge of the organisation of bookbinding workshops in Greek monastic communities is scantier still, owing to the lack of preserved workshops, equipment and, perhaps most important of all, decorative finishing tools. These last are the most straightforward and traditional means by which a workshop can be linked to the bindings it has produced.

The finishing tools discovered at Saint Catherine's should prove particularly useful, not only for this research project but for others in the future. They contain valuable information about their makers and the processes involved in their fabrication. Such information could not have been acquired by any means other than the observation of the tools themselves. The tools have been linked to the bindings they decorated, establishing the provenance of

a number of bindings in the library. This, together with evidence provided by ownership inscriptions or binder's, scribal or other notes, supports the conclusion that, whether or not these tools were made at the monastery, the bindings they decorated were in most cases made at Saint Catherine's, or in close proximity to it.

The secret lives of many of the manuscripts have been revealed as a result of this discovery. Their Sinaitic origin has been established and their date confirmed. In addition to the revelations associated with particular manuscripts, the discovery of finishing tools at Saint Catherine's represents an important contribution to the study of books and bookmaking traditions as a whole.

1. 'Classification of Finishing Tools in Byzantine-Greek Bookbinding: Establishing Links for Manuscripts from the Library of the St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt', under the supervision of Prof. Nicholas Pickwoad, due for submission to Camberwell College of Art - University of the Arts London.

*Nikolas Sarris is a book conservator and a member of the Saint Catherine's Library conservation project team since 2001. He is the supervisor of the book conservation workshop at the Monastery of St John the Theologian in Patmos, Greece. He is completing a PhD in bookbinding studies at Camberwell College of Art - University of the Arts London. His thesis is on the decorated bookbindings at the library of Saint Catherine's Monastery.*



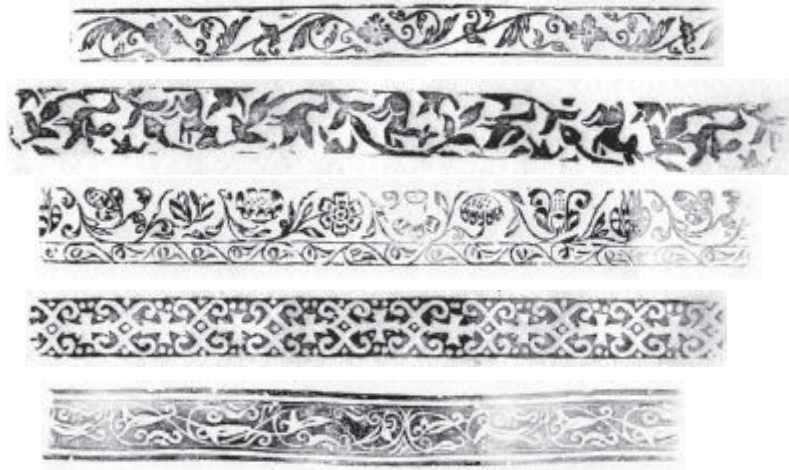
This group of decorative small metal stamps includes one with a motif of Moses and the Burning Bush.



The rolls pictured here are hand-engraved on copper alloy wheels. Wooden handles would once have been attached to the tapered ends of the metal shanks, but only a few of these handles have survived.



Smoke and ink proofs of the small stamps pictured on the left (in sequence from left to right, not actual size).



Smoke proofs from the rolls pictured on the left (in sequence from left to right, not actual size).



## THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CATHERINE AT MOUNT SINAI AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES OF THE CALIPHATE<sup>1</sup>

BRANDIE RATLIFF

With its well-known imperial foundations and relative isolation at the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula, the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai has long been recognized as a bastion of Byzantine orthodoxy, a Byzantine stronghold in a region lost first to the Persians in 618-619 CE and then to the Muslim Arab armies between 640-642 CE. Despite its inconvenient siting in a shifting political landscape, the monastery's association with the events of the Book of Exodus and later with the body of St. Catherine of Alexandria drew pilgrims from across the former Roman world. The international character of its visitors and the objects they presented to the monastery have long drawn the interest of scholars, including art historians exploring interactions between the artistic traditions of East and West during the Crusades. Other objects in the monastery's collections, such as the late fourteenth-early fifteenth-century Greek Lectionary (Gr. 233) with a later Arabic inscription stating that the book was donated to the monastery by Ibn Yūnūs, an Arab Christian,<sup>2</sup> or the Icon with the Virgin, Moses, and Patriarch Euthymios II



Saint Luke Painting the Virgin from a late 14th-early 15th century Greek Lectionary (Gr. 233, fol. 87v). A note in Arabic states that the book was given to the monastery by Ibn Yūnūs.

Euthymios II of Jerusalem, who was buried at the monastery,<sup>3</sup> suggest another set of interactions—the monastic community at Sinai's relations with the Christian communities of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and neighboring



Icon with the Virgin, Moses, and Patriarch Euthymios II of Jerusalem, by the Painter Peter, ca. 1223.

regions also living under Islamic hegemony. While the objects that provide evidence of this relationship have been the subject of scholarly inquiry, they have not been discussed with an eye towards understanding the extent of the monastery's participation in the Christian world of the caliphate.<sup>4</sup> This article will briefly consider a number of documents and manuscripts that taken together begin to shape an outline of Sinai's place in this world.

Before turning to this material, it is worth recalling that Mt. Sinai, which belonged to Palaestina Tertia during the Byzantine period, has always been associated with the Holy Land.<sup>5</sup> The early monastic settlements of the Sinai peninsula were part of the larger monastic movement in Egypt and Palestine.<sup>6</sup> Sinai's connection to these communities is suggested by the monastery's choice of the liturgical typikon of Mar Saba, the Palestinian monastery founded by St. Sabas in the fifth century, as the model for its own typikon.<sup>7</sup> Mt. Sinai features prominently in early accounts of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, such as those of late fourth-century pilgrim Egeria and the sixth-century Piacenza pilgrim.<sup>8</sup> Although many Christians fled the area after the conquests of the Holy Land and Egypt in the seventh century, Christians did continue to inhabit these areas, and the monks of Sinai were part of this Christian community.

An important historical document preserved at St. Catherine's speaks to the precarious situation of the Christian communities living under Islamic rule. This document, known as the Achtiname or the Holy Testament, records the privileges bestowed on the monastery by the Prophet Muhammad; the concessions granted include exemption from military service and taxation, assistance from Muslims, and protection for the monastery and pilgrimage routes leading to it. The original, written in Arabic and sealed with an imprint representing Muhammad's hand, was sent to the palace of the Sultan Salim I in Istanbul when Ottoman troops occupied Sinai in 1517



and replaced with a copy.<sup>9</sup> Documents issued by the Islamic government in Cairo, which will be discussed at greater length below, reference the tradition of Islamic beneficence towards the monastery, and during the Ottoman period, the Pasha of Egypt renewed these protections yearly.<sup>10</sup>



Copy of the document outlining the privileges granted to the monastery by the Prophet Muhammad.

The document bears close resemblance to a number of other documents found in religious communities in the Near East. These documents are remarkably similar to the letter of Muhammad addressed to the Christians of Najrān and discovered in 878 in a monastery in Iraq; the letter is preserved in the *Chronicle of Séert*.<sup>11</sup> The letter grants Christian communities in Islamic lands protection against acts of violence, protection for Christian cult sites, and exemption from taxes.

As mentioned earlier, the documents in the monastery's large collection of Fātimid, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk petitions and decrees exchanged between the Sinai monks and the government in Cairo refer to the traditional protections and exemptions extended to the monastery.<sup>12</sup> These legal documents also provide evidence of the monastery's trouble with provincial governors and Bedouin tribes; general statements about who was traveling to the monastery and its properties; and concrete statements regarding the acquisition of property. The petitions were submitted in Arabic by an agent representing the monastery. If the petition was deemed legitimate, a decree was issued by the government in Cairo; it was then registered in Cairo and in the appropriate provincial offices before being sent to the monastery for its records.

All of the preserved documents mention the monastery receiving, at Mt. Sinai and at its properties, pilgrims, who in the Mamlūk period are identified as Muslims traveling to and from Mecca, coreligionists, and Christians from neighboring areas; Christians from the Egyptian provinces are specifically noted. From an Ayyūbid petition dated 1212/1213 prepared for Bishop Symeon and submitted to al-Kāmil, we learn that included among the monastery's properties around al-Tūr and Fārān was a vineyard with a wall and 50 palms given to them by a Christian called Mālik and palms belonging to the property which came into the monastery's possession from a man called Abu 'Urayya.<sup>13</sup> A second petition, this time a Mamlūk petition addressed to Baybars in 1261 by Salāma al-Shawbakī, records that Salāma, a Christian who owned property with palm trees in al-Tūr, was suffering at the hands of Bedouins who were plundering his palms, which he used to support his family and visitors. While it is not clear whether Salāma was an agent of the monastery or if he was simply a devout Christian, it is clear that his property was later bequeathed to the monastery. His petition and its decree are housed in the monastery's archive with an affixed label that reads: "For Salāma al-Shawbakī, a decree exempting his palm trees—with which he has endowed the monastery—from impositions."<sup>14</sup>

While the petitions and decrees furnish evidence of who was visiting the monastery—pilgrims, other monks, and local Christians—and how the monastery acquired some of its property—from local Arab Christians—colophons preserved in two manuscripts (Vaticanus Arabicus 71 and Strasbourg Orientalis 4226) no longer in the monastery's collections give us some insight into Sinai's connection to the monasteries of Palestine.<sup>15</sup> The relevant portion of the colophon from Vaticanus Arabicus 71 reads: "The poor sinner, Anthony David the son of Sulayman of Baghdad, copied this volume in the laura of the holy Mar Saba. The monk Abba Isaac asked him to copy it for the monastery of the hallowed Mt. Sinai."<sup>16</sup> Strasbourg Orientalis 4226 reads: "Abba Anthony of Baghdad, David the son of Sīnā [sic], copied this volume in the laura of the holy Mar Saba. Abba Isaac asked him to write it for Mount Sinai."<sup>17</sup> Both manuscripts were copied in the same year—885/886—at the request of the monk Isaac of Mar Saba for the monastery at Mt. Sinai by Anthony of Baghdad. Each manuscript contains a different selection of texts, translated from Greek into Arabic, which are ascetical in character, such as monastic saints' lives and homilies.<sup>18</sup> Kate Leeming has argued on the basis of paleographic evidence that a third manuscript recently discovered at Mt. Sinai—Sinai Arabic NF35, which contains sixteen homilies and a set of twelve hymns—should be included among the books copied for Abba Isaac by Anthony David.<sup>19</sup>

The manuscripts containing the colophons were copied under Abbasid rule, which marked a period of relative isolation for the Christian communities of the Islamic world, who were more concerned with the vicissitudes of life in the caliphate than with events in the Byzantine world.



Sinai Arabic NF 35.

© Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai

This isolation lasted until the second half of the 10th century when Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) and John I Tzimiskes (969-976) made headway against the Islamic army in Syria.<sup>20</sup> It was during the first century of Abbasid rule that the Christian community, particularly Palestinian monastic communities, began translating Christian texts into Arabic. These early manuscripts are of two types: church books—scriptures, patristic texts, etc.—generally translated from Greek, used to conduct internal religious affairs and in the pastoral care of local Christian communities, and a handful of original compositions, most of which are apologetical in content.<sup>21</sup> The library at Sinai has one of the largest collections of Christian Arabic texts. A sizable number of these manuscripts have indications, though not as specific as the two already discussed, of their origin: Palestine, Syria, and Egypt.<sup>22</sup> Sinai's collection of Christian Arabic manuscripts along with the colophons in the Vatican and Strasbourg manuscripts, which explicitly state that the books were copied for the monastery, suggest that the monks at Sinai were in communication with local Christian communities and that they were actively collecting texts, which would likely have been used in the ministerial care of Arabic-speaking Christians, if not for the monastery's own internal use.

Two manuscripts at Mt. Sinai preserve the martyrdom account of 'Abd al-Masīh an-Nağrānī al-Ghassānī, originally composed in Arabic and preserved in its earliest form in Sinai Arabic Ms 542; the account and the manuscript are dated to the 9th century.<sup>23</sup> The account is remarkably mundane. A Christian, 'Abd al-Masīh, born Rabī' ibn Qays ibn Yazīd al-Ghassānī in Najrān, decided at the age of twenty to travel to Jerusalem to pray at the holy places. At the start of his journey, he fell in with a group of Muslims from Najrān who were setting out on a raiding expedition. He remained with the group for thirteen years before entering a church in Baalbek, where he met a priest and reaffirmed his Christian faith. Finally making his long-delayed journey to Jerusalem, he visited the Patriarch John, who sent him to Mar Saba to become a monk. After five years, 'Abd al-Masīh left Mar Saba to make a tour of other Palestinian monasteries; he ended his journey at Mt. Sinai.

He first assisted the monks with the provincial authorities in Aila, who collected taxes due from the monastery and from the Christians in neighboring towns, and then became the monastery's steward, an office he held for five years. Taken by a desire to reveal his Christianity to the Muslim authorities, 'Abd al-Masīh set off with a group of monks for Ramlah, the capital city of Palestine. Upon his arrival, he threw a note describing his conversion into the mosque and then awaited his fate in the lower church of St. Cyriacus. When the authorities arrived, 'Abd al-Masīh was hidden from their view by God. His fellow monks convinced him to leave the city, and after a trip to Edessa, he returned to Mt. Sinai and was elected the monastery's superior. After seven years, difficulties arose with the monastery's taxes. While traveling with a group of monks to Ramlah to resolve the issue, 'Abd al-Masīh met Muslims returning from Mecca. One of them recognized him from his raiding days. The monks were arrested, and 'Abd al-Masīh was taken to Ramlah and denounced as a convert to Christianity. He refused to give up his faith and was beheaded. His body was buried in a ruined well in Bali'ah, a suburb of Ramlah. After nine months, the monks retrieved his skeleton and his remains were divided between the church of St. Cyriacus in Ramlah and Sinai.<sup>24</sup>

While the martyrdom account, like all hagiography, must be treated with a certain amount of caution, its straightforward narrative suggests that at least the most basic facts of the text can be taken at face value. What is of interest for our discussion is the fact that an Arab Christian, who was a Muslim convert and then a monk at Mar Saba, made his way to Mt. Sinai and eventually became its superior. 'Abd al-Masīh's vita is not known in Greek and his feast day does not appear in Greek synaxaria, but he is celebrated in later Melkite synaxaria in Arabic and Syriac, which provides further evidence of Sinai's place in the Christian communities of the Islamic world. The March 9th entry of one Melkite synaxarion reads: "On it is the commemoration of 'Abd al-Masīh, who was the superior of Mt. Sinai who was martyred in the city of ar-Ramlah."<sup>25</sup>

The information presented here gives us a very general picture of St. Catherine's place in the Christian communities of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and neighboring regions, but even this most rudimentary sketch makes it clear that the monastery was visited by local Christians and monks, that it ministered to local Christians, that it was in communication with other Christian communities, particularly the monasteries of Palestine, and that the surrounding Christian communities viewed the monastery as related to their communities. Much more work remains to be done, but we can be sure that it will only deepen our appreciation of the rich complexity of the monastery's history.

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Notes

1. This paper was first presented at The First Kallinikeion Conference of New York Byzantinists, The Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, April 21, 2007; an extended version of the article will appear in the *Journal of Modern Hellenism*.
2. The note is found on folio 1r. Helen C. Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 344, cat. no. 203 [with bibliography].
3. Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins, *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 258-261, cat. no. 53 [with bibliography].
4. The monastery's important collection of early Arabic manuscripts in particular has been the subject of numerous studies. Joshua Blau treats the manuscripts in his discussion of the development of Christian Arabic: Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic, Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum orientalium, v. 267- Subsidia, t. 27 (Louvain, Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1966). Sidney Griffith has considered the manuscripts within the context of the Melkite community of Palestine; see his collection of articles in Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (London: Variorum, 1992).
5. Uzi Dahari, *Monastic Settlements in South Sinai in the Byzantine Period. The Archaeological Remains*, Israel Antiquities Authority, No. 9 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2000), 3. See also Mika Levy-Rubin, "The Reorganization of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem During the Early Muslim Period," *ARAM* 15 (2003): 197-226.
6. For a discussion of this movement and the settling of the area around Mt. Sinai, see Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert A City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995, first published Basil Blackwell and Mott, Ltd, 1966); Uzi Dahari, *Monastic Settlements in South Sinai in the Byzantine Period. The Archaeological Remains*, Israel Antiquities Authority, No. 9 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2000).
7. Nancy C. Ševčenko, "The liturgical *typikon* of Symeon of Sinai," in *Metaphrastes, or, Gained in translation: Essays and translations in honour of Robert H. Jordan*, ed. Margaret Mullet, Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 9 (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2004): 274.
8. For Egeria's account, see John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels. Newly Translated with supporting documents and notes*, 3rd edition (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1999). The text of the Piacenza Pilgrim is found in John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 2002), 129-151.
9. On the Achniname, see Jean-Michel Mouton, "Les musulmans à Sainte-Catherine au Moyen Âge" in *Le Sinai durant l'antiquité et le moyen âge. 4000 ans d'histoire pour un désert* (Paris: Editions Errance, 1998): 177-182; and Joseph J. Hobbs, *Mount Sinai* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 158-161. There are a number of traditions explaining its origin, many of which are recorded in the travel accounts of European visitors to the monastery. See for example, Greffin Affagart, *Relation de Terre Sainte*, ed. J. Chavanon (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1902); Jean de Thévenot, *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant* (Paris, L. Billaine, 1665); and Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East, and some other countries* (London: printed for the author, 1743-45). Since the nineteenth century, scholars have questioned aspects of the document, particularly the list of witnesses; see Mouton, 177.
10. Hobbs, 160.
11. Mouton, 177. For the text of the Chronicle of Séert, see Addā Scher and Robert Griveau, eds., "Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert): Seconde Partie (II)," *Patrologia Orientalis* 13.4 (1919): 601-610; see also, Ephrem-Isa Yousif, *Les chroniqueurs syriaques* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2002), 279-344. Aspects of this letter have also been questioned; it seems to have been produced by viziers of the Abbasid period, who were of Nestorian origin and wanted protection for their community. On the circumstances surrounding the creation of the document, see Scher and Griveau, 602, note 1; and Louis Massignon, "La politique islamo-chrétienne des scribes nestoriens de Deir Qunna à la cour de Bagdad au IXe siècle de notre ère," in *Opera Minora* (Beirut, 1963): vol. 1, 250-257.
12. On these documents, see S. M. Stern, "A Fatimid Decree of the Year 524/1130," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 23.3 (1960): 439-455; S. M. Stern, *Fatimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fatimid Chancery* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964); S. M. Stern, "Petitions from the Ayyūbid Period," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 27.1 (1964): 1-32; S. M. Stern, "Petitions from the Mamlūk Period (Notes on the Mamlūk Documents from Sinai)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 29.2 (1966): 233-276; and Hans Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sullansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1960).
13. Stern, "Ayyūbid," 19-32. Bishop Symeon is a well-known historical figure. He is the author of the monastery's thirteenth-century *typikon*, and he traveled to Venice and Rome in the first decades of the thirteenth century to guarantee the protection of the monastery's western properties.
14. Stern, "Mamlūk," 238-249.
15. For these manuscripts and the full text of their colophons, see Sidney H. Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas: *Arabic in the Monasteries of Palestine*," reprinted in Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (London: Variorum, 1992), XI: 7-19.
16. Griffith, "Anthony," 8.
17. Griffith, "Anthony," 8-9.
18. Griffith, "Anthony," 10, 13-16.
19. Kate Leeming, "The Adoption of Arabic as a Liturgical Language by the Palestinian Melkites," *ARAM* 15 (2003), 243. On Sinai Arabic NF 35, see Iōannēs Emmanouēl Meimarēs, *Καταλογος των νεων ἄραβικων χειρογραφων της ιερας μονης ἁγιας Αικατερινης του ὁρους Σιναι* (Athens: Ethnikon Hidryma Ereunōn, 1985), 30-31, ill. 89 (no. 34).
20. For a discussion of this period of isolation, see Sidney H. Griffith, "Stephen of Ramlah and the Christian Kerygma in Arabic in Ninth-Century Palestine," reprinted in Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (London: Variorum, 1992), VII: 23-45.
21. Sidney H. Griffith, "The Monks of Palestine and the Growth of Christian Literature in Arabic," reprinted in Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (London: Variorum, 1992), III: 1-28 [2-6].
22. Griffith, "Monks of Palestine," 8-9.
23. For a translation and discussion of the martyrdom account, see Sidney H. Griffith, "The Arabic Account of 'Abd al-Masīh an-Nağrānī al-Ghassānī," reprinted in Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (London: Variorum, 1992), X: 331-374. See also, Mark N. Swanson, "The Martyrdom of 'Abd al-Masīh, Superior of Mount Sinai (Qays Al-Ghassānī) in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden, Boston, Cologne: Brill, 2001), 107-129; and R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Studies in Late Antiquity 13 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 381-383. The account survives in four known manuscripts: Sinai Arabic Ms 542, British Museum Oriental Ms 5019, a lost 10th-century manuscript, and Sinai Arabic Ms 396 (13th century). Griffith argues that 'Abd al-Masīh was martyred in the 860s.
24. Griffith, "'Abd al-Masīh an-Nağrānī al-Ghassānī," 333-335.
25. Griffith, "'Abd al-Masīh an-Nağrānī al-Ghassānī," 346, note 48.



## THE NATIONAL GALLERY: ST CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA'S LONDON HOME

DL BRENAN

London's National Gallery is home to 33 images of St Catherine of Alexandria, from Raphael's beautiful three-quarter length portrait, *St Catherine of Alexandria* (see below), which shows the saint in an Italianate landscape, clothed in blue and red, leaning on her attribute of a wheel, to Fra Angelico's small panel, *The Forerunners of Christ with Saints and Martyrs* (reproduced opposite), where the saint is one of a multitude. Here she is immediately identifiable as much from the primacy of her position in the centre front of the right-hand panel as from the vibrancy of her scarlet robes. Some of the other great artists whose depictions of the saint are held in the National Gallery are Massys, Parmigianino, Garofalo and Titian.



Raphael, *St Catherine of Alexandria* (1507)

Both the number and quality of the images of the saint within the collection is not surprising. From the eighth to the nineteenth centuries St Catherine of Alexandria was one of the most popular and frequently depicted female saints in both Eastern and Western Europe. A role model for women, she was also revered by men: she became patroness of the Dominican Order and was immortalised in the Order's *Golden Legend*, a mid-thirteenth century collection of hagiographical stories. Veneration of St

Catherine spread rapidly throughout Western Europe. Her five-fold blessings – philosophical wisdom, eloquence, constancy, chastity and, above all, dignity in death – and her status as virgin, martyr, princess, scholar and Bride of Christ, conferred upon the saint an eminent position among the panoply of saints and led to her being considered one of the Fourteen Holy Helps of the Catholic Church. It is no wonder that the Dominicans made her a patroness, while other orders frequently included her on altarpieces alongside their own patron saints. An example of this is Moretto da Brescia's *Madonna and Child with Saint Bernardino and other Saints*. Originally produced for a Franciscan church or chapel dedicated to St Bernardino, the saints on the bottom, earthly half of the panel observe in the upper, Heavenly half, Saint Catherine's Mystic Marriage to Christ.

Although the National Gallery is a collection of Western European artists, it is easy to see the influence of the East and, more importantly, of Sinai upon depictions of St Catherine. One of the earliest paintings in the collection, a mid-thirteenth century altarpiece by Margarito of Arezzo, *The Virgin and Child Enthroned, with Narrative Scenes*, includes in the bottom left-hand corner a narrative sequence of St Catherine's execution and transportation to the pinnacle of Mount Sinai by angels. The blood pouring forth from the saint's neck is in the Orthodox tradition and not the Catholic, in which first milk, and then oil, is traditional. Originally acquired in 1857 for its curiosity rather than artistic value, 150 years of changing artistic sensibilities has resulted in the panel being appreciated for its Italo-Byzantine qualities and seen as an important bridge between Eastern and Western art and religious observation. Another beautiful and unusual work in the collection is Quinten Massys's *Virgin and Child with Saints Barbara and Catherine*, a rare survivor of a once common technique in which pigments are mixed with glue rather than linseed oil and applied to a linen ground. The image has deteriorated due to the glue having worked its way



Quinten Massys, *The Virgin and Child with Saints Barbara and Catherine* (1515 – 25)



© National Gallery London

Fra Angelico, *The Forerunners of Christ with Saints and Martyrs* (1443 – 44)

from the front through to the back of the fabric, leaving behind the now chalk-like pigments on the surface. The resultant painting looks more like an Impressionist pastel than the early Renaissance masterpiece it is. However, Massys's artistic skills allow us to see, if only incompletely, beyond the effects of time on an imperfect technique to the original majesty of the image. St Barbara may be receiving her martyr's crown from the Virgin, but St Catherine, in accepting her wedding ring directly from Christ, demonstrates her primacy among the hierarchy of saints.

Garofalo's *St Augustine with the Holy Family and St Catherine of Alexandria* is an unusual composition. In the painting, St Augustine, struggling to explain the Trinity, is distracted by a small child attempting to empty the sea into a hole in the sand. Standing behind Augustine, leaning on the broken remains of her wheel and holding a martyr's palm, is St Catherine. Although equally distracted by the child and its task, Catherine's left hand cradles the manuscript under Augustine's hand. Clearly the two saints had been engaging in intellectual discourse.

Catherine's status in life, as well as her reputation in death, made her an exemplary Christian role model. The term, *Virgo inter Virgines*, virgin among virgins, applies equally to Catherine as to the Virgin Mary. This, as well as her position as Bride of Christ, made her an ideal intercessory saint. Although she was removed from the Roman calendar following Vatican II, devotion to the saint never completely ceased, with dispensations continually given for her veneration. Pope John Paul II's visit to the Monastery of Saint Catherine in 2000 reminded the West of the saint's role as an exemplar of ideal constancy, commitment and intellectual rigour. Two years later, St Catherine of Alexandria's feast was officially reinstated to the Roman Liturgy – not before time.

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*Sinaiticus: the bulletin of the Saint Catherine Foundation*  
 Edited by Earleen Brunner  
 Designed by Emilia López ([www.loladesign.co.uk](http://www.loladesign.co.uk))  
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The Saint Catherine Foundation and its related associations in Switzerland and the United States support conservation work at the Monastery of Saint Catherine. The monastery's Library is the present focus of conservation activities. To safeguard this historic archive, the foundation is raising funds for the renovation of the Library building and for the conservation and boxed storage of the manuscripts and early books.

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## PETITE SYNTHÈSE SUR LES TRAVAUX DE CONSERVATION ENTREPRIS AU MONASTÈRE DE SAINTE-CATHERINE

Le but que s'est assigné la Fondation Sainte-Catherine est de protéger et de conserver le patrimoine culturel et spirituel rassemblé dans la Bibliothèque du monastère du Mont Sinaï. Dans ce cadre, l'attention se concentre actuellement sur la bibliothèque elle-même. Pour préserver en effet la mémoire que représentent les milliers de manuscrits et d'imprimés anciens, il a fallu en réaménager l'environnement (en déplaçant d'abord les cellules des moines et les locaux dont l'usage pouvait représenter un risque pour la conservation), puis rénover le bâtiment lui-même, pour qu'il réponde aux exigences de la conservation, de la consultation et de la modernisation (inventaire et numérisation du fichier). Les fonds importants nécessaires à cette entreprise préalable ont été levés avec succès par la Fondation. L'autre versant du programme concerne la conservation des manuscrits et l'emmagasinage dans des boîtes conçues à cette fin.

**Le programme des boîtes** a commencé en 1999 pour assurer la protection de quelques 2000 manuscrits parmi ceux qui sont le plus exposés. Les chercheurs ont conçu une boîte en acier inoxydable qui est durable, sans dommage pour les livres contenus à l'intérieur et garantissant une protection à l'égard des conditions environnementales propres au Sinaï. Par le passé, les dommages ont été aussi causés par des rayonnages inappropriés et des difficultés de maniement. La mise en boîtes permettra aux codex les plus précieux et aux imprimés les plus anciens d'être emmagasinés horizontalement, ainsi que leur structure l'exige, et d'être protégés de toute atteinte matérielle. Les boîtes sont nécessaires pour tous les manuscrits sur parchemin, soit tous les plus anciens et les plus importants parmi les plus récents, pour les manuscrits reliés dans le style byzantin ou grec, ainsi que pour d'autres manuscrits d'importance particulière qui, sans protection, sont vulnérables (dont un petit nombre de reliures islamiques de haute qualité). Les boîtes sont fabriquées par UK firm Conservation by Design. L'Association suisse des Amis de la Fondation Sainte-Catherine a fourni les fonds qui permettent déjà pour la présente année la fabrication d'une première tranche de 200 boîtes.

**Quel est l'état présent des projets?** Le projet de fabrication des boîtes attend deux informations finales supplémentaires :

En premier lieu, on attend la confirmation finale par les ingénieurs des dimensions précises des armoires d'emmagasinement des livres, une fois qu'on aura calculé exactement la distance entre les portes de l'armoire quand elles sont ouvertes. Selon une note récente de Nicholas Pickwoad, deux changements sont intervenus dans le dessin des boîtes. Le premier concerne le devant : l'adjonction d'un matériel d'hygrométrie sur les murs de la bibliothèque a, en effet, réduit la profondeur disponible des armoires

contenant les boîtes et une poignée a dû être dessinée pour réduire d'environ 3 cm la profondeur de la boîte de stockage. La substitution, d'autre part, d'une finition en bronze sur la partie métallique, en acier inoxydable, au bas de la bibliothèque, a entraîné une demande de modification du devant des boîtes pour les harmoniser avec la nouvelle couleur. On a donc ajouté une plaque de cuivre, avec une finition « vieux penny ». Dans le cuivre sont gravés l'inscription de l'étagère de chaque manuscrit et le monogramme de Sainte-Catherine. Mais pendant tout ce temps, Andrew Honey et Stuart Welch ont continué de travailler à la finition de l'intérieur des boîtes et cette tâche



est maintenant achevée. Rappelons qu'Alan Lawson est le fabricant du métal. Le retard pris pour la fabrication des boîtes a cependant été une chance, car les plans récents entraînés par le changement du projet auraient provoqué un coût supplémentaire pour modifier des boîtes déjà fabriquées.

Les **reliures** présentent un autre intérêt, d'ordre scientifique cette fois. La bibliothèque du monastère, célèbre depuis des siècles pour ses collections de manuscrits, contient aussi une remarquable collection de reliures qui proviennent à la fois du monde grec et du Moyen Orient, ainsi que de l'Europe orientale et occidentale. Depuis 2000, le projet de conservation de la bibliothèque a intégré à son examen de celle-ci l'examen des reliures de tous les 3306 manuscrits reliés et de plus de 1000 imprimés anciens. Cet examen a mis en évidence la plus grande collection de reliures byzantines au monde qui a survécu, ainsi qu'une collection de reliures datant de la fin du XVe siècle en provenance de l'Europe occidentale, qui était restée pratiquement inconnue de la communauté scientifique, de même que les reliures venant d'autres pays orthodoxes de l'Europe orientale. La variété va des reliures précieuses raffinées aux reliures fonctionnelles les plus simples. L'ensemble témoigne encore du fait que dans de nombreux cas la reliure a été faite dans le monastère lui-même. L'an passé le monastère s'est révélé être le lieu d'une collection unique d'outils de finition qui remontent au moins jusqu'au XVIe siècle et qui servaient à la décoration des livres reliés dans le monastère.

L'œuvre entreprise par la Fondation permettra donc non seulement de préserver un patrimoine fondamental dans l'histoire de notre civilisation, mais elle joue un rôle non négligeable sur le plan scientifique et technologique.